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The Frontier Within: The European Border Regime in the Balkans

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Contents

Articles

Artistic Contribution

Essays

Interview

Artistic Contribution

Interventions

Research Lab

The Forging of the Balkan Route

Contextualizing the Border Regime in the EU Periphery

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In the summer of 2015, the migratory route across the Balkans »entered into the European spotlight, and indeed onto the screen of the global public« (Kasparek 2016: 2), triggering different interpretations and responses. Contrary to the widespread framing of the mass movement of people seeking refuge in Europe as ›crisis‹ and ›emergency‹ of unseen proportions, we opt for the perspective of »the long Summer of Migration« (Kasparek/Speer 2015) and an interpretation that regards it as »a historic and monumental year of migration for Europe precisely because disobedient mass mobilities have disrupted the European regime of border control« (Stierl/Heller/de Genova 2016: 23). In reaction to the disobedient mass mobilities of people, a state-tolerated and even state-organized transit of people, a »formalized corridor« (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016), was gradually established. To avoid the concentration of unwanted migrants on their territory, countries along the route—sometimes in consultation with their neighboring countries and EU member states, sometimes simply by creating facts—strived to regain control over the movements by channeling and isolating them by means of the corridor (see e.g. Hameršak/Pleše 2018; Speer 2017; Tošić 2017). »Migrants didn't travel the route any more: they were hurriedly channeled along, no longer having the power to either determine their own movement or their own speed« (Kasparek 2016). The corridor, at the same time, facilitated and tamed the movement of people. In comparison to the situation in Serbia, where migrants were loosely directed to follow the path of the corridor (see e.g. Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Greenberg/Spasić 2017; Kasparek 2016: 6), migrants in other states like North Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia were literally in the corridor's power, i.e. forced to follow the corridor (see Hameršak/Pleše 2018; Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Chudoska Blazhevska/Flores Juberías 2016: 231–232; Kogovšek Šalamon 2016: 44–47; Petrović 2018). The corridor was operative in different and constantly changing modalities until March 2016. Since then, migration through the Balkan region still takes place, with migrants struggling on a

daily basis with the diverse means of tightened border controls that all states along the Balkan route have been practicing since.

This *movements* issue wants to look back on these events in an attempt to analytically make sense of them and to reflect on the historical rupture of the months of 2015 and 2016. At the same time, it tries to analyze the ongoing developments of bordering policies and the struggles of migration. It assembles a broad range of articles reaching from analytical or research based papers shedding light on various regional settings and topics, such as the massive involvement of humanitarian actors or the role of camp infrastructures, to more activist-led articles reflecting on the different phases and settings of pro-migrant struggles and transnational solidarity practices. In an attempt to better understand the post-2015 border regime, the issue furthermore presents analyses of varying political technologies of bordering that evolved along the route in response to the mass mobilities of 2015/2016. It especially focuses on the excessive use of different dimensions of violence that seem to characterize the new modalities of the border regime, such as the omnipresent practice of push-backs. Moreover, the articles shed light on the ongoing struggles of transit mobility and (transnational) solidarity that are specifically shaped by the more than eventful history of the region molded both by centuries of violent interventions and a history of connectivity.

Our transnational editorial group came together in the course of a summer school on the border regime in the Balkans held in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2018. It was organized by the *Network for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* (kritnet), University of Göttingen, Department of Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology (Germany), the Research Centre of the Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovenia), the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (Croatia), and the Institute of Ethnography SASA (Serbia). The summer school assembled engaged academics from all over the region that were involved, in one form or another, in migration struggles along the route in recent years.[1] The few days of exchange proved to be an exciting and fruitful gathering of critical migration and border regime scholars and activists from different regional and disciplinary backgrounds of the wider Balkans. Therefore, we decided

1 | This work has been supported by The German Academic Exchange Service, which funded the summer school, as well as the Croatian Science Foundation under the project »The European Irregularized Migration Regime at the Periphery of the EU: from Ethnography to Keywords« (IP-2019-04-6642). We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all authors and reviewers, the members of the editorial board of *movements* as well as our proofreader Christina Rogers and Leoni Faschian for logistical help. This issue would not exist without their work, support, advice, and encouragement.

to produce this *movements* issue by inviting scholars and activists from the region or with a deep knowledge on, and experience with, regional histories and politics in order to share their analyses of the Balkan route, the formalized corridor, and the developments thereafter. These developments have left a deep imprint on the societies and regional politics of migration, but they are very rarely taken into consideration and studied in the West as the centuries long entanglements that connect the Balkan with the rest of Europe.

In this editorial, we will outline the transnational mobility practices in the Balkans in a historical perspective that includes the framework of EU-Balkan relations. With this exercise we try to historize the events of 2015 which are portrayed in many academic as well as public accounts as ›unexpected‹ and ›new‹. We also intend to write against the emergency and escalation narrative underlying most public discourses on the Balkans and migration routes today, which is often embedded in old cultural stereotypes about the region. We, furthermore, write against the emergency narrative because it erodes the agency of migration that has not only connected the region with the rest of the globe but is also constantly reinventing new paths for reaching better lives. Not only the history of mobilities, migrations, and flight connecting the region with the rest of Europe and the Middle East can be traced back into the past, but also the history of political interventions and attempts to control these migrations and mobilities by western European states. Especially the EU accession processes produce contexts that made it possible to gradually integrate the (Western) Balkan states into the rationale of EU migration management, thus, setting the ground for today's border and migration regime. However, as we will show in the following sections, we also argue against simplified understandings of the EU border regime that regard its externalization policy as an imperial top-down act. Rather, with a postcolonial perspective that calls for decentering western knowledge, we will also shed light on the agency of the national governments of the region and their own national(ist) agendas.

THE FORMALIZED CORRIDOR

As outlined above, the formalized corridor of 2015 reached from Greece to Northern and Central Europe, leading across the states established in the 1990s during the violent breakdown of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and, today, are additionally stratified vis-à-vis the EU. Slovenia and Croatia are EU member states, while the others are still in the accession process. The candidate states Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro have opened the negotiation process. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo—still not recognized as a sovereign state by Serbia and some EU

member states—have the status of potential candidates. However, in 2015 and 2016, the states along the corridor efficiently collaborated for months on a daily basis, while, at the same time, fostering separate, sometimes conflicting, migration politics. Slovenia, for example, raised a razor-wire fence along the border to Croatia, while Croatia externalized its border to Serbia with a bilateral agreement (Protokol) in 2015 which stated that the »Croatian Party« may send a »train composition with its crew to the railway station in Šid [in Serbia], with a sufficient number of police officers of the Republic of Croatia as escort« (Article 3 Paragraph 2).

Despite ruptures and disputes, states nevertheless organized transit in the form of corridor consisting of trains, buses, and masses of walking people that were guarded and directed by the police who forced people on the move to follow the corridor's direction and speed. The way the movements were speedily channeled in some countries came at the cost of depriving people of their liberty and freedom of movement, which calls for an understanding of the corridor as a specific form of detention: a mobile detention, ineligible to national or EU legislation (see Hameršak/Pleše 2018; Kogovšek Šalamon 2016: 44–47). In the context of the corridor, camps became convergence points for the heterogeneous pathways of movements. Nevertheless, having in mind both the proclaimed humanitarian purpose of the corridor, and the monumental numbers of people to whom the corridor enabled and facilitated movement, the corridor can be designated as an unprecedented formation in recent EU history. In other words: »The corridor – with all its restrictions – remains a historical event initiated by the movement of people, which enabled thousands to reach central Europe in a relatively quick and safe manner. [...] But at the same time it remained inscribed within a violent migration management system« (Santer/Wriedt 2017: 148).

For some time, a broad consensus can be observed within migration and border studies and among policy makers that understands migration control as much more than simply protecting a concrete borderline. Instead, concepts such as migration management (Oelgemoller 2017; Geiger/Pécoud 2010) and border externalization (as specifically spelled out in the EU document *Global Approach to Migration* of 2005) have become increasingly important. In a spatial sense, what many of them have in common is, first, that they assume an involvement of neighboring states to govern migration in line with EU migration policies. Second, it is often stated that this leads to the creation of different zones encircling the European Union (Andreas/Snyder 2000). Maribel Casas-Cortes and Sebastian Cobarrubias, for instance, speak of four such zones: the first zone is »formed by EU member states, capable of fulfilling Schengen standards«, the second zone »consists of transit countries« (Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias 2019), the third zone is characterized by countries such as Turkey, which are depicted by emigration as well as transit, and the fourth zone are

countries of origin. While Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias rightly criticize the static and eurocentric perspective of such conceptualizations, they nevertheless point to the unique nature of the formalized corridor because it crisscrossed the above mentioned zones of mobility control in an unprecedented way.

Furthermore, the corridor through the Balkans can be conceived as a special type of transnational, internalized border. The internalized European borders manifest themselves to a great extent in a punctiform (see Rahola 2011: 96–97). They are not only activated in formal settings of border-crossings, police stations, or detention centers both at state borders and deep within state territories, but also in informal settings of hospitals, hostels, in the streets, or when someone's legal status is taken as a basis for denying access to rights and services (i.e. to obtain medical aid, accommodation, ride) (Guild 2001; Stojić Mitrović/Meh 2015). With the Balkan corridor, this punctiform of movement control was, for a short period, fused into a linear one (Hameršak/Pleše 2018).

The rules of the corridor and its pathways were established by formal and informal agreements between the police and other state authorities, and the corridor itself was facilitated by governmental, humanitarian, and other institutions and agencies. Cooperation between the countries along the route was fostered by representatives of EU institutions and EU member states. It would be too simple, though, to describe their involvement of the countries along the route as merely reactive, as an almost mechanical response to EU and broader global policies. Some countries, in particular Serbia, regarded the increasing numbers of migrants entering their territory during the year 2015 as a window of opportunity for showing their ›good face‹ to the European Union by adopting ›European values‹ and, by doing so, for enhancing their accession process to the European Union (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Greenberg/Spasić 2017). As Tošić points out, »this image was very convenient for Serbian politicians in framing their country as ›truly European‹, since it was keeping its borders open unlike some EU states (such as Hungary)« (2017: 160). Other states along the corridor also played by their own rules from time to time: Croatia, for example, contrary to the Eurodac Regulation (Regulation EU No 603/2013), avoided sharing registration data on people in transit and, thus, hampered the Dublin system that is dependent on Eurodac registration. Irregular bureaucracies and nonrecording, as Katerina Rozakou (2017) calls such practices in her analysis of bordering practices in the Greek context, became a place of dispute, negotiations, and frustrations, but also a clear sign of the complex relationships and different responses to migration within the European Union migration management politics itself.

Within EU-member states, however, the longer the corridor lasted, and the more people passed through it, the stronger the ›Hungarian position‹ became. Finally, Aus-

tria became the driving force behind a process of gradually closing the corridor, which began in November 2015 and was fully implemented in March 2016. In parallel, Angela Merkel and the European Commission preferred another strategy that cut access to the formalized corridor and that was achieved by adopting a treaty with Turkey known as the »EU-Turkey deal« signed on 18 March 2016 (see Speer 2017: 49–68; Weber 2017: 30–40).

The humanitarian aspect for the people on the move who were supposed to reach a safe place through the corridor was the guiding principle of public discourses in most of the countries along the corridor. In Serbia, »Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić officially welcomed refugees, spoke of tolerance, and compared the experience of refugees fleeing war-torn countries to those of refugees during the wars of Yugoslav Succession« (Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 315). Similar narratives could also be observed in other countries along the corridor, at least for some period of time (see, for Slovenia, Sardelić 2017: 11; for Croatia, Jakešević 2017: 184; Bužinkić 2018: 153–154). Of course, critical readings could easily detect the discriminatory, dehumanizing, securitarizing, and criminalizing acts, practices, tropes, and aspects in many of these superficially caring narratives. The profiling or selection of people, *ad hoc* detentions, and militarization—which were integral parts of the corridor—were, at the time, only denounced by a few NGOs and independent activists. They were mostly ignored, or only temporarily acknowledged, by the media and, consequently, by the general public.

Before May 2015, ›irregular‹ migration was not framed by a discourse of ›crisis‹ in the countries along the route, rather, the discourse was led by a focus on ›separate incidents‹ or ›situations‹. The discursive framing of ›crisis‹ and ›emergency‹, accompanied by reports of UN agencies about ›unprecedented refugee flows in history‹, has been globally adopted both by policy makers and the wider public. »In the wake of the Summer of Migration, all involved states along the Balkan route were quick to stage the events as an ›emergency‹ (Calhoun 2004) and, in best humanitarian fashion, as a major humanitarian ›crisis‹, thus legitimizing a ›politics of exception‹« (Hess/Kasparek 2017: 66). Following the logic that extraordinary situations call for, and justify, the use of extraordinary measures, the emergency framework, through the construction of existential threats, resulted, on the one hand, in a loosely controlled allocation of resources, and, on the other hand, in silencing many critical interpretations, thus allowing various ›risk management activities‹ to happen on the edge of the law (Campesi 2014). For the states along the route, the crisis label especially meant a rapid infusion of money and other resources for establishing infrastructures for the urgent reception of people on the move, mainly deriving from EU funds. Politically

and practically, these humanitarian-control activities also fastened the operational inclusion of non-EU countries into the European border regime.

As Sabine Hess and Bernd Kasparek have pointed out, the politics of proclaiming a ›crisis‹ is at the heart of re-stabilizing the European border regime, »making it possible to systematically undermine and lever the standards of international and European law without serious challenges to date« (Hess/Kasparek 2017: 66). The authors:

> »have observed carefully designed policy elements, which can be labelled as anti-litigation devices. The design of the Hungarian transit zones is a striking case in point. They are an elementary part of the border fence towards Serbia and allow for the fiction that the border has not been closed for those seeking international protection, but rather that their admission numbers are merely limited due to administrative reasons: each of the two transit zones allows for 14 asylum seekers to enter Hungary every day« (Hess/Kasparek 2017: 66; on the administrative rationale in Slovenia see e.g. Gombač 2016: 79–81).

The establishment of transit zones was accompanied by a series of legislative tightenings, passed under a proclaimed ›crisis situation caused by mass immigration‹, which, from a legal point of view, lasts until today. Two aspects are worth mentioning in particular: First, the mandatory deportation of all unwanted migrants that were detected on Hungarian territory to the other side of the fence, without any possibility to claim for asylum or even to lodge any appeal against the return. Second, the automatic rejection of all asylum applications as inadmissible, even of those who managed to enter the transit zones, because Serbia had been declared a safe third country (Nagy/Pál 2018). This led to a completely securitized border regime in Hungary, which might become a ›role model‹, not only for the countries in the region but also for the European border regime as a whole (ECtHR – Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary Application No. 47287/15).

The Long Genealogy of the Balkan Route and its Governance

The history of the Balkan region is a multiply layered history of transborder mobilities, migration, and flight reaching back as far as the times of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires connecting the region with the East and Western Europe in many ways. Central transportation and communication infrastructures partially also used

by today's migratory projects had already been established at the heydays of Western imperialism, as the Orient Express, the luxury train service connecting Paris with Istanbul (1883), or the Berlin-Baghdad railway (built between 1903 and 1940) indicate. During World War II, a different and reversed refugee route existed, which brought European refugees not just to Turkey but even further to refugee camps in Syria, Egypt, and Palestine and was operated by the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration (MERRA).

The Yugoslav highway, the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity (Autoput bratstva i jedinstva) often simply referred to as the ›autoput‹ and built in phases after the 1950s, came to stretch over more than 1,000 km from the Austrian to the Greek borders and was one of the central infrastructures enabling transnational mobilities, life projects, and exile. In the 1960s, direct trains departing from Istanbul and Athens carried thousands of prospective labor migrants to foreign places in Germany and Austria in the context of the fordist labor migration regime of the two countries. At the end of that decade, Germany signed a labor recruitment agreement with Yugoslavia, fostering and formalizing decades long labor migrations from Croatia, Serbia, and other countries to Germany (Gatrell 2019, see e.g. Lukić Krstanović 2019: 54–55).

The wars in the 1990s that accompanied the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the consequent establishment of several new nation states, created the first large refugee movement after the Second World War within Europe and was followed by increasing numbers of people fleeing Albania after the fall of its self-isolationist regime and the (civil) wars in the Middle East, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan since the mid-1990s. As the migratory route did not go north through the Balkan Peninsula, but mainly proceeded to Italy at the time, the label *Balkan route* was mostly used as a name for a drugs and arms smuggling route well known in the West. Although there was migration within and to Europe, the Balkan migratory route, with the exception of refugee movements from ex-Yugoslavia, was yet predominantly invisible to the broader European public.

Sparse ethnographic insights from the beginning of the 2000s point this out. Academic papers on migrant crossings from Turkey to the island of Lesbos mention as follows: »When the transport service began in the late 1980s it was very small and personal; then, in the middle of the 1990s, the Kurds began to show up – and now people arrive from just about everywhere« (Tsianos/Hess/Karakayali 2009: 3; see Tsianos/Karakayali 2010: 379). A document of the Council of the European Union from 1997 formulates this as following:

> »This migration appears to be routed essentially either through Turkey, and hence through Greece and Italy, or via the ›Balkans route‹, with the

> final countries of destination being in particular Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Several suggestions were put forward for dealing with this worrying problem, including the strengthening of checks at external borders, the stepping up of the campaign against illegal immigration networks, and pre-frontier assistance and training assignments in airports and ports in certain transit third countries, in full cooperation with the authorities in those countries« (ibid. quoted in Hess/Kasparek 2020).

During this time, the EU migration management policies defined two main objectives: to prevent similar arrivals in the future, and to initiate a system of control over migration movements toward the EU that would be established outside the territories of the EU member states. This would later be formalized, first in the 2002 *EU Action Plan on Illegal Immigration* (see Hayes/Vermeulen 2012: 13–14) and later re-confirmed in the *Global Approach to Migration* (2005) framework concerning the cooperation of the EU with third states (Hess/Kasparek 2020). In this process, the so-called migratory routes-approach and accompanying strategies of controlling, containing, and taming the movement »through epistemology of the route« (Hess/Kasparek 2020) became a main rationale of the European border control regime. Thus, one can resume that the route was not only produced by movements of people but also by the logic, legislation, investment etc. of EU migration governance. Consequently, the clandestine pathways across the Balkans to Central and Western Europe were frequently addressed by security bodies and services of the EU (see e.g. Frontex 2011; Frontex 2014), resulting in the conceptual and practical production of the Balkan as an external border zone of the EU.

Parallel to the creation of ›Schengenland‹, the birth of the ›Area of Freedom, Security and Justice‹ *inter alia* as an inner-EU-free-mobility-zone and EU-based European border and migration regime in the late 1990s, the EU created the Western Balkans as an imaginary political entity, an object of its neighborhood and enlargement policy, which lies just outside the EU with a potential ›European future‹. For the purpose of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) initiated in 1999, the term Western Balkan was launched in the EU political context in order to include, at that moment, ›ex-Yugoslav states minus Slovenia plus Albania‹ and to presumably avoid potential politically sensitive notions. The Western Balkans as a concept represents a combination of a political compromise and colonial imagery (see Petrović 2012: 21–36). Its aim was to stabilize the region through a radical redefinition that would restrain from ethno-national toponyms and to establish a free-trade area and growing partnership with the EU. The SAP set out common political and economic goals for the

Western Balkan as a region and conducted political and economic progress evaluations ›on a countries' own merits‹. The Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 strengthened the main objectives of the SAP and formally took over elements of the accession process—institutional domains and regulations that were to be *harmonized* with those existing in the EU. Harmonization is a wide concept, and it basically means adopting institutional measures following specific demands of the EU. It is a highly hierarchized process in which states asked to ›harmonize‹ do not have a say in things but have to conform to the measures set forth by the EU. As such, the adoption of the EU migration and border regime became a central part of the ongoing EU-accession process that emerged as the main platform and governmental technology of the early externalization and integration of transit and source countries into the EU border regime. This was the context of early bilateral and multilateral cooperation on this topic (concerning involved states, see Lipovec Čebron 2003; Stojić Mitrović 2014; Župarić-Iljić 2013; Bojadžijev 2007).

The decisive inclusion of the Western Balkan states in the EU design of border control happened at the Thessaloniki European Summit in 2003, where concrete provisions concerning border management, security, and combating illegal migration were set according to European standards. These provisions have not been directly displayed, but were concealed as part of the package of institutional transformations that respective states had to conduct. The states were promised to become members of the EU if the conditions were met. In order to fulfill this goal, prospective EU member states had to maintain good mutual relations, build statehoods based on ›the rule of law‹, and, after a positive evaluation by the EU, begin with the implementation of concrete legislative and institutional changes on their territories (Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019). The control of unwanted movements toward the EU was a priority of the EU accession process of the Western Balkan states from the very beginning (Kacarska 2012). It started with controlling the movement of their own nationals (to allow the states to be removed from the so-called Black Schengen list) during the visa facilitation process. If they managed to control the movement of their own nationals, especially those who applied for asylum in the EU via biometric passports and readmission obligations (asylum seekers from these states comprise a large portion of asylum seekers in the EU even today), they were promised easier access to the EU as an economic area. Gradually, the focus of movement control shifted to third-country nationals. In effect, the Western Balkan states introduced migration-related legislative and institutional transformations corresponding to the ones already existing in the EU, yet persistent ›non-doing‹ (especially regarding enabling access to rights and services for migrants) remained a main practice of deterrence (Valenta/Zuparic-Iljic/Vidovic 2015; Stojić Mitrović 2019).

From the very beginning, becoming an active part of the European border regime and implementing EU-centric migration policies, or, to put it simply, conducting control policies over the movements of people, has not been the goal of the states along the Balkan route *per se* but a means to obtain political and economic benefits from the EU. They are included into the EU border regime as operational partners without formal power to influence migration policies. These states do have a voice, though, not only by creating the image of being able to manage the ›European problem‹, and accordingly receive further access to EU funds, but also by influencing EU migration policy through disobedience and actively avoiding conformity to ›prescribed‹ measures. A striking example of creative state disobedience are the so-called 72-hour-papers, which are legal provisions set by the Serbian 2007 Law on Asylum, later also introduced as law in North Macedonia in June 2015: Their initial function was to give asylum seekers who declared their ›intention to seek asylum‹ to the police the possibility to legally proceed to one of the asylum reception centers located within Serbia, where, in a second step, their asylum requests were to be examined in line with the idea of implementing a functioning asylum system according to EU standards. However, in practice, these papers were used as short-term visas for transiting through North Macedonia and Serbia that were handed out to hundreds of thousands of migrants (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 17–19, 36).

Furthermore, the introduction of migration control practices is often a means for achieving other political and economic goals. In the accessing states, migration management is seen as services they provide for the EU. In addition, demands created by migration management goals open new possibilities for employment, which are essential to societies with high unemployment rates.

Besides direct economic benefits, migration has been confirmed to be a politically potent instrument. States and their institutions were more firmly integrated into existing EU structures, especially those related to the prevention of unwanted migration, such as increased police cooperation and Frontex agreements. On a local level, political leaders have increasingly been using migration-related narratives in everyday political life in order to confront the state or other political competitors, often through the use of Ethno-nationalist and related discourses. In recent times, as citizens of the states along the Balkan route themselves migrate in search for jobs and less precarious lives, migration from third states has been discursively linked to the fear of foreigners permanently settling in places at the expense of natives.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

According to a growing body of literature (e.g. Hess/Kasparek 2020; Lunaček Brumen/Meh 2016; Speer 2017), the Balkan route of the year 2015 and the first months of 2016 can be conceptualized in phases, beginning with a clandestine phase, evolving to an open route and formalized corridor and back to an invisible route again. It is necessary to point to the fact that these different phases were not merely the result of state or EU-led top-down approaches, but the consequence of a »dynamic process which resulted from the interplay of state practices, practices of mobility, activities of activists, volunteers, and NGOs, media coverage, etc. The same applies for its closure« (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 6).

The closure of the corridor and stricter border controls resulted in a large transformation of the Balkan route and mobility practices in the recent years, when push-backs from deep within the EU-territory to neighboring non-EU states, erratic movements across borders and territories of the (Western) Balkan states, or desperate journeys back to Greece and then back to the north became everyday realities. In the same period, the route proliferated into more branches, especially a new one via Bosnia and Herzegovina. This proliferation lead to a heightened circulation of practices, people, and knowledge along these paths: a mushrooming of so-called ›jungle camps‹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an escalation of border violence in Croatia, chain push-backs from Slovenia, significant EU financial investments into border control in Croatia and camp infrastructures in neighboring countries, the deployment of Frontex in Albania, etc. As the actual itineraries of people on the move multiplied, people started to reach previously indiscernible spots, resulting in blurring of the differences between entering and exiting borders. Circular transit with many loops, involving moving forward and backwards, became the dominant form of migration movements in the region. It transformed the Balkan route into a »Balkan Circuit« (Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019: 540; see also Stojić Mitrović/Ahmetašević/Beznec/Kurnik 2020). The topography changed from a unidirectional line to a network of hubs, accommodation, and socializing spots. In this landscape, some movements still remain invisible—undetected by actors aiming to support, contain, and even prevent migration. »We have no information about persons who have money to pay for the whole package, transfer, accommodation, food, medical assistance when needed, we have no idea how many of them just went further«, a former MSF employee stressed, »we only see those who reach for aid, who are poor or injured and therefore cannot immediately continue their journey.« Some movements are intentionally invisibilized by support groups in order to avoid unwanted attention, and, consequently, repressive measures have also become a common development in border areas where people

on the move are waiting for their chance to cross. However, it seems that circular transnational migration of human beings, resulting directly from the securitarian practices of the European border regime, have also become a usual form of mobility in the region.

The Balkan route as a whole has been increasingly made invisible to spectators from the EU in the last years. There were no mass media coverage, except for reports on deplorable conditions in certain hubs, such as Belgrade barracks (Serbia), Vučjak camp (Bosnia and Herzegovina), or violent push-backs from Croatia that received global and EU-wide attention. However, this spectacularization was rarely directly attributed to the externalization of border control but rather more readily linked to an presumed inability of the Balkan states to manage migration, or to manage it without the blatant use of violence.

As Marta Stojić Mitrović and Ana Vilenica (2019) point out, practices, discourses, knowledge, concepts, technologies, even particular narratives, organizations, and individual professionals are following the changed topography. This is evident both in the securitarian and in the humanitarian sector: Frontex is signing or initiating cooperation agreements with non-EU member Balkan states, border guards learn from each other how to prevent movements or how to use new equipment, obscure Orbanist legislative changes and institutionalized practices are becoming mainstream, regional coordinators of humanitarian organizations transplant the same ›best practices‹ how to work with migrants, how to organize their accommodation, what aid to bring and when, and how to ›deal‹ with the local communities in different nation-states, while the emergency framework travels from one space to another. Solidarity groups are networking, exchanging knowledge and practices but simultaneously face an increased criminalization of their activities. The public opinion in different nation states is shaped by the same dominant discourses on migration, far-right groups are building international cooperations and exploit the same narratives that frame migrants and migration as dangerous.

About the Issue

This issue of *movements* highlights the current situation of migration struggles along this fragmented, circular, and precarious route and examines the diverse attempts by the EU, transnational institutions, countries in the region, local and interregional structures, and multiple humanitarian actors to regain control over the movements of migration after the official closure of the humanitarian-securitarian corridor in 2016. It reflects on the highly dynamic and conflicting developments since 2015 and their

historical entanglements, the ambiguities of humanitarian interventions and strategies of containment, migratory tactics of survival, local struggles, artistic interventions, regional and transnational activism, and recent initiatives to curb the extensive practices of border violence and push-backs. In doing so, the issue brings back the region on the European agenda and sheds light on the multiple historical disruptions, bordering practices, and connectivities that have been forming its presence.

EU migration policy is reaffirming old and producing new material borders: from border fences to document checks—conducted both by state authorities and increasingly the general population, like taxi drivers or hostel owners—free movement is put in question for all, and unwanted movements of migrants are openly violently prevented. Violence and repression toward migrants are not only normalized but also further legalized through transformations of national legislation, while migrant solidarity initiatives and even unintentional facilitations of movement or stay (performed by carriers, accommodation providers, and ordinary citizens) are increasingly at risk of being criminalized.

In line with this present state, only briefly tackled here, a number of contributions gathered in this issue challenge normative perceptions of the restrictive European border regime and engage in the critical analysis of its key mechanisms, symbolic pillars, and infrastructures by framing them as complex and depending on context. Furthermore, some of them strive to find creative ways to circumvent the dominance of linear or even verbal explication and indulge in narrative fragments, interviews, maps, and graphs. All contributions are focused and space- or even person-specific. They are based on extensive research, activist, volunteer or other involvement, and they are reflexive and critical towards predominant perspectives and views.

Artist and activist **Selma Banich**, in her contribution entitled »Shining«, named after one of her artistic intervention performed in a Zagreb neighborhood, assembles notes and reflections on her ongoing series of site-specific interventions in Zagreb made of heat sheet (hallmarks of migrants' rescue boats and the shores of Europe) and her personal notes in which she engages with her encounters with three persons on the move or, rather, on the run from the European border control regime. Her contribution, formulated as a series of fragments of two parallel lines, which on the surface seem loosely, but in fact deeply, connected, speaks of the power of ambivalence and of the complexities of struggles that take place everyday on the fringes of the EU. **Andrea Contenta** visualizes and analyzes camps that have been mushrooming in Serbia in the recent years with a series of maps and graphs. The author's detailed analysis—based on a critical use of available, often conflicting, data—shows how Serbia has kept thousands of people outside of the western EU territory following a European strategy of containment. Contenta concludes his contribution with a

clear call, stating: »It is not only a theoretical issue anymore; containment camps are all around us, and we cannot just continue to write about it.« Serbia, and Belgrade in particular, is of central importance for transmigration through the Balkans. On a micro-level, the maps of **Paul Knopf**, **Miriam Neßler** and **Cosima Zita Seichter** visualize the so-called Refugee District in Belgrade and shed light on the transformation of urban space by transit migration. On a macro-level, their contribution illustrates the importance of Serbia as a central hub for migrant mobility in the Balkans as well as for the externalization of the European border regime in the region. The collective efforts to support the struggle of the people on the move—by witnessing, documenting, and denouncing push-backs—are presented by the **Push-Back Map Collective's** self-reflection. In their contribution to this issue, the Push-Back Map Collective ask themselves questions or start a dialogue among themselves in order to reflect and evaluate the Push-Back map (www.pushbackmap.org) they launched and maintain. They also investigate the potentials of political organizing that is based on making an invisible structure visible. The activist collective **Info Kolpa** from Ljubljana gives an account of push-backs conducted by the Slovenian police and describes initiatives to oppose what they deem as systemic violence of police against people on the move and violent attempts to close the borders. The text contributes to understanding the role of extralegal police practices in restoring the European border regime and highlights the ingenuity of collectives that oppose it. **Patricia Artimova's** contribution entitled »A Volunteer's Diary« could be described as a collage of diverse personal notes of the author and others in order to present the complexity of the Serbian and Bosnian context. The genre of diary notes allows the author to demonstrate the diachronic line presented in the volunteers' personal engagements and in the gradual developments occurring in different sites and states along the route within a four-year period. She also traces the effects of her support for people on the move on her social relations at home. **Emina Bužinkić** focuses on the arrest, detention, and deportation of a non-EU national done by Croatia to show the implications of current securitization practices on the everyday lives and life projects of migrants and refugees. Based on different sources (oral histories, official documentation, personal history, etc.), her intervention calls for direct political action and affirms a new genre one could provisionally call ›a biography of a deportation‹. In her »Notes from the Field« **Azra Hromadžić** focuses on multiple encounters between the locals of Bihać, a city located in the northwestern corner of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and people on the move who stop there while trying to cross into Croatia and the EU. Some of the sections and vignettes of her field notes are written as entries describing a particular day, while others are more anthropological and analytical reflections. Her focus lies on the local people's perspectives, the dynamics of their daily encounters with

migrants and alleged contradictions, philigram distinctions, as well as experiences of refugeeness that create unique relationships between people and histories in Bihać. **Karolína Augustová** and **Jack Sapoch**, activists of the grassroots organization No Name Kitchen and members of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, offer a systematized account of violence towards people on the move with their research report. The condensed analysis of violent practices, places, victims, and perpetrators of the increasingly securitized EU border apparatus is based on interviews conducted with people on the move in border areas with Croatia, Šid (Serbia) and Velika Kladuša (BiH). They identify a whole range of violence that people on the move are facing, which often remains ignored or underestimated, and thus condoned, in local national settings as well as on the EU and global level. They conclude that border violence against people on the move cannot be interpreted as mere aggression emanating from individuals or groups of the police but is embedded in the states' structures.

We also gathered scientific papers discussing and analyzing different aspects of the corridor and the years thereafter. In their article, **Andrej Kurnik** and **Barbara Beznec** focus on assemblages of mobility, which are composed of practices of migrants and local agencies that strive to escape what the authors call ›the sovereign imperative‹. In their analysis of different events and practices since 2015, they demonstrate how migratory movements reveal the hidden subalternized local forms of escape and invigorate the dormant critique of coloniality in the geopolitical locations along the Balkan route. In their concluding remarks, the authors ask to confront the decades-long investments into repressive and exclusionary EU migration policies and point to the political potential of migration as an agent of decolonization. The authors stress that post-Yugoslav European borderland that has been a laboratory of Europeanization for the last thirty years, a site of a ›civilizing‹ mission that systematically diminishes forms of being in common based on diversity and alterity is placed under scrutiny again. **Romana Pozniak** explores the ethnography of aid work, giving special attention to dynamics between emotional and rational dimensions. Based primarily on interviews conducted with humanitarians employed during the mass refugee transit through the Balkan corridor, she analyzes, historizes, and contextualizes their experiences in terms of affective labor. The author defines affective labor as efforts invested in reflecting on morally, emotionally, and mentally unsettling affects. She deals with local employment measures and how they had an impact on employed workers. Pozniak discusses the figure of the compassionate aid professional by it in a specific historical context of the Balkan corridor and by including personal narrations about it. The article of **Robert Rydzewski** focuses on the situation in Serbia after the final closure of the formalized corridor in March 2016. Rydzewski argues that extensive and multidirectional migrant movements on the doorstep of the EU are an

expression of hope to bring a ›stuckedness‹ to an end. In his analysis, he juxtaposes the representations of migrant movements as linear with migrant narratives and their persistent unilinear movement despite militarized external European Union borders, push-backs, and violence of border guards. Rydzewsky approaches the structural and institutional imposition of waiting with the following questions: What does interstate movement mean for migrants? Why do migrants reject state protection offered by government facilities in favor of traveling around the country? In her article, **Céline Cantat** focuses on the Serbian capital Belgrade and how ›solidarities in transit‹ or the heterogeneous community of actors supporting people on the move emerged and dissolved in the country in 2015/2016. She analyzes the gradual marginalization of migrant presence and migration solidarity in Belgrade as an outcome of imposing of an institutionalized, official, camp-based, and heavily regulated refugee aid field. This field regulates the access not only to camps per se, but also to fundings for activities by independent groups or civil sector organizations. **Teodora Jovanović**, by using something she calls ›autoethnography of participation‹, offers a meticulous case study of Miksalište, a distribution hub in Belgrade established in 2015, which she joined as a volunteer in 2016. The transformation of this single institution is examined by elaborating on the transformation within the political and social contexts in Serbia and its capital, Belgrade, regarding migration policies and humanitarian assistance. She identifies three, at times intertwined, modes of response to migration that have shaped the development of the Miksalište center in corresponding stages: voluntarism, professionalization, and re-statization. She connects the beginning and end of each stage of organizing work in Miksalište by investigating the actors, roles, activities, and manners in which these activities are conducted in relation to broader changes within migration management and funding.

Finishing this editorial in the aftermath of brutal clashes at the borders of Turkey and Greece and in the wake of the global pandemic of COVID-19—isolated in our homes, some of us even under curfew—we experience an escalation and normalization of restrictions, not only of movement but also of almost every aspect of social and political life. We perceive a militarization, which pervades public spaces and discourses, the introduction of new and the reinforcement of old borders, in particular along the line of EU external borders, a heightened immobilization of people on the move, their intentional neglect in squats and ›jungles‹ or their forceful encampment in deplorable, often unsanitary, conditions, where they are faced with food reductions, violence of every kind, and harrowing isolation. At the same time, we witness an increase of anti-migrant narratives not only spreading across obscure social networks but also among high ranked officials. Nonetheless, we get glimpses of resistance and struggles happening every day inside and outside the camps. Videos

of protests and photos of violence that manage to reach us from the strictly closed camps, together with testimonies and outcries, are fragments of migrant agency that exist despite overwhelming repression.

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Articles

Old Routes, New Perspectives

A Postcolonial Reading of the Balkan Route

BARBARA BEZNEC, ANDREJ KURNIK

Abstract: This article delivers a reading of the deconstruction and restoration of the European border regime along the post-Yugoslav section of the Balkan route from the perspective of assemblages of mobility. It starts with a short history of the opening and closure of the formalized corridor in 2015/2016 by claiming that the restored border regime adopted most of the main characteristic of its pre-crisis period, while simultaneously aggravating their securitarian dimensions. It continues with the recent history of the Balkan route from the perspective of assemblages of mobility: the mutual articulations of migrant struggles and local struggles against the imposition of homogenizing forms characteristic of colonial modernity. State centered analysis is additionally challenged and rejected while discussing the role of sovereign violence in the restoration of the European border regime. Article finally explores the potential of mobility struggles for postcolonial critique by describing the uncertain articulations of the European border regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically.

Keywords: Balkan route, assemblages of mobility, autonomy of migration, European border regime, post-colonial critique

The attempt of this article is to deliver a reading of the recent history of the temporal suspension of the European border and migration regime on the Balkan route during and immediately after the Long Summer of Migration in 2015 and its subsequent restoration from 2016 onwards. We start our observation from the vantage point of *assemblages of mobility*, which are composed of practices of migrants and refugees as well as various local agencies. Those assemblages, or joint agencies, are the result of the mutual implication of various forms of escape, of what Papodopulus et al. call fixed spaces of the subjects of sovereignty (Papadopoulos/Stephenson/Tsianos 2008). Through this mutuality, migration movements simultaneously reveal the hidden and previously undisclosed subalternized local forms of escape and therefore invigorate the dormant critique of coloniality in the geopolitical locations that nowadays function as the borders of Europe. Our extensive militant research and ethnography of the Balkan route spans from Croatia and Slovenia to Serbia and Bosnia and Herze-

govina.[1] By following migrant agency and the nexuses it constitutes with various solidarity initiatives along the route, our investigation gradually pointed to something much less tangible: to counter-hegemonic memories inscribed in localities of post-Yugoslav territory that significantly contribute to the local articulations of the European migration and border regime. Such exciting deviation in our findings was crucial in surpassing the logic of reductionism that is enforced and encouraged by more or less spectacular applications of state violence in closing the corridor and establishing firm control over national borders along the route. Instead of being dazzled by the presumable return of sovereign state violence, we could deepen our insights into the complexity on and around the route to invoke the heterogeneous tacit and silenced agencies and the new possibilities of connectivity among them. In order to surpass the tiresome and unproductive false alternative between the ›European‹ and ›sovereign state‹ approach to the reconstruction of the European border regime, we dived with great delight into a much bigger complexity beyond oppositional dialectics: into new counter-hegemonic stories of the Balkan route. This journey begins with a brief description of the establishment of the formalized corridor and its gradual closure during the summer of 2015 and spring 2016. It continues with an analysis of the corridor in the context of the European integration processes of affected states and the constituent elements of the emerging European border regime. It proceeds to re-examine the same developments from the perspective of autonomy of migration and assemblages of mobility and concludes with a description of the currently most critical point of aggregation and resistance, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Brief History of the Formalized Corridor: from Deconstruction of the Border Regime to its Restoration

The unprecedented increase in quantity and visibility of illegalized transit migration through the Balkans towards North and West Europe in Summer 2015, which soon

1 | This article draws upon our involvement in solidarity activism during the opening and closure of the formalized refugee corridor in 2015 and 2016 in the framework of Antiracist Front Without Borders (Pistotnik/Čebron/Kozinc 2016). It is also based on recent involvements in the activist project Info Kolpa that attempts to monitor police procedures at the Slovenian southern border and the Schengen border as well as on ethnographic research conducted in the post-Yugoslav region as part of various research projects, including a three-month research residence in Sarajevo during the spring of 2019.

became labeled as the »refugee crisis«, led to the establishment of the so called »formalized corridor« (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016). In less than six months of its existence, the corridor eventually enabled continuous and state-sponsored transit with a corresponding humanitarian infrastructure of almost one million people. It began on the Macedonian-Greek border and initially continued to Serbia and later to Hungary. After the completion of the fence on the Hungarian-Serbian border the corridor turned to Croatia and Slovenia via Austria to Germany. The formalized corridor, or the temporary legalization of transit migration through the long time existing so called Balkan route, was a historical unicum, a legal and political precedent: people who were previously labeled ›illegal migrants‹ practiced and gained the right to enter, transit, and leave one state after the other towards the preferred country of destination.

The formalized corridor was the shifting and ever changing interplay of the agency and autonomy of (mass) migration, the engagement of solidarity structures and broader civil society, as well as various humanitarian and securitarian practices of the affected states. It was comprised of temporary and ad hoc coalitions, conflicts, tactics, and strategies, but always depending on the existence of a receiving state and therefore the possibility of further transit. It was a sort of state-organized smuggling, involving a great amount of legal, political, and ›logistical creativity‹ (Speer 2017), that enabled a safer, faster, and cheaper travel. But on the other hand, its main purpose was not to build a permanent and safe humanitarian infrastructure to challenge or resolve the ›refugee crisis‹, but to transfer the ›human packages‹ from one border, from one state to the other as fast as possible. The main philosophy behind the corridor was not ›well-come‹, but ›welcome-through‹ (Bužinkić 2017). Additionally, the formalization of movement was not only instrumental in increasing the efficiency of transferring responsibility to the respective northern neighbor. It was also the only way to tame the movement and gradually stop it without the use of continuous and undifferentiated extreme violence. In other words, gradual formalization, or opening from South to North, finally enabled the gradual closure from North to South precisely through the chain reaction of the affected states.

The formalized corridor should not be understood as a homogeneous material and political infrastructure but as a flexible phenomenon that featured different modalities in different time periods and in different nation states. We separate the period of deconstruction, which spans from summer 2015 to spring 2016, in two different phases (see also Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Speer 2017; Lunaček Brumen/Meh 2016).

The first phase, which we call the ›emergency‹ phase, begins in June 2015 with the formalization of the southern part of the Balkan route, i.e. with the legalization of transit migration through Macedonia with the introduction of the so called 72-

hours paper.[2] After the March of Hope with around 2000 involved refugees moving from Budapest Keleti train station towards the Austrian border on 4th of September 2015, Germany announced that it will not close its borders for the new arrivals from Syria (Kasparek/Speer 2015). From the next day onward, people were transferred from Hungary to Austria with various means of transport from where the vast majority would continue their travel to Germany and further north with special or regular trains. With the March of Hope and the state-facilitated transit from Hungary to Northern Europe the northern part of the route was formalized. After the completion of the Hungarian fence with Serbia on 14th of September 2015 the corridor moved to Croatia, and, after the completion of the Hungarian fence on the Croatian border on 16th of October 2015, the corridor moved to Slovenian borders and reception centers where people were transferred with trains and buses to the northern border with Austria (Speer 2017). The initial attempts from the Slovenian and Croatian authorities to control the amount or speed of the movement, or permanently close the border, turned out to be—just as in the case of the March of Hope—futile. The final trajectory of the formalized corridor was established, forced into existence by the agency and autonomy of migration.

The second phase, which we call the phase of ›gradual closure‹, begins on the 18th of November 2015 when Slovenia decided to close the border for all people that were not citizens of Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan.[3] This was the beginning of national profiling and separating supposed economic migrants from the supposed refugees on the basis of nationality. It enabled the ›nationalization of the refugee policy‹ and the formation of a parallel ›counter-corridor‹ of deportations from North to South. The corridor turned into an instrument of physical containment, of ›mobile detention‹, and a machinery of segregation, hierarchization, and fragmentation of movement under the umbrella of the established asylum regime and humanitarianism (Hameršak/Pleše 2017).

The Slovenian and later also Austrian partial closure of the border produced a (most probably intentional) domino effect to the South. On the 28th of November 2015 Macedonia started building a fence on its southern border to Greece, which led

2 | Macedonia's parliament passed an amendment to the *Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection*, which introduced a travel permit that allowed asylum seekers to apply for asylum at any police station at border crossings or inside the country within the time limit of 72 hours. This paper basically legalized transit migration through Macedonia after the Serbian example where such temporary legalization of transit existed since 2008 (see UNHCR Macedonia 2015).

3 | On the 20th of February 2016, Austria decided to also exclude Afghan citizens from the corridor.

to a dramatic enlargement of the Idomeni makeshift camp. The numbers of stranded people in the camp grew everyday due to new arrivals from southern Greece and so did the tension among those that were eventually allowed to pass to Macedonia and further north based on their nationality and those who were forced to stay behind the fence (Anastasiadou et al. 2017). On 8th of March 2016, Slovenia and consequently Macedonia officially closed the border fully and permanently. The establishment of a border to border corridor with closed camps as well as the fragmentation and weakening of the movement through the production of different statuses was efficient. It was instrumental for inhibiting the autonomy of migration that finally enabled the reversal of movement and the gradual restoration of the border regime.

Different levels of inclusion of the affected states within the hierarchic EUropean integration project and the migration control regime certainly significantly defined the manner in which the corridor was formalized and subsequently closed. They were instrumental in bringing migrant movement through the Balkans under control, in taming its unruliness, and in imposing differentiations and segmentations that are characteristic for the European border regime. The post-Yugoslav region, that was once a unified and rather homogeneous political space, is nowadays a vast palette of little states with different accesses to the EU space of free circulation. The EU member Croatia as well as the EU and Schengen member Slovenia attempted to impose full state control over the corridor. The prime concern of the Slovenian government during the existence of the corridor was to achieve the closure of borders as soon as possible, while Croatian government focused on the fast and efficient transport of migrants and refugees initially to the Hungarian and later to the Slovenian border. At that time, Croatia even produced a domino effect in the northern direction by not obstructing columns of refugees to enter Slovenia through the green border. On the other hand, in the EU candidate country Serbia such state control was never achieved. Even a certain laxity could be perceived in the attitude of Serbian authorities towards the existence of migrant itineraries outside the official route with camps.

Since March 2016, the European border regime in South-East Europe started to fully reconstruct (Hess/Kasparek 2017) and some of its characteristics are even stricter than before the establishment of the corridor. Along the Balkan route, we witness an increase in, and normalization of, the fortification of borders with fences (Slovenian-Croatian, Hungarian-Croatian, Hungarian-Serbian, Macedonian-Greek, and Bulgarian-Turkish border), intensified and often violent policing of border regions as well as frequent use of illegal push-backs (Slovenia, Croatia, and Hungary). These material enclosures dramatically affect the geography of migratory routes and increase the human and financial costs of border crossing (Amnesty International 2019; see also the contribution by Robert Rydzewski in this issue). They are en-

forced and fortified by legal and political enclosures in terms of new laws on foreigners which drastically restrict the right to claim asylum as well as further criminalize any kind of solidarity with ›illegal‹ migrants.

Despite the evident and drastic fall of migration to Greece and along the Balkan route after spring 2016, the topic of ›borders‹ and ›migration policy‹ of the EU and its individual member states remain one of the central and most controversial topics of disputes in which the European and wider public are faced with two opposing interpretations of the post-crisis era. One narrative, mostly propagated by the European Commission (European Commission 2017), emphasizes the »fully integrated EU migration policy« and the supposedly effective reconstruction of the European border regime, epitomized by falling numbers of asylum seekers, reactivation of the Dublin system, and the tentative functioning of the refugee relocation mechanism among member states. The other narrative, mostly propagated by growing right wing populist movements and some right wing populist regimes, utilizes the phenomena of the refugee crisis and the aftermath of the formalized corridor as an example of the supposedly still widely open European borders and the supposedly ongoing welcoming migration policy of the so called core European countries, most notably Germany.

We claim that the new border regime in South-East Europe maintains most of the main characteristic of its pre-crisis period such as: a) externalization of European migration control to non-›European‹ states such as Turkey b) containment of the migration ›crisis‹ on the south of the EU (due to sheer ›geographical exposure‹, due to increased difficulty to travel further north and the subsequent formation of bottleneck countries, due to the continued efforts to reinstate the Dublin III system of deportations to first countries of entry etc.) and c) the ongoing use of the peculiar mixture of securitarian and humanitarian practices of affected states. Simultaneously, there are some new characteristics that will be the focus of our next chapters: alongside the rise of new legal and political frameworks, a securitarian infrastructure, and consequent shifting routes of migratory movements in all affected states, we witness a new form of ›intra-European‹ externalization of EU migration control to the non-EU and/or non-Schengen countries along the Balkan route, most notably Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (Ahmetašević/Mlinarević 2019), but also Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro. In order to become full members of the Schengen and/or the EU space, some states increasingly function as the main protectors of the external EU border (Croatia, Bulgaria) or as certain bottle necks (Serbia, BiH), where several thousand stranded refugees find little hope to receive shelter and protection or to autonomously move towards the north. In addition, this externalization transformed the previously established notions of ›transit‹ and ›receiving‹ countries in the Balkans. While they remain mostly transit states, they still host more refugees and asylum

seekers than before 2015. The former ›transit refugees‹ are now ›caught-in-mobility‹ (Hess 2011), transformed into ›illegals‹, ›refugees‹, ›asylum seekers‹, or ›economic migrants in the process of deportation‹ and are scattered across the Balkans in different types of institutions or spaces and shifting between legal statuses (see also Robert Rydzewski's contribution to this issue of Movements).

Migrant Route, Assemblage of Mobility and Postcolonial Critique

In our attempt to read the recent history of the Balkan route since 2015 from the perspective of mobility struggles and local anti-hegemonic discourses that together form assemblages of mobility, we refer to developments of critical migration and border studies whose aim is to de-naturalize and de-objectify migration so that migrant practices and subjectivities are considered as constitutive for border and migration regimes. What was retrospectively labeled as a Copernican turn in migration and border studies (Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias/Pikles 2015) evolved in theories on the autonomy of migration (ibid.) and in research projects such as Transit Migration 1 (2002-2004) and 2 (2016) that introduced an »ethnographic regime approach« as an »ethnographic border regime analysis«, or as an »critical regime analysis« (Hess 2012, 2016; Hess/Kasparek 2017). Such approaches, that have developed by applying »insight of de-constructivist social science theories« (Hess 2012), introduce what we —while referring to the philosophical and political theoretical background of de-constructivism— call immanence of power in migration and border studies. This has various far-reaching consequences. The one that we are especially interested in introduces a heterogeneity of actors or agencies to the research. When border and migration policies are not understood as being an implementation of a sovereign power or a state-centered and centralized rationality of power, we get a strategic field that is animated and shaped by state and non-state actors on a national and transnational level, where the rationality of power is defined upon relations of forces, through constant negotiations (ibid.). In the absence of a monopoly on force and rationality, the basic constituent of modern sovereignty, a new sovereignty, sometimes also referred to as »transnational sovereignty« (Papadopoulus/Stephenson/Tsianos 2008), emerges through ad hoc practices of governance dealing with emergency situations. For this reason, the site where control over mobility is applied ceases to predominantly be the physical border of nation states. It rather becomes a more fluid landscape where people carve new itineraries of mobility. Notions of *ubiquity of borders*, *regime* and *externalization* of border control are used to depict such new sites of power articula-

tions (see, for example, Balibar 2004; Hess 2012, 2016; Hess/Kasparek, 2017; Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias/Pikles 2015; Papadopoulus/Stephenson/Tsianos 2008). But the matter of heterogeneous actors and agencies does not solely refer to a variety in a quantitative sense but rather points to the existence of a qualitative difference between them. Not only is a strategic field of immanent power hierarchical with various actors having more or less power, they are also unequal in the sense of incommensurability. What is therefore highlighted is not only the importance of migrant agency in the articulation of border and migration regimes, but also alterity of migrant subjectivity. Therefore, while referring to Foucault's notion of ascending analysis (Foucault 2003)—meaning a bottom up analysis of power articulations that takes into account peripheral and marginal sites where power generates as well as related general schemes of domination while simultaneously revealing the possibility of other power—we claim that bottom-up analyses of making and remaking a migration regime could reveal not only the way hegemony articulates itself but also the ways possible counter-hegemony could be articulated by means of other narratives of migrant routes enunciated in assemblages of mobility.

Against the background of such theorizations of border and migration regimes, we attempt to introduce postcolonial or rather decolonial critique (Bachir Diagne/Amselle 2018) to our analysis of the ways the European border regime is being restored along the Balkan route on the territory of former Yugoslavia. While such critique is mainly foreclosed in the studies of this area (Bjelić 2018), we claim that research on migrant routes crossing post-Yugoslav states demands its introduction. There are various reasons for this. The efforts of state authorities to regain control over human mobility after 2015 relied heavily on racializing practices and the mobilization of racist sentiments in the public sphere. Such »authentic« expressions of racism certainly appoint to »endogenous« expressions and sources of racism and, therefore, to a historical presence and perpetuation of colonial power relations in the Balkan region. Furthermore, the turbulent political history and nowadays chronic instability of the area, that has been tailored upon the model of the modern European nation state since the demise of socialist and federal Yugoslavia, could be considered as a proof that the absolute sovereignty of the nation state, which evolved in close relation to colonial and imperialist expansion, is not universalizable (Balibar 2004). A critique of this imposition of the European nation form is present in local counter-hegemonic articulations of political constitutionalization based upon diversity and heterogeneity. In its intersection with the »constituent power of the escaping people that evacuate the fixed spaces of sovereignty« (Papadopoulus/Stephenson/Tsianos 2008) such critique and articulations form a sort of *joint agency* that generates *postcolonial critique*.

In order to portray the epistemological potential of such interrelatedness between joint agency and post-colonial critique, we refer to De Castro's criticism of the obsession with grand divisors as *fons et origo* of colonialism (De Castro 2009: 9) and his affirmation of *relational ontology*, which is a practice of comparison and translation as mutual implication and transformation (ibid.: 54). One could claim that counter-hegemonic discourses that reject homogeneity common to normative conceptions of being and constitutionalized state power regard diversity, heterogeneity and migrant practices as precisely those who escape fixed spaces of sovereignty. The subjectivity of mobility is therefore a *becoming* that dissolves identity and inevitably composes hybrid assemblages of mobility with other subjectivities escaping such spaces. Human mobility as a form of escape is, therefore, a decolonizing act, generating assemblages as hybrid spaces of enunciation (Mignolo 2012) that articulate a post-colonial critique. We use these rather abstract notions of authors such as De Castro and Mignolo to expand the scope of postcolonial critique beyond the analysis of mere unequal relations between dominant and subjugated powers. One can surely identify a colonial relation in the subordinate position of local (Balkan) powers in charge of restoring the EUropean border regime on behalf of EU core states and powers. And our analysis of the postcolonial condition partly resides on that. But we also strive to transcend this understanding of the ›non-European‹ and ›non-modern‹ Other as the inverse projection of the ›European‹ and ›modern‹ Self. Instead we seek to identify an affirmative aspect of the ›European‹ Other, or rather an Alterity that enables alternative conceptualizations of *being in common*, which historically developed to counter the violent imposition of homogenizing forms characteristic of colonial modernity.

Militant research that draws upon the rich history of collaborative knowledge production developed within social movements offers a particularly appropriate methodology that allows articulating such hybrid spaces of enunciation. By refusing a detached and universal position of enunciation—a position which so often obscures relations of (colonial) power and domination—militant research instead opens up situated ways of narrating the migrant route. By this, it avoids sovereignist and securitarian discourse, on the one hand, and universalist discourse of (human) rights, on the other. We do not claim that mobility struggles should not be struggles for rights, and we certainly recognize the emancipatory potential of rights claiming as well as the necessity of struggles on the legal terrain. As Spinoza has taught us, rights can be regarded as an expression of the power of the multitude and should not be understood exclusively as the expression of a transcendent power. Here we are referring to the *discourse* of rights that tends to be the discourse of power's origin and legitimacy, eclipsing the relationality and internal antagonisms that permeate political categories and therefore prevents to grasp the political subjectivity of migration.

THE HISTORY OF THE BALKAN ROUTE SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ASSEMBLAGES OF MOBILITY

Now it is time to analyze the history of the unprecedented opening of Europe and the subsequent restoration of the European border and migration regime in the Balkans from the perspective of *assemblages of mobility*. A history that could be understood as a history of non-sovereign localities along the Balkan route forming *ecologies of mobile existence* (Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias/Pickles 2015) together with escaping subjectivity of migrants.

Such a locality, to begin with the south of the route, is the area around the city of Preševo with the village Miratovac on the Serbian-Macedonian border. Researching on solidarity structures on the Balkan route we have encountered quite ›unusual suspects‹ in this borderland. Different actors, from the local Imam to Albanian youth organizers, got involved in various solidarity actions with migrants and refugees: they built a new cross-border road through the fields, they monitored economic exchanges between the local population and people on the move by defining fair prices of various goods and services and intervened in case the local providers exploited those on the receiving end. Such practices of economic and social inclusion of migrants in transit reveal a specific understanding of economy and authority: solidarity and fairness should be inherent to socio-economic relations, so the state is not needed as an intervening force to address the negative effects of economy that is supposedly driven by possessive individualism. Furthermore, such practices exclude the existence of an absolute and unique authority since they rely on constant negotiation among various sources of authority that gain legitimacy while being exercised. In short, this is *autonomy*. While this case of socio-economic inclusion of migrants in transit at the Serbian-Macedonian border refers to Albanian autonomy,[4] such a paradigm of autonomy has a historical situatedness in the Balkan area. It continuously subverted and subverts violent attempts to rearrange the Balkan heterogeneity and turn it into sovereign nation states; attempts that, since the introduction of the national paradigm in the region in the 19th century, repeatedly led to wars including ethnic cleansing and genocide. Such *autonomy* on the southern Serbian border, easily related to the migrant *non-sovereign subjectivity*, and formed an *assemblage of mobility* that metaphorically turned the border into a bridge or literally turned the

4 | Ibrahim Rugova and his associates articulated this as a political project during the Serbian apartheid regime in Kosovo. It was defeated as such in the 1990s due to policies of ethnic cleansing by the Milošević regime and the Western military intervention that supported political forces that demanded the establishment of an independent nation state.

field into a road. Furthermore, such an assemblage of mobility certainly prevented the formalization of the route into a form of state-controlled humanitarian corridor which was the precondition to close the route and borders.[5] We certainly do not deny a certain ambiguity in such non-sovereign social practices that at some other localities could lead to the savage exploitation of migrants and refugees. We rather claim that they have to be considered in order to understand the dynamic of the route and to articulate its counter-hegemonic narration.

During our discussions with local Albanian activists in Preševo and Miratovac about their motives to get involved in solidarity activities with people on the move, they frequently mentioned their previous experience of being refugees themselves. Beyond the particular locality of the Macedonian-Serbian border, personal refugee experiences certainly promoted formations of assemblages of mobility between migrant subjectivities and those of local residents with a shared history of refugeeism. Modern day ›local‹ refugees along the post-Yugoslav section of the Balkan route are the product of several wars that accompanied the dissolution of Federal Socialist Yugoslavia and the following establishment of several new nation statelets in the 1990's. While those processes were relatively peaceful in areas that were ethnically homogeneous, they were marked by extreme violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in ethnically heterogeneous areas. One of the regions most affected by nationalist violence was East Slavonia, the border region between Croatia and Serbia, through which the migrant route turned after Hungary sealed its border with Serbia. According to accounts from that area (Lunaček Brumen/Meh 2016) and our personal experience, at the very beginning of mass transit through Slavonia in fall 2015—when the Croatian state was still almost absent from humanitarian or policing activities—local people and international volunteers formed ad hoc solidarity initiatives to provide various kinds of help to the people crossing the border. Although Croatian authorities eventually managed to take control over the route and squeeze out all independent and autonomous actors, they never fortified and militarized the border with Serbia. Having in mind that various solidarity initiatives in Croatia like *Welcome! Initiative* and *Are you Syrious?* adopted the strategy of mainstreaming solidarity, also by keeping up a positive discourse on people on the move by constantly reminding the Croatian public of its own history of refugeeism, it is possible to claim that the initial peculiarly neutral attitude of the Croatian authorities was motivated by the legacy of recent nationalist wars against areas with heterogeneous ethnic composition in Croatia. Those

5 | When the Serbian state tried to enforce state monopoly over migrant transport from Preševo to Belgrade, local activists organized a protest scandalizing family connections between the owner of the designated transport company and a high official in the Serbian government.

areas that are part of the historic Balkan route are still coping with the traumatic experience of war and refugeesim on both sides of the ethno-national divide. In such a situation, the mutual translation of various refugee experiences and shared *distance to*, or even *refusal of*, fixed spaces of subjects of (ethno-national) sovereignty certainly promoted the *ecology of mobile existence* that could foster Croatian authorities to facilitate the freedom of movement of refugees and migrants by focusing on their fast transport towards Slovenia.

Slovenian authorities initially tried to prevent the massive entering of refugees coming from Croatia by deploying riot police at their main point of entrance, the Obrežje border crossing (Lunaček Brumen/Meh 2016). But similarly to Croatia, also in Slovenia the initial transit period was marked by an incredible mobilization of solidarity by members of civil society. By the time the first refugees arrived at the Slovenian border, hundreds of locals already volunteered for months along the entire route from the Greek islands to the Austrian border by collecting humanitarian aid, providing direct and immediate assistance to the people traveling north, and/or joining several antiracist manifestations for open borders in Slovenia, even denouncing or subverting government attempts to establish state control over freedom of movement (Pistotnik/Lipovec Čebron/Kozinc 2016). Moreover, joint efforts of refugees and local anti-racist networks managed to politically open the gate to the Schengen space by blocking the traffic through the border crossing Obrežje and, with it, the entire main highway that connects Central and South-East Europe for several hours. This action happened after Slovenian border police suddenly ceased to allow small groups of refugees to cross the border and more and more people were stranded at the border crossing. As a result, Slovenian authorities were forced to remove the line of riot police and provide busses for refugees to travel further north, and thereby the humanitarian refugee corridor through Slovenia was firmly established (Kurnik 2015). Contemporary antiracist activism in Slovenia has its distinctive local genealogy, including personal and organizational continuity with the struggle of Bosnian refugees, migrant workers (coming mainly from countries of former Yugoslavia, most notably BiH), asylum seekers, and the struggle of the Erased (victims of the Slovenian ›bureaucratic‹ version of ethnic cleansing as part of the nationalist war on multiethnic Yugoslav societies). Therefore, the common action on the border crossing Obrežje (and many others that later followed inside of the state) represents a mutual articulation of struggles for freedom of movement and ›local‹ struggles against the imposition of the ›nation form‹ (Balibar 2004) that has led to wars and ethnic cleansing in heterogeneous localities of former Yugoslavia. Such an assemblage of mobility was active on the Slovenian section of the Balkan route in the time of the humanitarian corridor

and its subsequent closure, and it continues nowadays while the Balkan route is again illegalized and criminalized.

Sovereign Violence on the Route

A lot of attention, certainly rightful and necessary, has recently been given to *sovereign violence* on the route after the closure of the official corridor. And there is an abundance of it. The closure of the corridor in spring 2016 on the (Slovenian-Croatian) Schengen border was established with unprecedented militarization. Since the closure of the corridor, the Slovenian police systematically denies the refugees on its territory to apply for asylum by handing them over to the Croatian police on the basis of a readmission agreement and joint Slovenian-Croatian border police patrols (Info Kolpa 2019).[6] The Croatian police on the other hand regularly violently pushes migrants who are crossing from Bosnia and Serbia or are returned by Slovenia back to Bosnia by literally beating people across the border (see Proglio/Zochi 2017; Welcome n.d.).[7] Although push-backs are secretive, they are now already quite publicly known, not in order to raise concern but to demonstrate that the state exercises its sovereignty.

All this certainly appoints to sovereign violence. But we should neither be deceived and tempted to claim that nation states have reclaimed sovereignty over borders nor that the *regime of mobility control* is in retreat.[8] If we stick to the double definition of the *regime of mobility control*, which includes migrant agency as constitutive to regime of mobility control on the one hand and the variety of state and non state ac-

6 | When an activist group from Ljubljana in collaboration with a legal NGO began to monitor police procedures on the border, the authorities responded by launching a media campaign against the latter accusing it of being involved in trafficking and forcing it to abandon the project of police monitoring.

7 | The attempts to publicly and legally denounce such practices were met with a criminalization of solidarity as the case of little Medina, a little Afghan girl that was killed during a push back from Croatia to Serbia, clearly illustrates. When one activist later helped her family to apply for asylum in Croatia so that justice could be sought by simply monitoring police procedure on the border, he was criminally charged and sentenced as trafficker.

8 | According to statistics more than 24.000 refugees and migrants registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout the year 2018 and ›only‹ 4000 were still stranded in the country at the beginning of 2019. Certainly not all of them managed to continue their journey to EU and some headed to Serbia. Nonetheless the route was still considered as successful.

tors working in national and transnational contexts on the other, then the hypothesis of a mere national sovereign control over the state border seems to be standing on weak grounds. For example, migrant agency considerably affects the ways in which the route is managed by state and non-state authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The protests of refugees and migrants for their right to freedom of movement, which resulted in the police closure of the Maljevac border crossing between Bosnia and Croatia for days during the winter of 2018, resulted in the EU abandoning its determination to prevent the establishment of reception facilities at the northern Bosnian border.[9] by refusing to finance them (Ahmetašević/Mlinarević 2019). Although the newly established reception camps in Velika Kladuša and Bihać run by the IOM and finally financed by the EU function as a partial separation of migrants and refugees from local societies that support them, there are certainly continuous struggles in those camps to reappropriate them, by turning them into places of rest and recuperation before taking hazardous journeys to the north. Migrant agency is also perceptible on the other side of the Schengen divide. For example, Slovene authorities often complain about refugees and migrants ›abusing‹ the right to asylum by entering into official asylum procedures and then continuing their journey further north after a short period of recuperation (although risking to be deported back to Slovenia due to the Dublin agreement).

Furthermore, the hypothesis of a return of the sovereign nation state at the border should be rejected if we take into consideration the various actors and agencies participating in the attempts to restore the European border and migration regime. Even though it comes to push backs, it is a narrow perspective to read into state practices an exercise of exclusive state monopoly over force and norm. Consider, for example, the reaction of the EU core states and institutions to the already well-documented practices of police violence at borders in the Balkans. After such reports became public and even reported in international media, the EU even increased funds given to Croatia to control EU borders with Angela Merkel publicly praising Croatian efforts.[10] Thus, the spectacle of sovereign violence of Balkan nation states did not trigger the same reactions as the one on the Hungarian border with Croatia and Serbia. And there is certainly a difference in the *border dispositif* when it comes to Hungary or Croatia and Slovenia. While the Hungarian wall with its notorious transit zones actually tends to hermetically seal the border, the securitized Slovenian and Croatian borders tend to sieve and differentiate (by assigning different legal statuses and access to rights)

9 | Prior to this protest the EU refused to finance the establishment of such facilities close to EU border.

10 | See for example the report of Hina (2018).

the so called ›mixed flow‹. Sovereign violence is therefore functional and subordinate to the *regime* whose aim is rather »to control migration flows and to regulate the porosity of borders« (Papadopoulos/Stephenson/Tsianos 2008: 175). And that is exactly the reason why various initiatives to monitor state violence at borders are so valuable. Not only because they point to the violent and repressive nature of the state but also because they show that the European way of restoring and strengthening control over mobility implies the use of arbitrary (sovereign) violence and could not be achieved if based on respect of human rights and the rule of law. Various monitoring projects and reports thus call the bluff that there is a humane and human rights based liberal alternative to the bluntly brutal sovereignist approach of Orban's Hungary and Salvini's Italy. Such a fake alternative has lately seriously shrunken the public and political space for a radical critique of the European migration and border regime. The necessity for reconquering such space certainly drives our quest for propagating a political counter-hegemonic articulation of heterogeneous assemblages of mobility, rather than universalist human rights discourses.

The Uncertain Articulation of the Border Regime in Bosnia

Claiming the restoration of the EUropean border and migration regime in the case of the EUropean Croatian border and the Schengen Slovenian border plays a kind of already familiar tune. State repression with police violence against refugees and migrants, combined with the increasingly restrictive asylum and foreigner legislation that is often at odds with various international conventions and laws, has a rather functional meaning for the post-national *regime of mobility control*. Its aim is not to reestablish the sovereign states' control over national borders and their exclusive exercise of monopoly over force and norm, but it is rather the management of the hierarchical porosity of EUropean borders.

The EUropean border and migration regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina articulates itself much more ambivalently. Not in the sense that the sovereign paradigm would resist the externalization of the EUropean migration management to BiH, since BiH is a protectorate of the international community in which the EU has determining role, but in the sense that the so called refugee and migration crisis accentuates already strong centrifugal and disintegrating forces inside of BiH. The attempts to control and tame migrant itineraries and movements by establishing firm control over mi-

grant routes additionally destabilizes the Bosnian state,[11] which, since its inception, struggles to avoid a new dissolution along ethnic lines and to overcome the constitutional impasses defined in its founding Dayton agreement in 1995 (Mujagić 2010). To turn Bosnia and Herzegovina into a EUropean borderland means to additionally fuel these internal ethno-nationalisms and to additionally marginalize the public authorities of the multiethnic state. A local articulation of the EUropean border and migration regime in BiH thus highlights the ways in which the so called Europeanization in general undermines the very possibility for this multiethnic state and society to exist and thrive in the future. Struggles for freedom of movement and the attempts to enforce control over mobility on that section of the Balkan route are a kind of a litmus test to assess not only the level of the so called Europeanessnes of BiH but also the persistence of local counter-hegemonic discourses and practices. These historic discourses and practices are the legacy of the multiethnic and mixed society that resisted the modern sovereign state in its nation form. Combined with the contemporary migrant subjectivities they compose new assemblages of mobility.

First groups of transit migrants began to travel through Bosnia and Herzegovina in the spring of 2018. At the very beginning, the local communities along the route—namely in Sarajevo, Bihać and Velika Kladuša—openly expressed considerable solidarity. This was soon to be changed. Early in 2018, the Islamska zajednica (Islamic Community) announced the closure of mosques as sites providing assistance to refugees and migrants (see Islamska zajednica 2018). According to our informants, this statement led to a significant demobilization of religious people that previously provided support to people on the move. During an interview, the journalist and editor of FB page Izbjeglice u Velikoj Kladuši (Refugees in Velika Kladuša), Amir Purić, claimed that this suspension must have been issued after an intervention from the Bosniac political establishment. When the high official from the Austrian Interior Ministry, Peter Weber, stated at the end of May 2018 that one should stop talking about the Balkan route and rather use the name Mosque route instead,[12] mosques were already closed for refugees and migrants. Against expectations of European islamophobes, Muslim cosmopolitanism in BiH therefore does not compose assemblages of mobility with migrants and refugees that are predominantly from majority

11 | We acknowledge the conceptual difference between itineraries and routes introduced by Casas Cortes, Cobarrubias and Pickles (2015: 900): »Routes refer to the ways in which migration management seeks to channel movements into migration routes, whereas itineraries refers to the migrants' paths and passages whose spatial configurations always exceed the ability of formal routes management to synthesize and regulate them.«

12 | See, for example, the report of Radio Slobodna Evropa (2018).

Muslim countries. The reason for this is partly the pressure of European islamophobia itself. Based on interviews with officials from the BiH Ministry of Interior, local experts on migrant route, and various religious practitioners, we claim that the caution in dealing with refugees and migrants in BiH is connected to prejudices of the European public towards Bosnia and Herzegovina being a potential breeding ground for Islamic extremism and terrorism. Local Serbian and Croatian nationalist political establishments (that continuously push for a final territorial separation of BiH across ethno-national lines) on the other hand exploit and accentuate islamophobia by portraying migrants and refugees as part of a Bosniac plan to Islamize Bosnia and Herzegovina.[13] They are directing the migrants to areas with Bosniac majority and refusing to establish any reception facilities under their jurisdiction, or at least trying to obstruct their establishment as the case of Salakovac in Herzegovina showed[14]. Furthermore, as the result of war in BiH at the beginning of 1990's, local Islam is not exempted from the widespread processes of ethnonationalization. The Dayton constitution pushes ethnic communities to become ethno-national, and since ethnic divisions in BiH are defined upon religious belongings, Islam has inevitably become nationalized. During our research conducting interviews with religious people we often encountered racist claims of civilizational superiority of Bosnians and, thus, of European Muslims being superior to those coming from the Middle East.

Easily perceived hostility of a growing part of the local population in the border area with Croatia (Una-Sana Canton) is generally assigned to the fact that the local and national authorities are not able or willing to provide reception and accommodation facilities for stranded migrants. But such ›mismanagement‹ of the situation needs to be understood as a clear result of the EU model to externalize the border and migration regime. In practice, the EU completely ignores BiH authorities and directly finances the IOM to run reception camps in Velika Kladuša and Bihać and to provide surveillance, repressive equipment, and training to the local cantonal police (Ahmetašević/Mlinarević 2019). The EU is, thus, effectively establishing and financing a parallel government of the whole border area. Growing monopoly over the management of reception facilities by the IOM is supported by arbitrary actions of local and cantonal authorities that attack transit migrants and criminalize solidarity.

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13 | See, for example, Dodik 2018.

14 | In May 2018 authorities of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton tried to obstruct authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish refugee camp in Salakovac. The police of the canton that has Croat majority temporarily blocked state organized busses with refugees on the way to newly established camp. Republika Srbska authorities on the other hand strictly refuse to establish any reception facilities.

For example, authorities of Una-Sana Canton issued a prohibition to provide services to migrants on the canton territory (i.e. accommodation and transport). Their cantonal police prevents the internal movement of migrants from south and inland Bosnia to the Una-Sana Canton border region by evicting migrants at the southern cantonal border from buses and trains through blatant racial profiling (Hadžimušić 2018). Municipal authorities in Velika Kladuša started a smear campaign against local citizens providing support to migrants. This affirmation of a parastate actor such as the IOM certainly corresponds to the otherwise deeply entrenched colonial prejudices of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an ›endemically chaotic borderland‹ (New Keywords Collective 2015) with a population incapable to govern itself. The ungovernability of Bosnia, which has to be regarded as the result of neocolonial power arrangements, therefore significantly defines the ways in which the European border and migration regime articulates itself locally.

But there is another meaning of Bosnia's alleged ungovernability that is expressed in the popular saying »No one ever ruled Bosnia, they just pretended they did« (Sa Bosnom niko nije vladao, samo mu se pričinilo). Despite the mentioned growing hostility toward people on the move, a considerable openness of the Bosnian society towards refugees and migrants, towards alterity, can still be observed. While distance and hostility resonate with the prevalent public discourse of exclusivism and intolerance, a myriad of solidarity acts still exist outside the public space and discourse. There is a continuity between solidarity engagement with refugees and migrants and previous struggles of refusing and subverting projects of hegemony, either on a personal level, on the level of shared experiences, or even on the level of a shared memory of the territory. People supporting refugees and migrants that we talked to were either themselves refugees during nationalist aggressions or were involved in previous mobilizations displaying a refusal of ethno-nationalist divisions (such as large protests in February 2014 and massive solidarity responses in the time of floods in May 2014).

Another popular expression »mirna Bosna« (peaceful, inert Bosnia) implies the understanding that any homogenizing form is violently imposed as well as the awareness that all constellations of power are transient and prone to demise. Such attitude evolved during the turbulent history of conquests and alterations of various imperial powers and turned Bosnia into a ›corpus separatum‹ of European modernity (Mujkić 2019: 10). Bosnia is thus a »body that is not uniform, homogeneous, but is made out of differences in constant process of differentiation. An integralist eye could interpret this as a confusing des-integration, while it is actually a qualitatively new aspect of integration« (ibid.). The Europeanization of Bosnia silences such counter-hegemonic discourses. Imperceptible politics of migrants (Papadopoulos/Stephenson/Tsianos

2008) make it perceptible again and call for a postcolonial critique in a geopolitical region from which it was until now excluded. Localities along the Balkan route, like Bosnia, are denied political and epistemological self-determination—historically at first during nationalist aggression and subsequently by imposed neocolonial constitution. Such diminished capacity of a geopolitical territory to think itself exists all along the post-Yugoslav section of the Balkan route.[15] Hence, it is interesting to see how mobility struggles contribute to a potential for epistemological and political emancipation by composing assemblages of mobility with subaltern local legacies and counter-hegemonic discourses.

CONCLUSION

After the closure of the formalized corridor in March 2016 and the renewed illegalization and criminalization of transit migration through the Balkans, two questions seem to be particularly challenging. First, are we witnessing the restoration of the EUropean *border regime*, or does the post-corridor situation on the Balkan route rather point to a *sovereignist response* to the epochal opening of the borders of EUrope in 2015? Second, what are possible discursive strategies to relaunch a radical critique of EUropean migration and border policies when the EUropean public space seems to be completely exhausted by the putative alternative between post-national EUropean and national sovereignist response to the so called migration crisis?

Considering the short description of the history of the formalized corridor and the analysis of the role of post-Yugoslav states in repressing and criminalizing transit migration, we claim that excessive state violence does not suggest the return of nation state sovereignty in migration and border control. Instead, spectacular state violence related to the militarization of borders and more clandestine forms of state violence, such as push backs, serve rather functional purposes for the regime of mobility control and the management of porous borders. The aforementioned state violence of Croatia and Slovenia invalidates the assumption that there is no contradiction between the restoration of the EUropean border regime and the protection of human rights and the rule of law. When the crown argument of proponents of the EUropean solution to so called migration and border crisis vanishes, new discursive strategies to criticize

15 | By claiming this we certainly do not ignore the rich and authentic critical theory production still existing in post-Yugoslav space.

and oppose violence against people on the move and to affirm the potential of human mobility for social change are needed.

Our rejection of the hypothesis of a return of the sovereign state is certainly based on facts while our concern is simultaneously epistemological. Such hypothesis also needs to be rejected within the field of knowledge production, as theories on the autonomy of migration convincingly show. What we call »immanentization« of power allows us to understand migrant agency as constitutive of the migration and border regime. Having in mind the urgent need to define new discursive strategies to criticize border violence and to affirm the political potential of migration, we have pushed the ideas discussed in regime theories a bit further, understanding migrant agency as constituting assemblages of mobility, or ecologies of mobile existence, with local agencies that escape the sovereign imperative. Such an expansion of the concept of mobile commons (Papadopoulos/Tsianos 2013) provided us with a specific vantage point, a hybrid locus of enunciation (Mignolo 2012), to rewrite the recent history of the Balkan route and its post-corridor presence. Highlighting the ways in which mobility and locality mutually articulate, and, through this, achieving a most needed reconciliation between these seemingly exclusive agencies, sheds a new light on struggles for freedom of movement. By constituting assemblages of mobility, they have the potential to prompt a dormant critique of colonial power that is so deeply entrenched in European modernity.

Where else could we perceive the political potential of migration as a powerful agent of decolonization so clearly? The post-Yugoslav European borderland, that has been a laboratory of Europeanization for the last thirty years, a site of a ›civilizing‹ mission that systematically diminishes forms of being in common based on diversity and alterity, is placed under scrutiny again. Can it be trusted in its role as EUropean border? While local rulers do everything to reassure their EUropean masters, a myriad of struggles for freedom of movement and acts of solidarity by local people contribute to Europe's opening. This is where the dignity of migrants and refugees corresponds with the epistemological dignity of silenced, local altermodern legacies.

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Affective Labor within the Local Humanitarian Workscape

ROMANA POZNIAK

Abstract: The article presents an anthropological inquiry of the humanitarian *workscape* by focusing on the ethnography of work, and the interviews conducted with humanitarians employed during the mass refugee transit through the Balkan corridor. First, the paper will address manifestations of the humanitarian enterprise in a refugee camp in Croatia and then explore work experiences of the local humanitarians. Special attention will be given to dynamics between emotional and rational dimensions of aid work by using the concept of affective labor.

Keywords: Aid work, humanitarian workscape, affect, humanitarianism, affective labor

By the end of the twentieth century, humanitarianism became recognized as a distinct sector in the labor market (Barnett 2011; Weiss 2013) and was transformed into a powerful international *workscape* with more than 200 000 workers worldwide (see Walker et al. 2010: 2223). Despite high burnout rates and the fact that most organizations have to frequently recruit new staff, there is a growing number of full-time staff members who perceive humanitarianism as a career (see Barnett 2005: 130). According to Neuman and Weissman, the early ethos of adventurous humanitarians has been replaced by the ethos of »docile« and »responsible« employees (2016: 12–13) who are now subjected to the expanding security discourse within the aid industry (Duffield 2012). Next to the phenomenon of securitization of aid work, Duffield argues that there has been a growing discourse on self-care,[1] and the expansion of resilience training within the humanitarian sector, both of which might detriment their initial intentions of advancing the functioning of the aid industry by, among other things, acting to alienate aid workers from the context they work in and from the people they attempt to help (ibid.: 487). Consequently, humanitarianism has been widely criticized for cultivating remoteness among aid workers (see ibid.),

1 | Even though the notion of self-care presented in this text might invoke negative connotations, it is not meant to exclude its importance in feminist literature or the general emphasis on a person's well-being.

and for developing into an enterprise (see Donini 2008; Dunn 2012) and a form of government (see Fassin 2012). Importantly, it is estimated that around 90% of all aid workers are locally recruited (Egeland et al. 2011 in Duffield 2012: 476). However, the existing research on development and aid work is mostly focused on what Escobar termed the »transnationalized middle-class experts« who frequently occupy managerial positions (Escobar 2016 in Pascucci 2019: 744) and pay less attention to locally employed »subordinate aid professionals« (Heathershaw 2016 in ibid.).

Given the fact that I worked with several humanitarian organizations in Croatia on projects that were providing assistance to migrants and refugees, I decided to explore this specific *workscape* and focus on the aspirations and experiences of the local workers who were employed to distribute aid in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre of the Republic of Croatia during the mass refugee transit in 2015 and 2016. Thomas Andrews defined workscape as »a place shaped by the interplay of human labor and natural processes. [...] [It's] not just an essentially static scene or setting neatly contained within borders, but a constellation of unruly and ever-unfolding relationships – not simply land, but also air and water, bodies and organisms, as well as the language people use to understand the world, and the lens of culture through which they make sense of and act on their surroundings« (2008: 125). In the context of humanitarianism, I will use the concept of *workscape* to address the working arena produced in accordance with recent transformations of humanitarianism (see Barnett 2005) that enact individual, social, political, cultural, and labor practices negotiated within the humanitarian space. As the (neo)liberal transformations of humanitarianism and aid work are complex phenomena, this paper aims at tackling practices specific to this local aid workscape and focuses on individual impressions of emotional engagement in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Importantly, ethnography from the Winter Reception-Transit Centre of the Republic of Croatia encapsulates the tensions between rational and emotional apprehensions of aid work and enables an extended view on the dialectical nature of humanitarianism. I am specifically interested in the interplay between the impulse to give and the rational accountability of giving (see Bornstein 2009: 643) that I first encountered during my work in the camp and later in my research. In order to understand this affective ambivalence, the paper explores the nature and the kind of labor performed in humanitarian interventions. Particularly, it focuses on the labor invested by workers who are not part of the professional international humanitarian staff that jumps from one crisis to another, but are locally recruited workers with little or no experience in this field. Drawing on the work of Liisa Malkki (2015) and Anne Meike Fechter (2016), this paper aims at investigating affective labor performed by local humanitarians and their ways of adopting, rejecting, or adjusting the habitus of the self-manageable, compassionate professional fab-

ricated within the discourse of contemporary aid industry. Furthermore, the analysis provides an insight into the relationship between local and international forms of humanitarianism by looking at the manifestation of the transformed humanitarian sector in the micro context of the postindustrial Croatian town where authorities decided to open a humanitarian-transit camp for refugees.[2] The paper will first depict controversies of aid in the Croatian refugee camp with an emphasis on the manifestation of »humanitarian business« (Weiss 2013) in a local context and then discuss the affective labor of humanitarians formed between the emotional and rational positioning within the aid workscape, according to narratives of the local workforce.

Humanitarian Workscape of the Winter Transit-Reception Center in Slavonski Brod

In the fall of 2015, Croatia witnessed mass refugee transit that eventually took the form of the Balkan corridor whose formal recognition and exceptionality remain a contested area of discussion up until today (see Santer and Wriedt 2017). From the border between Greece and Macedonia to the border between Slovenia and Austria the movement of people was coordinated, though arbitrarily, between the countries through which the corridor passed while migrants were being given humanitarian assistance in different transit points throughout the route. In November 2015, the Croatian authorities opened the Winter Transit-Reception Centre in Slavonski Brod, a town at the border with Bosnia and Hercegovina that has been facing sound waves of deindustrialization since the war in the 1990s and increased labor emigration since Croatia's accession into the EU. The refugee camp was placed in the industrial zone of Slavonski Brod, in a neighborhood called Bjeliš, at an old railway station adjusted to temporarily function as a transit station for people on the move through the corridor. Škokić and Jambrešić Kirin importantly argue that this center signified the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial town in which »Slavonski Brod came to realize that someone else's misfortune is a (business) opportunity for foreign corporations and humanitarian agencies« (2018: 91). As I have argued elsewhere (Pozniak 2019: 77–78), having in mind the high unemployment rates and the ongoing aggravation of

2 | For a more detailed analysis of the transformation of humanitarian work by using the example of the Croatian refugee camp in 2015 and 2016 with an emphasis on its economic and political aspects, see Pozniak 2019.

the Slavonski Brod economy,[3] this camp appeared as an ephemeral economic stimulation given that the substantial number of mobile, national, and transnational humanitarians were using a broad range of local services (i.e. renting rooms and apartments and using taxi services, local shops, bars, and restaurants, etc.). Moreover, during the course of its work,[4] aside from engaging international professionals, this camp enabled short-term employment for many local and national residents. According to the minutes from the camp's daily coordination meetings between aid organizations, it had up to 300 people working every day with a decrease in March and April due to the closure of the corridor and the official ending of the organized transit. Many local workers were employed through state-subventions (i.e. »public work«)[5] at minimum wages which enhanced an already large disproportion between the position of international professionals sent on a mission to the »western Balkans« and the local workforce employed on short-term and precarious contracts, a position that, according to Catherine Baker's criticism of the disrupting impact of foreign aid in post-war and post-Yugoslav states, could be understood as elite precariat (see 2014).

At the time, I was employed by a local NGO, sub-contracted by an international humanitarian organization, to work on their child protection program. According to my working experience and a four-month engagement in Slavonski Brod camp, work in the humanitarian sector required a peculiar performance of loyalty and discretion—even though I had not signed a confidentiality agreement with the international agency leading the program, I was expected to follow confidentiality regulations to prevent me from exposing the organization to external criticism and unpredictable public attention or from compromising its reputation. Taking this into account, as well as the fact that the ethnographic data and impressions presented in the text were collected during my employment and that they formulate a specific (auto)ethnography of humanitarian work, I decided not to expose the name(s) of the organizations I worked for. To complement the research, I conducted interviews with employees

3 | The unemployment rate for Slavonski Brod was 25.5% in 2015 and 22% in 2016. In the same years, the unemployment rates in Croatia were 16.9% and 14.2% (see Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje 2017: 9).

4 | The camp opened on 3 November 2015 and closed on 15 April 2016.

5 | Public work is an employment measure in Croatia whose program is based on socially useful work initiated by the local community or civil society organizations. The goal of the measurement is to include unemployed persons into the labor market and »activate them« through socially beneficial programs. It can last up to six months for full-time employment with a guaranteed minimum wage provided by the government of the Republic of Croatia (for more information see mjere.hr [27.01.2020]).

who worked in the camp, whose identities, as well as the organizations they worked for, will also remain unexposed.[6] The interviews were conducted after the closure of the Balkan corridor, and therefore they offer an extended perspective on aid work, not only during the mass refugee transit in Croatia but, more importantly, about the practices and implications of aid in its aftermath. In the context of humanitarianism and migration studies linked to the Balkan route, the Winter Transit-Reception Centre was important for introducing a professional standard of aid that continued to dominate the formulation of humanitarian practices in the post-Balkan corridor context and expanded to the models of humanitarian assistance in the neighboring countries after the redirection of the migration route—a mechanism in accordance with Marta Stojić Mitrović and Ana Vilenica's thesis about the circulation of people, practices, money, and organizations within the external borderscapes of the EU (see Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019).

The camp in Slavonski Brod was managed by the Croatian Ministry of Interior (MOI), which appointed the Croatian Red Cross (CRC) as the coordinator of humanitarian assistance. During my work there, it consisted of five sectors that were composed of large tents and shipping containers to accommodate thousands of people for a short stay, a central transit space divided between a »registration area« with several smaller tents placed right next to the railway (a point of arrival and departure for refugees transiting through Croatia by train) and a »distribution area«, a large tent where humanitarian organizations distributed immediate aid. Right next to the distribution area was a separate tent for women and young children and an additional tent for activities of the Croatian Red Cross. Apart from tent-units for police officers and the main administration building for government officials, containers were set for the NGO humanitarian staff that marked an area also known as the »NGO village« or »office area« mostly used for desk-work and staff meetings but also as a place of interaction and social relationships among humanitarians. Except for the CRC, a dozen organizations decided to join relief programs in Slavonski Brod and, more importantly, their involvement was approved by the Croatian MOI.[7] With time, every

6 | Research participants are presented under pseudonyms.

7 | Among the intergovernmental organizations and UN agencies were the UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The international non-governmental organizations present in the camp were: Save the Children, MAGNA, and Samaritan's Purse. The national non-governmental organizations were the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), CARITAS, Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA), the Alliance of Baptist Curches in the Republic of Croatia, the Centre for Peace Studies (CMS), Welcome! Initiative, the Humanitarian Association Remar Croatia (REMAR), the Croatian Law Center (HPC), and the

organization took over a specific program adjusted to fit its mandate and offered aid they considered appropriate and that would distinguish them from other humanitarian actors. The distribution area was a place where the division of labor between different actors was clearly enacted, hence, enabling the differentiation of donors, types of aid, and responsibilities of each NGO. Such a configuration created a parceled aid system with a more or less specialized niche for each association and for particular groups of refugees moving through the corridor. Even though the cluster approach sometimes seemed to be the only viable solution to meet the needs of people on the move, the fast transit through the Balkan corridor, with less than one hour of time for scanning and refreshing in the camp, certainly fits to Elizabeth Dunn's notion of »aid adhocracy« (2012). She argues that despite the efforts of humanitarianism to standardize and bureaucratize aid, it is a process based on guesswork and »satisficing« as well as on rational planning, which eventually transforms the imperative of bureaucracy into chaos and adhocracy (ibid.: 2). The dehumanizing effects of the contested humanitarian governmentality (see Agier 2010; Fassin 2012) were mostly demonstrated in efforts to properly classify the severity and the type of a refugee's misfortune. One of the key codes for mastering work within the aid distribution echelon was to economically and rationally assess how badly someone needed assistance and what kind of aid should be offered accordingly:

> »[Center for Peace Studies representatives posing a question] Does any organization have male and female trousers S/M/L and socks? [CRC answering] CRC has socks; we will bring it to the distribution tent. We point out that we shouldn't offer everything to everyone, but see who is in *real* [added emphasis] need of something.«[8]

Furthermore, the aid labor division, in combination with the attempt to distribute »exclusive« humanitarian assistance, served organizations to justify their further presence in the camp and assure donors that their money was fairly used. The fact that humanitarians were obliged to report to donors about the type and quantity of delivered aid caused competitive relationships between organizations subjected to the growing humanitarian business and the overall transformation of humanitarianism

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Croatian Association of Court Interpreters (HSUST). In addition, a German non-governmental organization Intereuropean Human Aid Association (IHA) was also present in the camp (see also Pozniak 2019: 76–77).

8 | This is a portion of the text from the »question and answer« section of the daily coordination meeting between humanitarian organizations held at the Winter Transit-Reception Centre in Slavonski Brod, 8 January 2016.

(see Pozniak 2019: 81; Weiss 2013; Barnett 2005). It is important to stress that several associations were not subjected to the economization and standardization of aid practices, at least not to this extent. Some actors (i.e. the Center for Peace Studies and the Welcome! Initiative) did not identify their mission with the discourse of aid industry but rather with the Croatian civil society scene (see Stubbs 2001) and the solidarity movements with refugees and/or with a »wider context of structural critique of neoliberal, post-colonial, or capitalist structures« (Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017: 19). Importantly, several NGOs (i.e. CMS, HSUST, REMAR, IHA) largely engaged as volunteers rather than employees. However, the importance to differentiate between civil society, activists, and volunteer actors, on the one hand, and the professional (inter)national humanitarian agencies, on the other, does not mean that such actors are entirely excluded from becoming involved in what Paul Stubbs defined as the »struggles over the possession of different ›capitals‹« (2001). According to one of the participants of the established activist platform Welcome! Initiative they never identified themselves as a humanitarian organization in order to avoid a further victimization of refugees. Nonetheless, distributing aid in the camp enabled an insight into the situation and formed the basis to work on other activities (advocacy, public demonstrations, monitoring the human rights violations, etc.),[9] which was seen as one of the factors that intensified competitive and rival relationships between different actors in the camp:

> »I remember, when I would go to the field, my goal was to give water, but my goal was also to find out what was going on. Someone who only wanted to give water at that moment and saw me not doing that held it against me, but that was the process one has to go through.«

Controversies over everyday aid in Slavonski Brod were best summarized in a complaint made by a handful of humanitarians about local »public work« employees and Red Cross volunteers taking pieces of donation clothes, such as shoes or jackets, that were meant for refugees, which led to the decision that staff members were not, under any circumstances, allowed to use donations, not even the »leftovers« that had not been picked up by refugees. This restriction was introduced in spite of the fact that some auxiliary workers—hired to clean the camp after a train, that had carried approximately one thousand persons passing through the distribution area within two or three hours, departed—could not afford proper pieces of clothing for an outdoor job

9 | One example for this can be highlighted by the case of members of the Welcome! Initiative who worked on collecting information and testimonies on human rights violations and mistreatment of people incarcerated in closed parts of the Winter Reception-Transit Center.

in the middle of the winter. The established humanitarian adhocracy of the Slavonski Brod camp insisted on regulating any potentially compromising situation by avoiding any potential conflict with the donors and adhering to general standards of humanitarian action, even if it meant supporting (and producing) precariousness, social stratification or, more paradoxically, not being able to properly answer to the needs of persons transiting through, or staying in, the camp (cf. Pozniak 2019: 82). Anita, one of my interlocutors, remembers her boss insisting on following every protocol, step by step, even when a certain procedure could not respond sufficiently and timely to a specific situation, or when it was not applicable in this particular camp:

> »This way of work made me feel frustrated because someone who is constantly in the office can't judge if there are any steps… I think we were all skilled enough to skip two or three steps at that moment, when this need is present, and to help that person as soon as possible.«

For myself as an employee, it was demanding to witness how the managerial system of aid overpowered the ethos of »help«, or, more precisely, how the two opposite perspectives worked together in fabricating a system focused on satisfying the donor requirements rather than efficiently providing help for its beneficiaries. This, coupled with the fact that working in this refugee camp implied an emotionally taxing working environment, especially for volunteers and less experienced employees, suggests that aid work did not only require emotional engagement but also imposed specific ways of managing compassion and the impulse to help.[10] In other words, the exposure to mass suffering not only initiates emotional distress but a sole logic of a technocratic system of care also causes disturbing impressions. Importantly, as I will show in the next section, humanitarianism simultaneously tries to manage these impressions. In addition, most research participants had difficulties dealing with affects produced by the emotionally wearing aid workscape that emphasized that humanitarian work should be approached professionally and treated as a job (cf. Pozniak 2019: 83) rather than a selfless act of help. In order to examine the discomforting ambivalence—the binary created between the emphasis on professionalization and rational aid management on the one side, and the emotional engagement of local workers on the other—the interviews especially focused on investigating how workers perceived this kind of job, how they coped with anxiety produced by this ambivalence (if any), and what kind of labor humanitarianism finally entails.

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10 | The phrase »impulse to help« is coined by paraphrasing Liisa Malkki's notion of the need to help (2015) and Erica Bornstein's notion of the impulse of philantropy (2009).

Research Participants— The Self and the Human(itarian) Affect

My interviewees were temporarily employed in several non-profit organizations that were providing humanitarian assistance in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre in Slavonski Brod. Most interlocutors (except one) did not have prior working experiences in refugee camps or humanitarian crises. Some of them found the motivation to work there in their professional occupations, like psychology or social sciences, or because they spoke one of the languages used by migrants so they could work as interpreters, while other local workers were just curious to see how the camp functions. Certainly, some unemployed individuals sought to, at least temporarily, satisfy their basic existential needs. Some workers searching for a career in the desired sector known for its competitiveness decided to engage as volunteers only to later obtain a paid »entry« position in the humanitarian sector.

The interviews presented here were conducted with a project assistant, an interpreter, a child feeding counselor, and a field coordinator, all working on short-term but not minimum wage (like state subventioned »public work«) contracts. On many occasions during conversations with research participants, I was able to compare the feelings and challenges they went through to the ones I faced during my stay in the camp. The only part where our experiences somewhat differed was the employment position—most of the informants worked directly »in the field«, with refugees as »first-line responders«[11], while I engaged in »office work«. This meant that I coordinated project activities; hence, I spent less time with refugees and dealt with project coordination and donor reporting. This experience also steered my research attention towards the transformations of humanitarian work and its growing bureaucratization, which is why it did not come as a surprise when most of the informants pointed out the disproportion between »office-work« and »field-work« and expressed their concerns about administration becoming a priority and preceding the needs of the recipients—the reason we were all there in the first place. Their working experience, together with their methods of negotiating, overcoming and coordinating the overwhelming compassion within an emotionally exhausting working environment and an overly bureaucratized structure of aid work, served as a basis to comprehend the labor performed by local humanitarian workers.

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11 | »First line responders« were people working directly with refugees transiting through the camp: interpreters, distributers of aid packages, staff assisting women and young children in »Mom&Baby Area« etc.

According to Liisa Malkki, humanitarianism is often associated with selflessness and self-sacrifice and less often with notions that appeared in her research such as »self-escape, self-loss, dehumanization, self-humanization, self-transformation, the care of the self, the relation of self to others and the relation of self to the world« (2015: 10). Her informants were members of the Finnish Red Cross who joined international missions of the Red Cross and worked in extreme humanitarian crises all over the world. Even though the reasons to join such missions varied, she interestingly shows how, for some of them, aid work abroad represents »a line of escape from the familiar, and sparks urges to self-transformation« (ibid.: 4). Because the notion of selflessness is usually inscribed in the meaning of humanitarianism, she was interested to see how aid workers abroad perceived themselves and, analytically, what happens with the *self* while engaging in such a selfless profession? Importantly, her informants emphasized that they do not perceive themselves as selfless heroes. They pointed out the fact that they were trained professionals, experts in their fields, who had no motive in perpetuating the heroic image about themselves and their work ethics. On the contrary, doing so was perceived as a non-professional behavior.

My interlocutors were not trained professionals abroad but, rather, non-professionals or semi-professionals recruited locally (or nationally). Nonetheless, similar to Malkki's findings, the processes of self-identification, valuing the self, self-protection, and care of the self, emerged as main attributes that they used to describe their experiences. In more general terms, Nikolas Rose has argued that today »the prevailing image of the worker is of an individual in search of meaning and fulfillment, and work itself is interpreted as a site within which individuals represent, construct and confirm their identity, an intrinsic part of a style of life« (1990: 14). One of my interlocutors, Vinka, hoped for meaningful changes in her life and a job that would fulfill her, which is why she decided to quit a steady job as a school psychologist in Zagreb and apply for a job in the camp. Saman worked on aid programs in Bosnia during, and after, the war in the 1990s and, as a person originating from Iran, he spoke Persian, including Dari. When he first found out about the refugees' arrival in 2015 and the opening of the camp(s) in Croatia, he thought: »Something happened without me. Something is happening in Croatia, and I'm here, close, but not a part of it.« Soon after, he came to work in the camp and later joined several projects focused on migration and refugee assistance in Zagreb. While looking for a job that would enable her to combine professional and personal passions, Anita, a senior-year psychology student soon to defend her MA thesis, came across a job vacancy as assistant coordinator of a child protection program in the camp. She immediately applied, even though she had to go back to Slavonski Brod, a hometown she »ran away from«, and a place she thought she would not be coming back to, at least not

for work. However, while completing the application form and hoping to get the job, she did not even think about that. In her understanding: »I felt that this job is for me.« Another interviewee, Marija, had wanted to work with refugees ever since she was a little girl. During our conversation, she remembered that her parents always worried about her one day working in dangerous places and refugee camps far away from home. Very soon after graduating political sciences, she was hired by an NGO she had been volunteering with for a couple of years in Zagreb and in which she coordinated the activities in the camp in Slavonski Brod: »At first, it was a shock that I could work on the topic I love very soon after graduating!« Anita, Vinka, Saman, and Marija all shared enthusiasm towards working in the refugee camp, perceiving it as an arena that would enable them to professionally and personally express themselves and satisfy their needs. The latter did not only refer to the needs of being engaged in a crisis situation or advocating for political and social changes, but, for some interlocutors like Vinka, it meant to have their actions finally recognized and respected, to inscribe them with meaning. Describing her first encounter of »aiding refugees«, Vinka portrayed herself as the »helper« whose actions had finally been appreciated, and who, in the process of giving aid, received feedback that fulfilled her need to feel like a valued and accomplished human:

> »By offering my hand, giving someone a blanket or a hat, I received something that I wouldn't receive in school in one year. And so, there somewhere, on a personal level, there was this beautiful exchange where I felt valued, seen as a person, as a human being. What I have to offer, what I was usually giving and what hadn't been seen; it certainly found its place in these moments.«

Aid workers in Slavonski Brod were confronted daily with a »bare humanity«—the suffering mass on the move—managed by the progressively rigorous migration and refugee policies and subjected to a »regime of care« (Ticktin 2011) that classified their pain in order to supply them with donor-convenient necessities. In that kind of situation, the gratefulness and appreciation shown by aid receivers, presented in the form of words like »thank you« or a smile on their faces because they were given an appropriate aid item needed to alleviate their pain, created for some research participants a powerful, yet potentially toxic, agglomerate of feelings—a form of affect—that, as I want to show, professional humanitarianism strives to tame. Unlike emotions, affects are understood as interrelations (see Škrbić Alempijević/Potkonjak/Rubić 2016: 65), ambiguous conditions that are »less easily categorized« and »potentially more disruptive presence in a social world« (Malkki 2015: 55). The »beautiful exchange« that Vinka felt while distributing blankets to refugees

passing through the camp, or Anita's realization of »how little can be enough to make someone's day, a month, or a week« can be understood as affective conditions that, as I will show in the next section, humanitarians had to learn to control. According to Saman, »this stimulates one part of the brain that gives you the most beautiful feelings that you can get—that I'm a human. And this ›*I human*‹ [affect] you want all the time, constantly, you won't have a limit.« Particularly, he emphasized the risks of attaching yourself to »beneficiaries« and allowing the »satisfaction for doing good« to affect you:

> »When you do something good, and you really do it well, and a woman hugs you, cries in your lap. When children see you from afar and start running towards you, run to your lap… […] You attach them to you. This brings such a big feeling of satisfaction, self-satisfaction, pleasure—that I did something good—that you become addicted. […] It's very important that we don't ask someone to worship us, to look at us like heroes, to be grateful. We just want respect because we do our job well.«

Saman was the only interlocutor who had worked in the humanitarian sector before the camp opened in Croatia and could refer to his experiences from Bosnia during the 1990s. To protect oneself from the »do-gooder addiction« that can cause humanitarians to neglect their private life, he advocated professionalism and treating aid work as a job. According to him, humanitarians should present themselves as the »intermediaries« of aid companies who cannot take full responsibility when faced with either disappointment or criticism if an aid package was not sufficient or with immense joy and thankfulness due to an appropriate aid package. In other words, this could be seen as a self-protection measure for the aid worker and a mechanism that hinders both the negative image of aid labeled as counterproductive and the heroic image of humanitarians perceived as saviors. Even though Malkki's interlocutors worked in extreme situations like the Rwandan genocide, Saman's narration similarly refers to the possible dangers an aid worker faces when being overwhelmed by a crisis situation in terms of its scale, duration, or complexity (see ibid.: 56). For example, the Finnish Red Cross humanitarians that Malkki interviewed did not even want to engage in knowing details about the socio-political context of the place where they came to intervene because it could have jeopardized their focus on urgent medical assistance they were obliged to provide (see ibid.: 56–57). In case they would fail in providing aid because they were emotionally and affectively distracted, they were perceived as non-professionals and basically unfit for (aid) work. Interestingly, though, despite the fact that he advocated for professional behavior and maintenance of a social distance

between aid workers and refugees (cf. Gilbert 2014), Saman still tried to avoid the act of aid distribution simply because he did not want to decide »whom to give, and whom not to give«. Precisely this dynamic between the emotional and professional dimension of aid work is where the affective labor takes place.

Affective Labour of Local Humanitarians

Within the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski/Chiapello 2018), some authors discuss immaterial labor as the central paradigm of post-industrial work (Lazzarato 1996; Hardt 1999; Gorz 2015). According to Michael Hardt (1999), affective labor is a model of immaterial labor performed in professions that involve human contact and interaction. It acts in different kinds of relational services, all of which contain in-person interaction, from health to entertainment industries. He continues by saying that »this labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community« (ibid.: 96). What is essential to it is the fact that it creates and manipulates affects (ibid.). In comparison to Anne Meike Fechter's understanding of immaterial labor performed within the aid industry, I will present difficulties that my interlocutors experienced during and after their engagement and show how the efforts they invested, or failed to invest, into adopting and practicing professional aid work could be seen as a form of affective labor.

Even though many situations could have been perceived as disturbing, some interlocutors explained that working in »fast transit« circumstances did not leave much time to build connections with refugees or to reflect on taxing events they witnessed daily. However, every time Vinka would leave the camp and go to Zagreb for a couple of days, she faced difficulties when trying to participate in »ordinary« everyday practices at home:

> »When I'd return to Zagreb, it really felt like I don't belong in Zagreb. As if I was, actually, in a way, swollen by this world of refugees, and I actually wanted to be there, but… It was unusual to witness my interior disproportion between the world, which is like: people here go to a bar, talk this and that, and I have to come back there tomorrow with refugees, and drama—people fleeing, barefoot, hungry, have no idea if… They hope it will, somehow, be a better tomorrow there, and you already have the experience that they end up trapped in some ghettos there from where they can't get out, with no perspective.«

This narrative points out to the main antagonism created within the humanitarian workscape of the Croatian refugee camp that evolved around the impulse of an aid worker to provide essentially meaningful and sustainable service while, simultaneously, anticipating the ineffectiveness of the refugee aid discourse. Specifically, besides the ambivalence between emotional and rational giving, this refugee camp was organized around the humanitarian-security axis as shown by Hameršak and Pleše (2018) and Petrović (2018). It, thus, perfectly exemplified how the two discourses (the humanitarian and the security discourse) work together in fostering the techno-managerial approach that dehumanizes the contemporary refugee movements. Having to accommodate a knowledge about the morally disturbing opposition between the »extraordinary« reality of refugeeness and the »ordinary« everyday life not only depicts Vinka's possible state of distress or burnout but reveals the efforts required to deal with the disparity that working in the humanitarian sector implies. Marija's explanation sums up this tension:

> »[…] it was really difficult to deal with that situation daily, with that topic generally, with everything you see on a daily basis, with all the wrongdoing you witness every day, which you try to fight against but you're under the impression that you're tilting at windmills.«

Furthermore, closing the camp meant for many humanitarians that they would lose their jobs, friendships, and connections with other humanitarians, but also the relationships with people who, upon the closure of the Balkan corridor, found themselves stranded in Croatia and who were, hence, incarcerated in the third sector of the camp.[12] Although some of them were aware that their feelings were paradoxical, the atmosphere of disappointment, sadness, and uncertainty spread through the camp as we were packing our things, tents, and containers. This is how Anita described her condition after closing the camp:

> »I didn't save myself, emotionally, or in any other way. […] It would have been easier, after the closing of the camp, if I hadn't known what was bothering whom, if I hadn't known which child lost its family members or which one had some traumas. […] So, I wasn't in control of myself at all or the situation.«

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12 | When the Balkan corridor closed in March 2016, a group of people was stranded in Croatia and incarcerated in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre. The third sector was used for stranded families. The organization I worked for was working with children, which is why some interlocutors spent more time in that sector and eventually got more connected with this group than with other people during the fast transit through the camp.

Similarly, Vinka said that when she returned home after the camps' closure she felt like she had a »mild PTSD«: »It was really difficult to go back to reality and turn on the ›now it's all okay, now I'm here‹, while I know I carried a burden of the whole story.«

The state of distress and the lack of emotional control are not new to humanitarians working in crisis situations. The fact that these local workers had very little experience with such camps or mass refugee movements certainly influenced their impressions and the way they dealt (or had troubles dealing) with the emotionally disturbing work place. As mentioned above, Liisa Malkki and Anne Meike Fecther conducted research with international aid professionals. In both cases, most research participants had already established more or less clear accounts about the difficulties they were going through and the methods they used to manage them, unlike the Croatian local workers who were still trying to grasp the complexities of what they had experienced. In the case of the Finnish Red Cross workers, Malkki concluded that »maintaining a balance between humane professionalism and affective neutrality, on the one hand, and less manageable and even institutionally dangerous affects, on the other, was simultaneously a regulating ideal and a constant struggle« (2015: 55). To perform their jobs efficiently, and still protect themselves from conditions frequently defined within humanitarian regimes as the compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, burnout, and even PTSD, her interlocutors had to learn how to »professionally coordinate affects« (Mazzarella 2009 in Malkki 2015: 55). In her attempt to understand the daily labor invested by international aid workers in Cambodia, Fechter shows that their everyday professional and personal lives require the performance of what she proposes to identify as »moral labor«—a continuous search for the right approach and an answer to the question of »what is the right course of action when faced with morally complex situations« (2016: 230). This also refers to the effort required to deliver aid daily, knowing »that it will be impossible to make poverty history, [...] eradicate tuberculosis, or whatever the goals might be« (ibid.: 232). And she adds that this is not incidental but systemic: »performing this labor constitutes implicit part of an aid worker's contract with their organizations, aid donors and the general public« (ibid.).

According to Mark Duffield, to not only manage the security risks but the risks of emotional and mental distress caused by the humanitarian workscape, the aid industry requires workers to »build resilience« and apply therapeutic *care of the self* techniques (2012: 486). He argues that building personal resilience is a method of self-management, and it is not meant to deal with PTSD but to prevent it from happening in the first place (ibid.). Therefore, these risks can be avoided, managed, and rationalized by using the appropriate therapeutic techniques, or, in words of Niko-

las Rose »therapeutics can make us better workers at the same time as it makes us better selves« (1990: 11). This also means that the techno-managerial approach adopted in the humanitarian sector affects the way workers can not only manage external situations, such as the »refugee crisis«, but also their internal impressions when faced with morally complex or emotionally taxing situations. In my view, the formula for becoming a self-manageable compassionate aid worker is grounded in the assumption that the ideology of work ethics, as well as the overall professionalization of work, can regulate the discomforts of humanitarianism, be it the discomforts emerging from the exposure to mass suffering that is emotionally and mentally difficult to process, the entrepreneurial nature of humanitarianism or the paradoxical humanitarian-security alliances—all of which might cause the aforementioned conditions of distress. In other words, next to the discrepancy that Vinka had to deal with, the methodology that teaches humanitarians how to manage affective impressions is also tacitly contracted within the humanitarian sector. In order to reach the habitus of professional helpers, aid workers have to adopt the techniques of »building resilience« (Duffield 2012) and »affect management« (Mazzarella 2009 in Malkki 2015: 55) while simultaneously maintaining a social distance (see Gilbert 2016) without appearing to be »emotionally indifferent and cold« (Malkki 2015: 56) in the eyes of aid receivers.

Anita, Marija, and Vinka experienced powerful and potentially dangerous affects with little control over their emotional engagement, which is one of the reasons they were distressed during employment and in the aftermath of the camp's functioning. This also implies that they were yet to be disciplined in this particular profession. To paraphrase Fecther (2016), their professional and personal lives required labor that refers to experiencing these disproportions, reflecting about them, and learning how to manage them in order to achieve the required balance between emotional and rational dimensions of aid work. The sole experience of humanitarian affect, as designated by Saman in his notion of the ›*I human*‹ affect, followed by the later awareness of the need to protectively use affect management (Malkki 2015:56) can be understood as affective labor. The image of a professional, self-manageable, and compassionate humanitarian is an ideal that workers might stream towards not knowing if they may ever accomplish the right balance. In that sense, affect management should be understood as an aspiration and a continuous attempt to, for example, avoid becoming indifferent while maintaining emotional distance, or, taking care of yourself while providing care for the others. Precisely this process, and particularly the effort invested to apprehend the balance and the self-management techniques that professional aid work entails, should be seen as affective labor that was largely performed within the humanitarian workscape of the Croatian camp for refugees.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to depict the enactment of humanitarian enterprise in a local camp for refugees during the mass refugee transit through Croatia. In the first section, I presented the context from which I drew the narratives about the labor that was performed in this specific camp. This part dealt with the functioning of the transit camp with an emphasis on features of the locally created aid workscape, such as local employment measures, tense relationships between different humanitarian actors, and effects of the dominant discourses of the contemporary humanitarian sector including the rationalization of aid resources and the standardization of work procedures. The second part of the article shifted the attention to individual aspirations to engage in the provision of aid and presented the ways in which the humanitarian workscape affected locally employed workers. What binds these two parts together is the fact that the discourse on the professional humanitarian enterprise can produce morally, emotionally, and mentally unsettling affects in the same way as the process of witnessing the suffering of others can. More precisely, the complementary relationship between these two domains formulates the contemporary aid workscape. This is the site where the rational and emotional dimensions of aid come together in a professional humanitarian setting that introduces methods for humanitarians on how to successfully manage the challenges posed by the discomforts of such a work place. Examples of these discomforting aspects of the local aid workscape are analyzed as human(itarian) affects and traced within interviews exemplifying the state of distress and burnout among several interviewees. Even though there is a tendency of professional humanitarianism to tame the emotional impulse of humanitarian work as a self-protection measure, these local workers were not trained international staff members who had previously worked in different crisis settings around the world. Importantly, despite the fact that many workers and volunteers, including my interlocutors, went through training which, apart from addressing their area of work in the camp, tackled the importance of self-care (some associations even organized psychological supervision) and emphasized that workers should not get too emotionally and socially close to refugees, it is possible to conclude that this was not sufficient to actually implement these instructions daily. They simply did not have enough working experience to inhabit the figure of a compassionate aid professional. Their experiences were intensive because they were yet to master the aforementioned methods. I argue that the efforts invested in reflecting on these affects and in adopting the ways to manage them can be understood as affective labor. In addition, I believe that exploring affective labor with regards to different contexts and scales of humanitar-

ian interventions can help to unveil the complexity of the expanding humanitarian workscape more generally.

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Hope, Waiting, and Mobility

Migrant Movement in Serbia After The EU-Turkey Deal

ROBERT RYDZEWSKI

Abstract: This paper analyses the Balkan route after the closure of the formalised corridor through the Balkan Peninsula to the EU. It emerges from maps and non-governmental organisation reports—which most often depict a one-way, linear migrant journey and subsequent entrapment in camps in Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia—and juxtaposes this with migrant narratives. By March 2016, the movement of migrants in Serbia had not stopped. Despite great efforts towards militarising external European Union borders, the push-backs and violence of border guards, and the structural and institutional *imposition of waiting*, migrants persisted in trying to move. They rarely stayed in government-run transit and asylum centres but instead travelled around Serbia: not only from south to north but also from north to south and in any other direction. In light of these considerations, key questions arise: What does this movement mean for migrants? Why have migrants often rejected state protection offered by government facilities in favour of traveling around the country, thus exposing themselves to danger? I argue that migrant movement on the doorstep to the EU is an expression of hope to bring »the stuckedness« to an end.

Keywords: Hope, waiting, migration, Balkan route, stuckedness

On one late night in Subotica, a border town in northern Serbia, I saw a few groups of ten to fifteen people each walking northwards. In a town that had already fallen asleep, they were the only visible pedestrians. At the central bus station, I saw dozens of migrants, mainly young males with small backpacks. Some of them were crouching against the bus station wall, drinking energy drinks and checking Google Maps. A few metres further on, others were crowded around an extension cord where they were charging their phones. For them, the day was clearly not over yet as they seemed to be waiting for something. The rest of the young, single, male travellers[1] were preparing for sleep: they unfolded their sleeping bags and blankets by the main entrance of the bus station. Outside the bus station, several taxis were lined up, and the drivers were chatting with each other while facing the waiting migrants. I approached a kiosk by

1 | The description »single, male traveller« refers to the status of migrants during their journey and does not reflect marital status.

the main entrance and spoke to a man sitting on a white plastic garden chair near an ice cream freezer. I asked about the unusual agitation and how it was combined with the boredom of waiting at these late hours. He explained to me that he and other taxi drivers were waiting until late at night to take migrants to the Serbian-Hungarian border area. Since the EU-Serbian border was sealed, migrants rarely managed to cross it on the first try. Thus, they moved through the country in search of accommodation, provisions, information, and other possibilities to cross the border.

This short observation from Subotica, a departure point for migrants to the European Union (EU), contradicts the predominant media reports and maps in 2015 and 2016 that depicted migrants' movement through the Balkan Peninsula as linear and unidirectional—from south to north. Shortly after, the media depictions of the one-way movement were replaced by stranded, passive migrants stuck in unofficial settlements in Idomeni, on the Greek-Macedonian border, or in Horgoš, on the Serbian-Hungarian border. Instead of giving an accurate account of migrant mobility, these pictures, graphs, maps, and other visualisations of either unidirectional migrant trajectories or stranded migrants rather obscured it. This is of importance because visual representations of migrant movement have a particular authority and persuasive effect in political and social debates (see Newhouse 2018: 90).

The Balkan corridor—the formalised migratory passage created in the first months of 2015 and shut down by March 2016—was possible upon the introduction of a 72-hour travel permit for migrants in Serbia and North Macedonia and led to an increase of border crossings (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 16, 46). In this exceptional period, the people who had the strength and resources could reach Northern and Western Europe somewhat feasibly: crossing three borders between Greece and Hungary could take as little as a few days. Moreover, in 2015 and 2016, 14 so-called temporary reception centres—an important part of the corridor's infrastructure—were built by the Serbian government with support of the EU and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The purpose for most of them was to register and provide short-term respites for those traveling via the Balkan corridor. Therefore, migrant journeys, although hectic, were safer and faster because of relatively open borders and state-supported means of transport. However, at the beginning of 2016, two EU-third country agreements introduced new rules of EU border control, which put the Balkan states and migrants in a predicament.[2]

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2 | The first deal was between the Austrian Interior Minister, Johanna Mikl-Leitner, and representatives of the Western Balkan countries. It launched a wave of border closures along the Balkan corridor in February 2016. This was followed by another agreement, during which the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip

Months before the implementation of the EU-Turkish deal, the Balkan corridor was gradually being closed down. Slovenia, following the example of Austria, set a limit on migrant arrivals to their country via the Balkan corridor and was the first to introduce a selection process. Its logic was supposedly based on national, racial, religious, and language criteria and was marked by arbitrariness, intimidation, and violence by law enforcement officers (see Hameršak/Pleše 2018: 21). Consequently, the states along the corridor closed its borders first to everyone but Syrians, Afghanis, or Iraqis, and directed most of their efforts towards filtering rather the excluding migrants (see Picozza 2017: 78; Hameršak/Pleše 2018: 21). The selective admission of migrants caused the number of stranded people in the Balkan Peninsula to rise. It led to the creation of large unofficial settlements, like the one in Idomeni in Greece or those in Horgoš and Belgrade in Serbia, exposing migrants to sudden disruptions of their journey and extended periods of waiting. As a result, migrant movements after the closing of the Balkan corridor were highly dangerous and slow due to shrinking state facilitation and migrants' limited access to NGOs. These journeys did not just take days but months or even years.

The introduction of border controls based on the filtering of wanted and unwanted migrants heralded the end of the formalised corridor through the Balkan Peninsula to Northern or Western Europe, but it did not shut down the Balkan route entirely (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016): the movement of migrants towards the EU slowed down but did not stop. Despite great efforts towards militarising external EU borders, and in spite of the push-backs and violence of border guards, and the structural and institutional »imposition of waiting«, migrants persisted in trying to move and reach the EU. This refers particularly to single males because these journeys are too dangerous and exhausting for families. Single travellers rarely stayed in the government facilities for long periods,[3] but instead moved around Serbia—not only from south to north but also from north to south and indeed in any other direction. What did this movement mean to them?

This article aims to reconstruct the representation of migrant journeys to the EU. By focusing on the geographical movements of migrants around Serbia in the first year(s) after the closure of the Balkan corridor (and before transit changed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018), I explore the relationship between time, space, and the meaning of movement on the fringes of the EU. I challenge the perception that the

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Erdoğan, agreed on closing the marine borders between the EU and Turkey and externalising immigration control to Turkey (see Üstübici/İçduygu 2019: 198).

3 | In that period, government facilities for migrants in Serbia were divided into asylum centres and temporary reception- or temporary transit centres.

movement of migrants is unidirectional and demonstrate that it is constantly interrupted, can move in a reverse direction, or even become circular. By doing so, I want to highlight migrant experiences and understand human reaction to geographical entrapment by linking the concepts of hope, waiting, and mobility. I argue that the »hyper mobility« (Fontanari 2019) of migrants on the doorstep of the EU is an expression of hope in times of »stuckedness« (Hage 2009b).

Defining the Method and Research Focus

In this article, I draw on ethnographic research carried out from October 2015 to October 2016 in Serbia: in Preševo, on the southern Serbian-Macedonian border and in Subotica and its surroundings, close to the Serbian-Hungarian border. Preševo was a »hotspot« during the »long summer of migration« (Kasparek/Speer 2015), when around one million migrants reached Europe's borders. During that summer, migrants entering Serbia lined up for several hours, and in extreme cases days, at the Preševo temporary reception centre for permission to transit through Serbia. Later, the centre offered accommodation and various kinds of support provided by NGOs. In contrast, Subotica was a kind of gateway to the EU, with poorly equipped government facilities for migrants and minimal NGO presence, which can be understood as part of a securitisation practice to keep migrants far from the EU external borders.

Alongside the fieldwork conducted in these two locations, I also visited migrants in other government centres and unofficial settlements scattered around the country. For most of my time in the field, I was engaged in volunteer grass-roots organisations,[4] providing support to migrants on their journey. Our work consisted of distributing food and items, providing information about the current situation along the Balkan corridor and psychological support. As such, my research turned into activist re-

4 | My research group consisted of mainly single, male travellers, which was initially not the aim of the research project in itself but rather a result of the process of the fieldwork. The volunteer aid points for distributions were stopover points, which are in themselves a selection mechanism (see Newhouse 2018: 88). The main recipients of assistance given from grassroots organisations operating outside of government facilities were mostly single, male travellers, whose access to state facilities were hindered, and who were therefore both more visible in public spaces and more in need of assistance than families or single females. Their attachment to, and reliance on, grassroots operations was also caused by the NGOs working in Serbia as they regarded single, male travellers a low priority and less in need of help.

search, which presumes acquiring theoretical knowledge through action (Hale 2006; Goldstein 2014; Sandri 2017; Picozza 2017).

Activist research can give access to migrants *en route*, who often stay far from the public eye (Coutin 2005). As a part of the volunteers' group that distributed food and non-food items, I had access to migrants in unofficial settlements and hideouts but, more importantly, they contacted me and often asked for support. Hence, it gave me access to their whereabouts, needs, and emotional state. My research was combined with George Marcus' concept of multi-sited ethnography that allows one to follow migrants' histories in different parts of the globalised world and search for unexpected connections between places and contexts (1995). I thus followed migrants on their journey through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary in 2015 and 2016. Additionally, between 2016 and 2018, I visited some of them, by which point they had either reached their destination countries and/or were still on the way as »Dubliners« (Picozza 2017).[5] This helped me to understand their multidirectional journeys though Southeastern Europe and its changing conditions.

As highlighted by Michael Collyer and Hein de Haas (2012), naming those who are on the move has become highly problematic within research on migration to Europe. The ambiguity in defining people on their way to Europe was also perceivable in the case of Serbia: I asked a UNHCR officer in the Preševo temporary centre how they categorised people who were stranded in Serbia, since they rarely applied for asylum there, and their transit documents had often expired. In response, he told me that these people were »persons in need of international protection«. Such a group is defined by the UNHCR as people who may not qualify as refugees but may, nevertheless, in certain circumstances require international protection (see 2018: 138). This status did not have its equivalent within the Serbian law and practice, thus, migrants who stayed in Serbia longer than 72 hours were technically ›illegal‹ but were tolerated by the state authorities. This kind of »liminal legality« creates an excluded population and ensures a vulnerability and precariousness on the side of migrants by blurring the boundaries between legality and illegality (see Menjívar 2006: 1002). Therefore, »persons in need of international protection« in the Serbian context is a rather vague category and proves that there is still a conceptual and methodological problem in studying transit migration.

Scholars have argued against fixed definitions of who can be labelled as *transit* migrant concerning essential characteristics, such as time-space, location-direction, state perspective, or cause of migration (see Collyer/de Haas 2012: 470; Içduygu/

5 | »Dubliners« are border crossers that are forced to move in order, for example, to find a job, to secure some administrative status, or to escape Dublin deportations.

Yükseker 2012: 452; Hess 2012: 429). They have shown that being in »transit« can be a year-long endeavour, and that it is not a spatial question linked to the underlying premise of a linear crossing from country of origin to destination. Instead, transit can mean a protracted situation of criss-cross mobility (see Hess 2012: 429), changing legal status (see Collyer/de Haas 2012: 472), and exploitation and stigmatisation (see Bredeloup 2012: 464). The protractedness, as Sabine Hess explains, is an effect of the European border regime »as a territorial and space making policy par excellence« (ibid.: 431). Furthermore, the category of transit is a relatively new political invention that comes along with the definition of certain countries as transit countries (ibid.). Therefore, transit migration is not only hard to define but also an unfruitful category on an epistemological level. By deconstructing the notion of *transit*, these researchers have opposed the linear understanding of migrant journeys that imagines a clearly defined country of origin and destination, and have instead opted for notions that reflect changing migration conditions, including the legal status of migrants, and have helped to understand the fluidity and dynamism of the migration process. Following this discussion, and considering my research participants' self-titling as migrants, I have decided to refer to them as *migrants stuck in mobility* (Hess 2012) in order to underline their heightened geographical mobility between borders and simultaneous inability to either go back or move forward.

From Fragmented Journeys to Hyper Mobility at the Doorstep of the EU

Fragmented and multidirectional migrant routes have been explored by other researchers (Collyer 2007; 2010; Hess 2012; Fontanari 2019; Newhouse 2018; Picozza 2017). Geographer Michael Collyer, who focuses on migration across Maghreb countries, claims that »stranded migrants« and »fragmented journeys« »are both key elements of ›mixed migration‹ which capture the essential character of the protection requirements of migrants in this situation« (Collyer 2010: 279). On the one hand, journeys are interrupted by natural barriers and increasingly effective, violent immigration control. Within the scope of fragmented migration, failures play a key role: deportations, robberies, and detentions all have a decisive impact on the depletion of financial resources, the amount of possibilities and changing shapes of migration routes (see Collyer 2007, 2010). On the other hand, these journeys are sustained by technological developments, such as instant money transfers and new ways of communication (see Collyer 2010: 276). Thus, fragmented journeys imply the multiplicity and complexity of migration motivations, living and working conditions, forms

of survival, and changing legal statuses of migrants. The fragmented character of the movement contributes to the vulnerability of, and protection needed by, stranded migrants unable to continue their journey or go back (see ibid.: 288).

Another important piece of research when analysing migrant movement to Europe has been presented in the book *Lives in Transit* (Fontanari 2019). Its author, Elena Fontanari, conducted anthropological, multi-sited research among migrants travelling to the EU via the Mediterranean Sea. Fontanari shows that even after reaching their destination country, migrants continue to move around in search of work and better living conditions. She explains that the hyper mobility of migrants within the EU borders is a »product of protracted transit having being forced by bureaucratic procedure due to the short-term nature of document validity« (ibid.: 172). Hyper mobility is interlaced with »fragmented circuits« caused by endless waiting for resident permits, queuing for food, accommodation, and repetitively applying for subsidiary protection, which, in the end, leads to a prolonged, precarious, and unsettled life (ibid.: 94). The findings of Collyer and Fontanari correspond with my research. However, I suggest that migrants maintain their geographical mobility also at the margins of the EU. The movement on the doorstep of the EU helps migrants to wait out the time of entrapment in the protracted journey. Even if it appears senseless or circular, the movement gives hope and reduces the feeling of being stuck during prolonged stays in temporary reception centres or asylum centres. Thus, the ability to move during periods of a structural and institutional »imposition of waiting« is essential to endure it. The movement is also an expression of the agency of individuals who are stuck between the borders. All this allows me to expand Fontanari's argument that hyper mobility is an effect of the anti-migration sentiments of European bureaucrats.

There is a difference between the imposed hyper mobility that I could observe on the margins of the EU and the forced mobility within the EU observed by Fontanari (ibid.). She argues that hyper mobility, alongside the fragmented circuits of migrants after reaching the EU, has negative effects. Her research participants were forced into hyper mobility which, in turn, brought uncertainty and distrust towards state institutions and, in the long run, hopelessness (see ibid. 2019: 49, 154–159, 196). The case of Serbia is different. Analysing the migrants' movements, as well as informal conversations and interviews, I would claim that the migrant movements on the doorstep of the EU brought them hope of crossing the border and of eventually reaching a safe country with the possibility to develop a sustainable existence. The notion of hope appears in the research of scholars like Fontanari (2019) and Florenza Picozza (2017), but they tend to focus more on structural or legal conditions for movement and individual practices. In this text, I would like to contribute to the discussion on

migrant movement by analysing the role of migrant desires and aspirations in shaping migrants' trajectories.

I will show that the expectation of a better future was a main catalyst of the hyper mobility of migrants. In other words, in order to be able to maintain hope, migrants were moving. This meant that they sometimes avoided the government facilities which provided accommodation and food because they also restricted their movements, especially during the time of closing the Balkan corridor, when the Serbian state tried to re-establish control over migration and turned toward securitisation and preventing unwanted migration (Stojić Mitrović 2019). In that period, many NGO-run centres supporting migrants were shut down and migrants were removed from public spaces, such as parks and train stations (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 58). As a result, migrant movement and thus agency was restricted. During this time, the Preševo temporary reception centre was converted into a closed camp.[6] In March 2016, a 58-year-old male from Iraq, whom I escorted to a shop, told me, »We don't need money, we don't need this [pointing at a bag with groceries like Coca Cola, Milka chocolate and other delights, bought thanks to some pocket money provided by an NGO]. We need to go, start to work, live.«

Below, using interviews, brief chats, and observations, I will reconstruct the trajectories of migrants' movements after the closure of the Balkan corridor in March 2016. The journeys during what the literature describes as the »long summer of migration« greatly differ from those that took place before and after the EU-Turkey agreement was introduced.

Reconstructing Movements after the Closure of the Balkan Corridor

At the beginning of August 2016, I met 16-year old Sayad at the bus station in Subotica in northern Serbia. At that time, migrants could seek asylum in Serbia, try to cross the border in irregular ways, apply for family reunification, register for the assisted voluntary return program, or sign up to the waiting list to enter the Hungarian transit zone. Sayad, like all my research participants, came through Turkey. Afterwards, they had travelled through southern EU countries: some took the land route

6 | Temporary reception centres had been changing the rules of migrants' admission and release. In March 2016, migrants were allowed to temporarily leave the temporary reception centre in Preševo only if escorted by an NGO worker who guaranteed his or her return to the centre.

through Bulgaria, whereas others travelled across the Aegean Sea, Greece, and Macedonia. Both routes finally met in Serbia. My research participants, Sayad included, started their journey when the formalised corridor was still open, but did not manage to reach the EU before the closure and, as a consequence, were stranded in Serbia in 2016. The last of them entered the EU three years later, in March 2019.

Sayad did not want to register on the waiting list, because, as he said, »You never know what Europeans can come up with.« He feared that once he tried the official way, border guards would take his fingerprints and enter them into the EURODAC database.[7] This could hinder his asylum requests in EU countries other than Hungary due to the Dublin Regulation. Another reason for Sayad not taking the official way was the imposed waiting at the transit zones on the Serbian-Hungarian border, which in practice meant waiting in the temporary reception centre, checking the list every couple of days, and counting down the days for his turn.

Creating Institutionalised Waiting

Signing up to the waiting list did not guarantee fast transfer to Hungary. In summer 2016, the Hungarian border police allowed fifteen persons per zone per working day to access the militarised transit zones in Tompa and Röszke on the Hungarian side of the Serbian- Hungarian border, which remains the only place where migrants can seek asylum. The transit zones consist of a closed-off blue shipping container village constructed in 2015 along the fence at the southern Hungarian border that is armed with barbwire and high-tech surveillance systems. During this period, families and minors had to stop there for an asylum interview and were transferred the same day to the open camps inside Hungarian territory. Single, male travellers, however, had to stay in shipping containers 29 days longer, supposedly to verify the data from their asylum interviews.[8] They were not allowed to leave the containers unless they agreed to return to Serbia.

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7 | EURODAC (European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database) is a large-scale IT-system that indicates responsibility for examining an asylum application by comparing fingerprint datasets of migrants.

8 | At the beginning of March 2017, the Hungarian Parliament adopted a set of amendments allowing for the automatic detention of all asylum seekers while their applications were processed. This meant that, in reality, detention in the transit zone lasted months or even years (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2017).

In spring and summer of 2016, the Hungarian state created structural and institutional conditions of waiting in Serbia to cross the border, where peoples' lives were. Migrants waited for months under Hungarian state surveillance in the camps in pre-transit zones or temporary reception centres on the Serbian side and later in shipping containers on the Hungarian side. The everyday existence there was filled with boredom and poor living conditions —no kitchen or washing machine (and, particularly in the unofficial settlements, no showers). The Hungarian state thus created a condition of waiting in which migrants were deprived of state protection, the right to self-determination, and dignity. The rhythm was set by lining up for the distribution of food or non-food items, either in the temporary reception centres in Subotica, at the bus station, or in the camps in the pre-transit zone. These activities were interspersed with efforts to collect more financial resources, to contact smugglers, or those who had already crossed the border. Single, male travellers had to wait longer because priority was given to families, females, and minors. For single men there were only one or two places left per day. It meant that if all migrants who stayed in Serbia in summer 2016 had registered, the last one would still not have crossed the border by spring 2017. However, even with a long-term perspective, entering the EU seemed unrealistic. The number of people accepted into Hungary was shrinking, and the number of migrants staying in Serbia was growing. In January 2017, only five persons per zone per day were accepted. Consequently, the time of waiting became potentially indefinite.

If anthropologists Synnøve Bendixsen and Thomas Eriksen Hylland are right in arguing that once we accept waiting, we are stripped of control over our own time (see Bendixsen/Eriksen 2018: 92), then waiting generates not only vulnerability and humiliation but also dependency and lack of personal autonomy (see Fontanari 2019: 195). In creating the condition of waiting in precarious and unsafe environments for an unpredictable amount of time, the Hungarian state exercised power in the Foucauldian sense. Foucault claims that the state's disciplinary power is exercised over modern society by the control of people's time (see 1994: 80). This observation resonates with the work of Mikko Joronen who, in the context of his research on activities of the Israeli state towards Palestinian refugees, argues that the creation of a »space of waiting« is a powerful tool for governing populations (see Joronen 2017: 995). Thus, waiting involves disciplinary politics and power relations: who is waiting for whom. However, power relations not only dictate who has the power to stop and suspend someone's life (Hage 2009a: 2) but also what the conditions of waiting are and under what circumstances the right to move can be regained.

VIOLENCE AS METHOD OF THE BORDER DETERRENCE

A few days after learning Sayad's story, I met Gebre, an Eritrean in his late 20s. Along with a few other migrants, he paid for a smuggler to aid them to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border. They cut some wires from the fence's netting as well as the barbed wire that secured its lower portion. One by one, they wriggled through a relatively small hole. But the noise from the fence alerted the border guards, positioned every two hundred meters apart, who shouted and ran towards the migrants. A number of Gebre's travel companions managed to disperse into the woods, but Gebre and three other migrants were apprehended and taken for interrogation. There, the detainees were harassed and beaten by the border guards, who threatened to rape them if they did not disclose the size of their group, the identity of the smuggler, and their plan for crossing the border. Then, they pepper-sprayed the migrants, beat them again, and pushed them out through a gate in the fence back to Serbia. After walking for a few hours, Gebre arrived at the bus station in Subotica where Doctors Without Borders (MSF) workers were dressing the wounds of those who had unsuccessfully tried to enter the EU the previous night.

On 5th of July 2016, Hungary introduced the »eight-kilometre rule« allowing the deportation of migrants caught within eight kilometres from the border. From then on, the push-backs, like the one described above, became notorious along the Serbian-Hungarian border. According to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, during the period between the 5th of July and 31st of December 2016, 19,057 people were denied access to the asylum system, that is, either were prevented from entering Hungary or were caught and escorted back to the Serbian border (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, s.a.). The repeated push-backs evolved into a tool to remove migrants from the country and to prevent people from seeking protection on their territory. The vast majority of these push-backs have a collective character, they are undertaken without consideration of the individual circumstances of each person, without legal assistance or an interpreter, and without the possibility of appeal (which would usually suspend any possibility of expulsion while an appeal is pending). As such, the push-backs violate Article 4 of Protocol No 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (OXFAM 2017).

This violent chain refoulement was a common experience reported by my research participants. Migrants were repeatedly pushed back, not only from Hungary or Croatia to Serbia but also from Serbia to Macedonia and Bulgaria. During these illegal expulsions, migrants were heavily beaten, pepper-sprayed, bitten by dogs, and robbed

of their shoes and of their mobile phones, which hindered their further movements.[9] Border violence all along the Balkan route has been omnipresent. For example, MSF have stated in their annual activity report for Serbia to have assisted thousands of people stranded in the appalling conditions around the Subotica between April and November 2016. They carried out 7,407 medical consultations and have registered a steady and significant increase in various violence-related traumas (see MSF 2017: 83). In the given period, MSF treated 82 people for dog bites, irritations from tear gas and pepper spray, and injuries from beatings inflicted on them while attempting to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border (ibid.).

MOBILITY

After a four-day rest in the temporary reception centre in Subotica, Sayad again tried to cross the border. He walked with a group of friends following the path displayed by their phones' GPS. They kept only one phone on at a time, to limit signals, which, as they learned from the smugglers, could reveal their position to border guards. They marched eastwards for 20 hours along the northern Serbian border trying not to be detected by drones and helicopters patrolling the border. They wrongly assumed that the further they were from bigger settlements, the easier it was to enter the EU. The plan was to cross the border and get far into the Hungarian interior unnoticed—ideally all the way to Austria. But the plan backfired. Border guards pushed back migrants through randomly selected gateways, which made it difficult and longer to find their way back to a town or temporary reception centre and, in turn, increased their geographical mobility. In spite of these failures, they did not give up. A few days later Sayad told me, »Tonight, I will try, inshallah, to cross, but I don't know if I will succeed or not. We try every three or four days. We do not have any other choice.«

After several attempts, Sayad realised that getting to Hungary was impossible, so he travelled to Šid instead, a town in western Serbia on the border with Croatia. There, together with his friend, he cut a tarpaulin covering the trailer of a truck, snuck in and hid behind the cargo. But the heat detectors at the border had no difficulties in finding them. The border guards sent them back to the border again. In the middle of September, Sayad travelled to Subotica and later back to Šid and Belgrade in search of better living conditions and food. When the border crossers were tired of these

9 | According to my observations, these atrocities by the border guards and police officers were directed equally to all migrants, regardless of gender, age, or nationality.

constant failures, they looked for a place to rest. They even travelled 700 km south, to the temporary reception centre in Preševo, to make sure they had a decent place to sleep.

The hyper mobility of migrants that helps them withstand the periods of suspension and cross the border can be understood as an expression of agency, which does not appear within a vacuum but rather always within the wider social and political structure and as a response to the workings of the border regime. Thus, the hyper mobility of these migrants was triggered by the structural changes at the local and international level. Migrant movement in Serbia was unconstrained during the research period in comparison to Croatia or Macedonia where movement was controlled by either government or criminal groups (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 14). Serbian authorities, particularity until late summer 2015, gave migrants relative freedom to travel within the country and built various transit centres that enhanced mobility. For example, migrants' documents were not checked upon purchasing a ticket at a bus or train station. If they did not have one, migrants were asked to leave the train but were back on their way in a matter of minutes.

Like Sayad, Gebre's story also illustrates the determination to move and attempt to cross the border, a process that was interspersed with stays in both government facilities and unofficial settlements. Gebre and fifteen other migrants boarded a taxi at the Subotica bus station which took them to the vicinity of the Serbian-Hungarian border, but, once there, their attempt to cross was thwarted. Discouraged from trying to enter Hungary by the aggression of the border guards and the state-of-the-art surveillance system embedded in the demarcation line between Serbia and Hungary, he signed up to the waiting list to cross the border through official channels. But Gebre did not want to wait in temporary centres for months for his turn, and so he travelled to the Serbian-Croatian border to check the possibilities of entering the EU from there. In spite of the absence of a fence, crossing that border there was no easier than the one in the north of the country. Croatian border guards effectively intercepted migrants inside Croatian territory and pushed them back over the border to Serbia. To begin with, Croatian border guards simply drove migrants back to the Serbian border and, as far as I have been told, did not regularly use physical violence in that period. However, it would be only a matter of time before brutality by Croatian border guards became a method of border deterrence (Oxfam 2017; Human Rights Watch 2017).

The closure of the Balkan corridor was not limited to violence and heightened border control by the EU and non-EU countries. In August 2016, Serbian authorities curbed access to government facilities and changed the rules of admission (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 63). Migrants at government facilities were asked to legalise their stay in one of a handful of ways: for example, apply for fam-

ily reunification, register for the assisted voluntary return program, or sign up to the waiting list to enter the Hungarian transit zone. Migrants in response expressed the will to seek asylum in Serbia. However, from 2008 to 2016, most of the migrants in Serbia abandoned their asylum procedures before their cases were resolved (see Belgrade Centre for Human Rights 2017: 39).

Facing a challenge to accommodate the rising number of migrants in the country, the Serbian authorities balanced containing them in government facilities with controlling their movement within the country. Accommodating migrants or pushing them further to another state was a continuous dilemma for the Serbian state. On the one hand, Serbia did not want to become a container for unwanted migrants in the EU. On the other hand, the state had to respect different agreements with the EU and non-EU countries that obligated them to secure the border, prevent so-called irregular migration, and react to the growing pressure from the wider international community to fulfil the needs of the migrants stranded in Serbia (Stojić Mitrović 2019). Therefore, Serbian officials conditionally allowed civil society groups to provide support to migrants on the move, hoping that the latter would find a way to leave Serbia.

The Serbian government not only toughened up the rules of admission to government facilities but also tried to remove migrants from public spaces. Migrants with no asylum application or proof of having registered themselves on waiting lists slept in public spaces, such as parks, train stations, or abandoned buildings, effectively renouncing state protection and risking arrest. Sayad was among those who consciously left a government facility. He said he preferred to move between cities than stay in temporary reception centres and risk being locked up in there: »This is why I change, sometimes to Subotica and sometimes Šid. I want to go outside of Serbia. I want to move forward.« As aptly presented by Picozza, the migrants' freedom or relative autonomy comes with the price of »illegality« (see Picozza 2017: 77).

An increasingly large body of literature illustrates that migrant routes take opposite directions and their destinations are often indeterminate (Khosravi 2010; Collyer/de Haas 2012; Newhouse 2018). They are shaped by various factors and actors: smugglers, heightened border control, closing migration routes, or rumours etc., while their course and destinations are dictated by the weather, smugglers' fees and numerous other factors. However, as I will illustrate in the next section, these are not the only reasons why migrant movement is not unidirectional.

Hope as a Generator of Movement

The single men travelling alone undertook ongoing efforts to continue their journey. The driving force behind this exertion was the hope to liberate themselves from stuckedness; from immobility and suspension between the borders. Ghassan Hage claims that stuckedness occurs in a situation in which a person »suffers from both the absence of choices or alternatives to the situation they are in and an inability to grab such alternatives even if they present themselves« (2009b: 98). By comparison, hope can be understood as waiting while working to make something happen (see Procupez 2015: 63). During casual conversations and interviews with my research participants, they tended to repeat such words as »I hope« or »inshallah«. Although *inshallah* in its Quranic meaning denotes the supersedence of human will by God, it should not be taken here in its religious sense but rather as a synonym of hope. Both expressions were followed by action: untiring attempts to cross the border or collect new resources and information, intertwined with short rest in the government centres. This kind of hope does not guarantee anything, but it does suggest that something can still be done (see Zigon 2018: 65). Thus, hoping means to be oriented towards the future and involves waiting, which in its modality can be either passive or inert/active (see Marcel 1967: 280).

However, researchers have realised that people's agency can be found even during seemingly passive waiting or idleness (Hansen 1996; De Vries 2002; Jeffrey 2010). Craig Jeffrey shows that »timepass« in the case of jobless men in India promotes a somewhat inclusive young male culture (2010: 466). Therefore, an abundance of time can be a cultural resource and play a key role in the process of forming a political movement. Perhaps migrants' camping and waiting in precarious conditions along the Greek-Macedonian or Serbian-Hungarian border can constitute a novel form of migrant resistance that subverts migration control (see Hameršak/Pleše 2019: 155), or, at the very least, a displayed rejection of the violent and racist border regime. Furthermore, even longer stays in government centres are not purposeless. Migrants rest, wait out bad weather, collect information or non-food items to trade on the streets of Serbian towns and cities.

Nevertheless, waiting should not be romanticised. As Fontanari (2019) shows, when the available scope of possibilities and the space where migrant subjects act and move drastically shrinks, they might cease to see a future in which they can perceive themselves as active subjects (195). During my fieldwork, I came across migrants who lived in despair; they hid in government facilities, abandoned buildings or tents, unwilling to expose themselves to the public. Sometimes, it was just a temporary state, sometimes longer, maybe even permanent. Their orientation towards the future

could hardly be perceived as active or hope driven. They had the feeling that their life had been broken into pieces and regretted that they had ever started the journey. In these situations, referring to Gabriel Marcel's work (1967), Andreas Bandak and Manpreet K. Janeja claim that when such an internal debate dies out in one's self, we may see despair taking over—despair as the closed and inevitable outcome of a situation which can eventually bring about passivity, subordination, and dependency (2018: 3). Thus, the psychological strain of entrapment between borders can also cause disorientation and undermine self-confidence and motivation, which makes it hard to envisage a happy end to the journey.

In contrast to this, when waiting leaves open what can be anticipated and entails hope, it can be a generator of action (see Bandak/Janeja 2018: 3). In other words, in order to be able to hope, migrants had to move; thus, their hope was expressed by their hyper mobility. It allowed them to endure the imposition of waiting, uncertainty, and hazardous living conditions that were combined with the violence of border guards and pushed them towards border crossings. Migrants hoped to reach their destination country and moved within Serbia from the south to the north, from the north to the south, and in any other direction they thought might be of use.

Research on *Afghan migrants* stranded in Greece has shown that, at the moment of departure, a destination country is usually a pinned down place on their map, but the destination changes as the scope of opportunities shifts during a fragmented journey (Kuschminder 2018). Important factors in changing a decision regarding an intended destination include migrant's changing legal status during a journey, the length of the journey, and the perception of living conditions in the country of residence (Kuschminder 2018). For the protagonists of this paper, the destination country was rather loosely specified. But this imagined destination was nevertheless filled with expectations of having the right to decide about oneself, to have a chance to rent a flat and not be placed in camps under state surveillance. Another common aspiration was work and/or study. For example, Sayad's utmost desire was to finish his secondary education and then obtain a university degree. As scholars have shown, education is perceived as a means to economic development and to reducing poverty (see Jeffrey 2010: 467; Mains 2011: 67). Education is therefore associated with economic success and experiencing progress at an individual level and is a key to entering the middle class (see Mains 2011: 67–68).

Likewise, for Gebre, the opportunity of studying was an important factor since he had abandoned his IT studies due to the death of his father, the main bread-winner. However, Gebre's main priority was a functional and available health system due to an eye infection that was worsening as a consequence of his medical treatment being interrupted by migration. This reasoning was what led him to abandon his asylum

application in Serbia and later in Croatia because the necessity for his surgery was rejected in both places. This pushed him to take measures for a secondary movement to Sweden, where he hoped to receive eye treatment.

Moreover, the expectations of certain destination countries were verified during the course of migrant journeys. During the travel, migrants observed everyday life in the countries they passed through and compared it with their aspirations. An example for this is Gebre, who learned from Serbian and Croatian doctors that he had no chance for getting surgery there because Serbian and Croatian citizens themselves had to wait endlessly for medical treatment. Other migrants realised that their prospects of having a self-sufficient life and completing their education were doomed to fail since even local inhabitants struggled to make ends meet in the Balkan states and emigrated in large numbers to North and Western Europe. Hence, the process of choosing a destination country was often interrelated with the image of this country based on information, rumours and verification of this image on the way. Thus, desires and aspiration are not fixed but rather move as migrants do (see Fontanari 2019: 197).

Hope in Serbia was possible mainly because of the assumption that life would be better further north. Migrants in Serbia were unlikely to find safety and better life conditions there. For them, it was possible to get a short-term respite in the government run temporary facilities, but they did not offer an opportunity to study and work. Thus, they perceived Serbia, but also other poorer EU countries like Bulgaria, Greece, or Croatia, as nothing more than just another country to cross. The migrants' focus was on the future and further movement towards North and Western EU countries. As Abdel, a 20-year-old Moroccan who I met in the Kelebija pre-transit settlement, told me:

> »I am one year on the journey. I am having a shitty life. I must keep going. [...] When I get to Sweden, I will be fine. I will forget about everything. I will try to start another life, new life.«

Migrants saw their stuckedness as something temporary and exceptional imposed on them by the border control regime that would, as is the case with the whole journey, come to an end soon.

The protracted sense of existential and geographical stuckedness in Serbia was challenged by migrant mobility (even if only an imaginative one)—a sense that one is going somewhere (see Hage 2009b: 97). Many of the migrants who I met during my fieldwork had decided to migrate because they had experienced the situation of being stuck. They could not flourish; they could not study or work. Their countries were marred by war, economic injustice, or political terror. They felt that they were deprived of a stable existence, unable to progress in their life. Migration in this case,

as Hage claims, »is either an inability or an unwillingness to endure and ›wait out‹ a crisis of existential mobility« (2009b: 98). A good example for the inability to live in a condition of existential entrapment was Isaias, a 20-year-old Eritrean who had lived as a refugee in Uganda for five years. Isaias described his life in a transit centre as follows: »My mum is just sitting. Sometimes she is working, sometimes she is sitting. In Uganda there is no work.« He had experienced the same situation in Kenya, where he had moved with his uncle.

> »The whole day, I was just sitting. I went there to find some work, you know, to keep going, but I was unsuccessful. I was just sitting; I wanted to start school—it is expensive in Kenya. If you do not have money, you can't do anything.«

The impossibility of gaining education and, by extension, the limited work opportunities block their path to personal independence and developing gender and age-based social norms (see Jeffry 2010: 468). It also creates a space with an overabundance of unstructured time, which is a source of mental distress (see Mains 2011: 44; Jeffrey 2010: 477). The inability to develop, work, or study—in other words to comply with personal and social expectations—were the reasons why Isaias previously returned to Uganda after living in Kenya, where, as he told me, »I was just sitting for six months with my mum.« He then departed to Europe via Turkey. When he described his present situation in Serbia, he again used similar words: »Now, the borders are closed. I can't go further. Now, I am just sitting in the camp.« Isaias added later,

> »If they [the EU] say that the border will remain closed, I will go further [return to Turkey]. I haven't got other options. I can't just sit here any longer. There is no job, there is no pocket money. I can't live here longer. […] I am just sitting here [in the reception centre]. I can't do anything here. But if I get there [to Germany], I can study, I can get education.«

This narrative shows the importance of connecting the available opportunities with matters of the future which taken together translate into a sense of possible existential advancement. If people are unable to make this connection, they will try to move.

Migrants flee violence, terror, poverty, and social injustice, but also try to escape the lack of self-control over their time. In Serbia, they were unable to imagine their desirable future. According to Hage, migrants are »[…] looking for a space and a life where they feel they are going somewhere as opposed to nowhere, or at least, a space where the quality of their ›going-ness‹ is better than what it is in the space they

are leaving behind« (2009b: 98). Their geographical mobility, even if only internal, gave them agency and hope to reach their destination country and possibly realise their goals of social advancement by continuing their professional and personal development, or, at the very least, it gave them hope to attempt to start a normal life: self-sufficient, predictable, and secure.

However, researchers have illustrated that reaching the EU does not end precariousness, exclusion, and movement (Brekke/Brochmann 2013; Picozza 2017; Fontanari 2019). Fontanari shows that hope faded away among her research participants as they were trapped in lengthy unsettled conditions, including homelessness, unemployment, and being forced to move again across borders (see Fontanari 2019: 197–199). Many of her interview partners did not achieve their aspirations and did not have any further place to go.

Concluding Thoughts: Forced to Move

This article explored the trajectories of single, male travellers through the Balkan route and their reaction to the tightening of the external southeastern EU border. In order to better understand the meaning of high mobility at the bottleneck of entry to the EU, I have contrasted their experiences with research about migrants who have already reached the Schengen Area. I illustrated that the closure of the Balkan corridor, the increase of violence, and the structural and institutional *imposition of waiting*, increase the movement of single, male migrant travellers. Such movement reflects the migrants' hope and agency and offers a chance of social mobility. In other words, as long as migrants' needs, hopes, and aspirations remain unsatisfied and insatiated and as long as there is another place to go, they will keep moving. The hyper mobility on the fringes of the EU brings to mind walking on the spot or turning around in circles (Jansen 2015). These processes become metaphors for blocked expectations on the road to Europe (see Narotzky/Besnier 2014: 11).

Movement gave the migrants in my article hope to escape the stuckedness and eventually reach an idealised Europe, a kind of mythical place that takes time to arrive. However, upon reaching the EU, migrants are often disenchanted with the »welcome« they receive. The strict asylum procedure, the short validity period of documents (Fontanari 2019), the Dublin regulations (Picozza 2017), or simply differences in reception conditions (Brekke/Brochmann 2014) do not allow them to find a new home, but rather forced them to keep on moving. Therefore, movement can be a blessing and a curse for migrants depending on the state of their journey and the expectations they hold.

The high level of geographical movement creates a border control paradox: the more states impose movement-adverse conditions, the more migrants feel they have no choice but to continue moving. Hence, this work confirms Hess' argument that the European border regime does not stop the movements; rather it keeps people »caught in mobility« and transforms border-regions into zones of heightened circulation (see 2012: 436). Furthermore, and importantly, it illustrates that many attempts to »protect« the external EU borders not only unnecessarily risk human lives but also simply do not stop migrant movement. In this sense, they are unproductive; if anything, they seem to create hyper mobile classes that circulate in precarious zones. In fact, the state-imposed legal and physical constraints to curb international migration only temporarily limit the usage of one migratory route in favour of another, more dangerous one, such as the one taking its toll across the Mediterranean Sea.

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The Rise and Fall of Migration Solidarity in Belgrade

CÉLINE CANTAT

Abstract: This article discusses the experience of migrant self-organised spaces and migration solidarity groups in Serbia (particularly Belgrade) over the last four years. It first looks at how »solidarities in transit« emerged in the country between 2015 and 2018 and analyses the heterogeneous community of actors that came together in order to provide assistance to people on the move and to support migrants' self-organised living spaces. The article then examines the gradual marginalisation of migrant presence and migration solidarity in Belgrade. It explores how the Serbian authorities, thanks to vast amounts of European Union funding, established an institutionalised, official, camp-based, and heavily regulated refugee aid field from which political subversive actors and practices have been excluded. One of the consequences of the institutionalisation of the field is that the prescribed identity for refugee aid groups has become a purely humanitarian, non-political one. Ultimately, this article proposes an analysis of the further integration of Serbia into the EU border control regime since 2015 from the perspective of refugees' experiences and solidarity practices.

Keywords: Balkan route, solidarity, grassroots refugee support, migration governance, NGO-isation

This paper discusses the experience of migrant self-organised spaces and migration solidarity groups in Belgrade between 2015 and 2018.[1] Its primary concern is to analyse the processes and practices through which the Serbian authorities marginalised both migrants and solidarity presence in public spaces in the city. While migration solidarity has not been fully criminalised in Serbia, this paper argues that the authorities circumscribed refugee assistance to a heavily controlled and camp-based field of operation sustained by European Union (EU) funding. Within this field, regulatory

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mechanisms work to discipline aid actors and to neutralise politicised practices, essentially reducing refugee support to a purely humanitarian matter. The paper thus focuses on events in Belgrade in order to propose an analysis of the integration of Serbia within the EU border regime from the perspective of its effects on refugees' experiences and solidarity practices. The paper also considers how this marginalising process is connected to the imposition of a neoliberal regime of valuation that gives primacy to the commercial use of urban space in ways that excludes certain social groups from a number of sites. As argued by Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik (2018) and detailed by research participants, migrants thus find themselves at the intersection of racialised logics of migration governance and neoliberal processes of exclusion, which reinforce each other to further marginalise migrant and solidarity presence.[2]

The paper takes as its starting point the moment in spring and summer of 2015, when mass mobilities pushed their way through national and European borders along the so-called Balkan route, in what was immediately labelled by the media, governments, and associated authorities ›Europe's migrant (or refugee) crisis‹. The labelling of a crisis went together with calls by and for governments and European agencies to restore normality. At first, this translated into a range of (often violent) strategies aiming at stopping, reverting, and containing people's movement. This resulted in a series of struggles between mobilities and bordering tactics. As people became immobilised at various points of fixation, their collective efforts to continue their journey would confront the various manifestations of border control regimes (in the shape of police and military forces, fences, non-lethal weapons, among others). In early September 2015, thousands of people who had been immobilised in Hungary by national authorities decided to walk to the Austrian border in an evocatively named »March of Hope« (Kasparek/Speer 2015). Simultaneously, Chancellor Merkel announced the suspension of the Dublin regulation for Syrians, essentially alleging that all Syrians arriving in Germany would be allowed to claim asylum in the country, no matter which other countries they may have crossed on their way. With the notable exception of Hungary who closed parts of its Western and Southern borders through militarised fences in mid-September and mid-October 2015 respectively, the Balkan route ceased being an illegalised pathway into Europe and instead became a formalised corridor.

The »Balkan corridor« was opened as a quasi-legal passageway into the EU along which states facilitated and accelerated people's transit across their territory against all regulations making up the EU border regime—in particular the Dublin Regulation

2 | See also Cantat/Rajaram (2018) for a similar analysis in the Hungarian context.

that requires people to claim asylum in their first country of entry. The corridor was however an ambivalent development (e.g. Santer/Wriedt 2016; Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016). On the one hand, it was an unprecedented admission on the part of governments who stopped attempting to stop movements along the route. On the other hand, the formalisation of the route represented the first step towards the reassertion of state control (see e.g. Kasparek 2016). In November 2015, states restrained movement along the corridor through the exclusion of some travellers on the basis of nationality (only Afghanis, Syrians, and Iraqis were able to travel). In February 2016, people from Afghanistan were also excluded from free movement. Eventually, on 8 March 2016, it was announced that the Balkan corridor would be fully closed: this would be achieved through the implementation of the infamous EU-Turkey deal, an agreement aiming at preventing departures from Turkish coasts, and the official closure of borders along the route. This marked a return to a situation of closure, mass illegalisation and push-backs, and violence for people along the route. Migratory movement did not stop as people continued entering (and exiting) Greece. But journeys were made more difficult, dangerous, slower, and people became stranded in various localities along the route. A growing number of people became stranded in Serbia, wishing, but unable, to continue their journeys—a number that reached over 7,000 by the spring 2017.[3]

Contextualising migration and solidarity in Belgrade in a critical analysis of the naming, opening, and transformation of the Balkan route is important. Its name is underpinned by specific geographical and symbolic imaginations. It relies on an imagined geography that constructs the Balkans as external to Europe on the basis of a distinction between Europe as a space of coherence and civilisation on the one hand, and its threatening, unruly, and chaotic neighbourhood (Rajaram 2016) on the other. It also reactivates stigmas inherited from the 1990s wars and before, which regard the Balkans as always potentially being prone to criminality and backward nationalism (Bjelić/Savić 2002). This depiction of the Balkans as Europe's threatening outside leaves unscrutinised the varying relationships that the EU entertains with the states that came out of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and that constitute the territories refugees cross when they travel along the route (see El-Shaarawi/Razsa 2018: 5; see also Peović Vuković 2018 for a particular focus on Croatia). These range from full membership to the EU, the Schengen Area, and the Eurozone for Slovenia, over countries (such as Serbia) engaged in long and implausible acces-

3 | Although hundreds of thousands of people have passed through Serbia on the way to Western Europe, the UNHCR estimated the number of refugees in Serbia in May 2017 at 7,219 (UNHCR 2017).

sion processes to others whose very statehood still goes unrecognised by the EU (e.g. Kosovo) (see El-Shaarawi/Razsa 2018: 19). These newly-formed states have themselves been involved in aggressive bordering practices not only as part of processes of state-formation but also due to their integration within an EU border regime premised on outsourcing its most brutal aspects to peripheral countries as this paper will further reflect on.

The first section of the paper operates as a framing section in which I provide a brief overview of the choice and methods of fieldwork and the key concepts mobilised in the paper. The paper then looks at how »solidarities in transit« (Kallius 2019)[4] emerged in Belgrade over 2015 and 2016 and analyses the heterogeneous community of actors that came together in order to provide assistance to people on the move and to support refugees' self-organised living spaces. The third section examines the gradual marginalisation of refugee presence and solidarity in Belgrade. It shows how Serbian authorities—thanks to vast amounts of EU funding—established an official, camp-based, and heavily regulated refugee aid field from which political subversive actors and practices have been excluded. Within this field, NGOs find themselves subjected to particular forms of disciplining governmentality. The final section argues that this process must be understood in the context of the particular political economy of migrant governance that emerged in Serbia in relation to EU efforts to more firmly inscribe the country into its border regime.

Studying Migration Solidarity in Belgrade

This paper is based on several visits to Belgrade over 2016 and 2017 and a five-month intensive fieldwork between March and July 2018. It is located within a broader research project concerned with migrants' and solidarity practices along the Balkan route as part of which I conducted fieldwork in several other countries, including Greece and Hungary. Both Greece and Hungary have received acute media and academic attention: the former has been primarily studied in the context of »the Greek solidarity boom«[5] characterised by important arrivals of solidarity actors, but also of humanitarians, researchers, journalists, film-makers, and other parties concerned with engaging in, or documenting, the explosion in refugee solidarity practices. Hungary

4 | See Kallius (2019), who used the idea of »solidarity in transit« in her study of the Hungarian context.

5 | This is a term Katerina Rozakou used in several public talks and in private conversations.

for its part has triggered scrutiny for the radical anti-migrant campaigns and policies as well as the »border spectacle« deployed by its government (Cantat 2017). However, recent migratory events and related solidarity mobilisations in Serbia have been less written about.

Yet, as this paper sets out to show, the rise and fall of migrant presence and solidarity in Belgrade tells us much about the emergence of supportive popular responses to mass displacement in Europe (what we may call »vernacular humanitarianisms« following Čarna Brković 2017) and their ongoing marginalisation and disqualification by national and European authorities. The case of Serbia is also an insightful vantage point to understand the logics and mechanisms of the EU border control regime and the implications (on migrants but also on local actors) of the integration of the country within a system premised on encamping and marginalising people on the move (Obradovic-Wochnik 2018; see also Cantat 2017 for a discussion of the Hungarian situation). It is an important example of the ways in which global processes (securitisation of migration, neoliberalisation, and financialisation of public spaces) become embedded into particular contexts and of how these broader dynamics become rooted in the social relations and marginalisations that characterise local spaces. This is a general theoretical point (how global processes play out in local spaces) as well as an argument specific to Serbia and Belgrade which evidences their particular relation to the EU and the way they become subjected to the dispossessive forces of neoliberal development.

The fieldwork centred on neighbourhoods of downtown Belgrade where refugees had become visible in 2015 and 2016 in public parks and unoccupied buildings. It is important to note that the areas that became used by refugees and migrants in Belgrade coincided with sites earmarked for urban renovation projects where practices of dispossession and displacement of poorer local residents were already underway (see e.g. Ruff 2017; No Borders Hostel 2016; Jovanović/Miletić/Radovanović 2018). One of the latest and most controversial of such projects is known as the Belgrade Waterfront: a three-billion-euro urban project along the Sava riverfront, funded by an Emirati firm and subsidised with Serbian public resources, which will include luxury apartments and the largest shopping mall in the Balkans. In order to make way for the Belgrade Waterfront located near the historically working-class neighbourhood of Savamala, several hundred families that lived in previously state-owned houses were evicted. These downtown Belgrade evictions were taking place some hundred meters from the sites where refugees transiting through, or stranded in, Belgrade met and resided for some time—before themselves being removed. Both rounds of evictions—those of poor residents and those of migrants' squats—were underpinned by similar ideological and cultural discourses which masked the structural violence of

the state and capital with narratives of modernity, urbanism, and Europeanity.[6] The denunciation of the Waterfront project, and of the dispossession that accompanied its construction and affected both working-class people and refugees in Belgrade, was a key narrative I encountered from participants in the field. Many brought out connections between the displacement from urban spaces imposed on both impoverished local residents and on refugees. In that sense, while the transformation of regimes of urban spaces under conditions of neoliberal capitalism is not at the centre of this paper, the example of the Waterfront project still provides important insights and context to some of the complexities and tensions characterising Belgrade as a research site.

What it evidences in particular is how pauperised residents, national or non-national, were constructed as unwanted, surplus populations, hindering the development of Belgrade into a ›new European capital‹ and slowing down the process through which public space would be transformed into a space for the reproduction and accumulation of capital (Cantat/Rajaram 2018). However, as rightly emphasised by Obradovic-Wochnik (2018), migrants are also governed through particular mechanisms that differ from those applied to other social groups seen as undesirable. In particular, the availability of EU funding dedicated to the construction of migrant reception camps means that their marginalisation is orchestrated through their encampment and the NGO-isation of aid. In that sense, logics of racialised border control intersect with neoliberal capitalist processes producing a particular »migration-neoliberalism nexus« (ibid.: 73).

The paper explores these dynamics and their effects on solidarity actors through insights collected through twenty-seven interviews and numerous informal conversations with a range of individuals involved in assisting refugees in Belgrade in a variety of roles, including independent activists and volunteers, representatives of local and international NGOs, and state officers working for the Serbian Commissariat for refugees and migration (CRMRS). I also attended and observed a number of events bringing together representatives of local and international groups, including UN agencies and government organisations concerned with refugee protection, and consulted relevant reports and press releases from grassroots actors monitoring and reporting on their activities and the broader situation (often with a focus on border violence), as well as larger organisations such as the European Commission or Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). To preserve anonymity, all individual names have

6 | For interesting parallels of processes of urban dispossession, past and present, in Belgrade, see Jovanović/Miletić/Radovanović (2018).

been changed, and I also avoid naming organisations unless participants explicitly agreed otherwise or the information was made public in other ways.[7]

As mentioned before, the majority of the fieldwork was conducted in 2018: this proved particularly challenging considering that refugee presence in Belgrade had largely been evacuated by then. This raised particular questions and methodological challenges: What happened to the people who were using these sites and whom I had met during my previous visits? How to study something which had been erased and whose traces had been largely concealed? What might be of importance at this particular point in time for the many actors who had been involved in creating and sustaining social spaces hosting refugees in Belgrade over the previous years? I spent the first weeks of my 2018 fieldwork speaking with activists, refugees, and colleagues, and figuring out how my presence as a researcher may be useful at this particular conjuncture. One issue that came up several times was precisely a willingness to reconstitute the chain of events and mechanisms that led to such an absence, and to clarify the political and economic motives and dynamics that had played a role in the process. It is therefore primarily with this objective that I continued my research in the city over the next few months.

As will be developed in the paper, one of the key findings is that, although there is no law formally criminalising migration solidarity in Serbia, the authorities successfully marginalised migrants (spatially and socially) and solidarity actors. I argue that this was achieved through the establishment of a state-controlled and camp-based refugee aid field funded by European money within which discipline was exercised over people acting in support of refugees in various ways. These findings complement insights developed by other researchers who embraced the same topic (see, in particular, Jovanović/Miletić/Radovanović 2018; Obradovic-Wochnik 2018). The key mechanism that allows the exercise of disciplinary power is that refugee support groups have to register as NGOs in order to remain operative in this context. In consequence, they become dependent on the authorities to gain access to the camps where refugees now reside and on donors to secure funding allowing them to operate in a formalised way. I use discipline and disciplinary power in a Foucauldian sense in order to understand the ways control is exercised through a range of tools, techniques, and leverages that render individuals and groups more docile without necessitating the use of force. There is a biopolitical dimension to this process: it is pro-

7 | Further details on individual interviewees can be found in the list of references. However, interviews were conducted under the promise of anonymity and only information specifically agreed on has been disclosed. This means it was difficult to provide more details on the biographies, affiliations, and personal profiles of the people I have interviewed in the paper.

ductive of particular (compliant, depoliticised) subjectivities and modes of behaviour (Obradovic-Wochnik 2018; Cantat/Rajaram 2018).

Here also, the »migration-neoliberalism« nexus identified by Obradovic-Wochnik (2018) is a useful frame of analysis. It allows grasping the ways in which autonomous migrant and solidarity subjectivities, such as those enacted by people attempting to produce social spaces for refugees outside camps and the state-controlled system, become doubly disciplined. On the one hand, they are targeted through neoliberal logics premised on maximising the use-value of urban space: this generates desirable subjectivities determined by the ability to consume and generate profit and excludes other ways of being and using the city. The dynamic through which an image of a good and desirable urban citizen becomes connected to consumption practices is a broader biopolitical process that reshapes the boundaries of citizenship along class lines in particular and does not concern only people on the move (see Cantat/Rajaram 2018). On the other hand, migrants and their supporters are also interpellated by authorities through practices associated to border control regimes, premised on neutralising politicised socialities and on producing compliant migrants in camps as well as docile aid workers devoid of political ambitions. The last section of the paper will detail these disciplining mechanisms and their effects. Moreover, as we will also see, disciplinary mechanisms sometimes exist in tension with more coercive practices so that groups and individuals attempting to circumvent them may be exposed to forms of violence. The next part introduces the emergence of migration solidarity actors in central Belgrade.

Migration and Solidarity in Belgrad

By 2015, public parks and unoccupied buildings of downtown Belgrade had become hubs where travellers passing through the country would gather and attempt to organise their journeys onwards. At the time, the Serbian government's official discourse towards refugees was one of humanitarianism, emphasising the authorities' openness and their good treatment of people on the move. Serbian authorities routinely contrasted their humanitarian inclinations to the behaviour of neighbouring countries, particularly Hungary and Bulgaria, renowned for their ill treatment of refugees (Jovanović/Avramović 2015). This humanitarian discourse was in large part aimed at the EU as a means of demonstrating Serbia's capacity to uphold human rights and, hence, of cleaning the country from certain stigmas connected to its 1990s image (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Milan/Pirro 2018; El-Shaarawi/Razsa 2018). At the same time, the authorities also insisted on their capacity to ›manage‹ migra-

tion in order to show their willingness to abide by the role of border guard of the EU's external borders. This echoes important insights on the imbrication of humanitarian motives with processes of securitisation (Fassin 2011) as well as analyses of how a rhetoric that mixes security and humanitarian concerns is mobilised in order to justify further border control (Vaughan-Williams 2015).

In 2015, in spite of Serbian authorities' humanitarian discourse towards refugees, the situation on the ground was experienced in strikingly different terms. National and local authorities appeared as both unwilling and unable to provide support to people on the move. The social spaces created and used by refugees quickly became supported by the solidarity work of a number of volunteers and activists who provided clothes, daily food, and other items to their temporary occupants. One participant explained: »we had to do something, because the government was doing nothing« (interview with Fidel, 23.04.2018). This can be connected to discussions of the way in which post-Yugoslav solidarity politics have developed in the interstices of alternatively present and absent, securitised and neglectful, states that »emerge and recede in relationship to particular kinds of citizens and non-citizens« (Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 315, 319).

It is thus also important to think about migration solidarity in Belgrade in connection to the ways in which citizens (and others) adapt to a post-war, post-socialist and neoliberalising context in which the state's capacity or willingness to acknowledge and fulfil their needs has dramatically receded. Notably, in this context, some of the claims put forward by people in the region are articulated through imaginaries of a past relation between state and citizens, sometimes premised on imaginations of Yugoslav, socialist, or Non-Aligned ethics and socialities (Petrović 2013). In their study of refugee and activist struggles, El-Shaarawi and Razsa (2018) explain how the Balkan corridor roughly followed the path of the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity initiated by Tito in the 1950s and has now been replaced by national motorways (see also Peović Vuković 2018). The memory of this socialist infrastructure of international circulation also animated the social movements that refugees encountered along the route, even as new nationalist and Europeanist politics attempted to stop and impede their journeys.

The volunteer and activist groups that emerged in Belgrade over 2015 and 2016 to assist refugees formed a rather diverse community of actors. It included politicised activist networks with autonomist, anti-nationalist politics as well as groups of independent and grassroots volunteers moved into action by a variety of motives ranging from humanitarian compassion to more critical stances toward national and European border policies. A range of local NGOs, both pre-existing—including since the 1990s in response to displacement triggered by the wars—and newly formed, also

intervened alongside UN bodies (primarily UNHCR and UNICEF) and large international organisations, such as the Danish Refugee Council, MSF, and the International Federation of the Red Cross, among others. These actors varied significantly along ideological lines, previous experience (if any), political background, or operational modes. This configuration, whereby actors not traditionally cooperating came together in complex and often varying relational constellations, is not specific to Belgrade. In various points of transit or fixation along the Balkan route, coalitions of actors shaped by local politics, histories, and contexts emerged to »fill the gaps« left by states (Cantat/Feischmidt 2018).

This paper looks more specifically at the segment of this field that started in a largely independent, non-institutionalised fashion and operated under the label of »solidarity« in Belgrade. Migration solidarity actors in Belgrade comprised both Serbian and foreign individuals who originally acted as part of informal structures operated by volunteers or a very small number of (usually poorly) paid staff. The solidarity coalition was loose and largely heterogeneous in terms of the social profiles and situations of its members, making it difficult to offer a sociological overview. Most of the people involved seemed, at first sight, to belong to rather highly educated sections of the urban »middle classes«: they generally held university degrees or were at university, and those who had professional activities were mainly involved in fields such as civil society organisations, the arts, journalism, or academia. However, deeper conversations often revealed quite serious instability and precarity in their everyday life, particularly from a financial point-of-view. The panel of individual situations I came across ranged from people involved in small organisations or social spaces active in feminist and anti-fascist (and sometimes anti-capitalist) politics which managed to provide them with a (minimal) income, to a few people with no secure income or housing who struggled to find a place to stay on a regular basis and alternated between family accommodation, short-term stays in squats, and temporary flat-sharing situations. Yet, these also included a few people who, to the contrary, seemed to have their own sufficient resources (either financial or social in terms of securing various employment contracts for tasks such as translation, freelance journalism, curating events, and so on) to make activism and related activities their main occupation. Finally, a significant number of the people I met had a main job, often quite poorly paid, with little connection to their activism, and would use their evenings and weekends for political work. It must be noted that, for many, this mode of timesharing between an income-securing job and political activities was a longer-term lifestyle and did not start with their involvement in refugee solidarity. By the time I conducted formal fieldwork in Belgrade in 2018, however, a strong divide had emerged across two broad categories: people who entered the NGO field to sup-

port refugees as part of paid employment, and those who refused to do so, or could not, for a range of reasons.

Hence, even within this reduced category, marked differences remained across personal situations but also political positionings. Solidarity groups included for instance the local No Border network, made up of both local and international activists and supporting radical anti-border politics, and coalitions set up by expats—often with little pre-existing political experience, but who wanted to respond to the situation in the city. A number of foreign volunteers and activists also travelled to Serbia specifically to engage in refugee support: this pertains to a rather novel phenomenon which may be labelled *itinerant volunteerism or activism*. This somewhat new form of volunteer or activist engagement relies on the hyper-mobility of young people (particularly from the global North) able, through a variety of arrangements, to travel for weeks, months, or sometimes years at a time, and who follow the lines of movement of refugees and become active at points of immobilisation in order to provide basic services such as food, clothing, and other items. This is often the source of tensions: in Serbia, as in Greece and Hungary, local activists have sometimes complained about the patronising attitude and lack of knowledge of the local context on the part of international groups and individuals as well as about issues around responsibility, as some people may leave when things turn complicated or risky—and others not. However, the Serbian context seems characterised by a relatively collaborative model with less such tensions reported than in Greece or Hungary. A number of organisations set up by international volunteers are considered with sympathy and respect by local activists. The No Name Kitchen, set up in 2017 by Spanish volunteers, has, for instance, been repetitively praised by Serbian activists. Similarly, activists from Belgrade I spoke to speak in comradely terms of Hot Food Idomeni, a volunteer group formed at the Greek-Macedonian border that started being active in Belgrade in the early winter 2016.

In spite of visible differences in organisational modes and political trajectories, what seemed to bring together individuals and groups which mobilised the category of solidarity was the belief that their way of supporting refugees could be distinguished from other ways of providing assistance, as enacted by large-scale humanitarian or state agencies. This translated in particular into an insistence on their activities going beyond—or being different from—the mere distribution of goods. A strong emphasis was therefore placed on equalitarian social interactions, which may be described as »solidarity socialities« (Rozakou 2016). Solidarity socialities refer here to the types of connections and meanings which develop between individuals and groups who are engaged in a relation where aid and support are given and received in ways that attempt to subvert the top-down, securitised forms of humanitarianism

organised and deployed by states and official humanitarian actors. Some activists, for instance, were present in the parks everyday to provide and share warm tea, mostly in order to engage in conversations and build connections with people. When asking a volunteer from another group why giving out tea seemed important, he explained that, from his perspective, there was a particular meaning and symbol to sharing a cup of tea: »it makes people feel comfortable, it is a part of culture: you share tea or coffee with someone, it is like saying: »tell me, I am interested, let's speak« (interview with Mario, 26.04.2018). Participants often explained that what they understood as solidarity activities was as much about provision in itself (of various material goods) as about connections and sharing. Karika also told me that there was a fundamental value to »time spent and shared« and went on to say: »sometimes we cannot do all that much for a person. We might even feel like we are useless, but you learn also a lot yourself in this situation, and you learn the importance of not just distributing things but of being there your whole self and taking the time« (interview with Karika, 02.05.2018).

Another key leitmotiv of Serbian grassroots actors concerned their relation with the Serbian authorities. A participant explained:

> »In general what we understand as solidarity groups are those who refuse to implement the state's plan about the migrants, which has been one of not well-hidden racism… People like Vučić [President of Serbia] are playing on a double front: you know, they do everything to trigger hatred and defiance towards the migrants… but in the same time Vučić, he came sometimes to have his photo taken with refugee kids and stuff like that, to look as if he is a good humanitarian person… So for me all the groups who see this hypocrisy and denounce it, they are with the solidarity.« (interview with Karika, 02.05.2018)

Similar readings of solidarity articulated in opposition to the Serbian government and to a top-down mode of relating to people on the move were echoed in other interviews. Particularly in the time of fast transit, the focus of solidarity work was not on the building of common struggles but rather on the performance of alternative modes of connection, based on care and support. As put by a participant:

> »When you only meet someone for 48 hours, there is not much space to talk with him or her. […] What does solidarity with that person mean? In my case, it means to show that unlike this government, I care about people, wherever they come from. You know, we will give some food or tea with a smile, which says I relate to you and I know we have

> something in common and I value it. We will speak and chat and share what we can.« (interview with Fidel, 23.04.2018)

Many of the grassroots activists and groups present in the sites where refugees gathered were associated with other political networks, including anti-nationalist or anti-war groups. As observed by Nadia El-Shaarawi and Maple Razsa (2018) the Balkan route traversed the borders of the newly formed states of the region, and, hence, came across the social movements that had emerged in opposition to ultra-nationalist state-making processes. These movements might draw on »enduring forms of historical imagination and cosmopolitan sensibilities that span the borders of states, nationalities, and languages« (Henig 2016: 909, quoted in El-Shaarawi/Razsa 2018: 10). These may range from the legacy of Yugoslav socialist internationalism and the Non-Aligned movement to local smuggling networks developed in the 1990s during international sanctions against Serbia and former experiences of forced displacement and circulation (see El-Shaarawi/Razsa 2018: 17).

As we will see in the next part of this paper, over time, these groups had to renegotiate their relationship with the Serbian state, which strategically reorganised refugee assistance in Belgrade in ways that led to an almost complete institutionalisation of the field through the encampment of migrants. This often involves deep transformation in the form and discourses adopted by these groups.

The Institutionalisation of Refugee Support

Up to the closure of the Balkan corridor, Serbian authorities were relatively disinterested in refugees, grassroots communities and their supporters in downtown Belgrade. Around the spring and summer 2016, however, this started changing. In July 2016, the municipality engaged in an impromptu renovation of parks, which soon was used as a pretext to ban refugee presence (Obradovic-Wochnik/Stojić Mitrović 2016). In April, Miksalište, an important service provider, had been displaced as part of evictions anticipating the Belgrade Waterfront project. The Serbian state forced the organisation out before destroying the building entirely. Other buildings used as shelters by refugees were also dislodged, such as the short-lived No Border squat also closely located to Miksalište. In November, a refugee aid kiosk ran by the volunteer group Info Park, located in the colloquially named »Afghan park«, was shut down by municipal authorities and forced to move to another location.

In November 2016, an official Open Letter was circulated to refugee aid groups by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy. One part read:

> »[…] assistance and support in the form of food, clothing, footwear, encouraging migrants to reside outside the designated permanent asylum centers and transit reception centers are [no] longer acceptable, this [particularly] on the territory of the Belgrade city municipality.« (Ministry of Labour 2016, as quoted in Border Monitoring Serbia 2016)

The Open Letter was issued as the situation of refugees stranded in Serbia further deteriorated following the reinforcement of border control along the Balkan route. People faced a situation of immobilisation and stagnation with serious implications for their mental and physical wellbeing. Although not subject to the direct violence that many refugees experienced in neighbouring Bulgaria and Hungary, people stuck inside Serbia faced indirect violence and neglect through living in extreme poverty, intensive social exclusion, and lack of access to care (among other things). Many migrants developed complex forms of trauma as their experience in Serbia came to exacerbate already existing psychological conditions.

Although the Open Letter was not a formal piece of legislation, it came with important consequences for groups supporting migrants. The implicit message was that either groups would conform to the new camp-based securitised model of care provision, or they would sever their relationship with the state. One participant explained: »It was more blackmail than law, but it scared us to be honest. We could have, like, lost our status as an NGOs, which you know is quite a big risk to take, because this is where people work and their livelihood and so on« (interview with Srdjan, 25.04.2018).

While the official discourse was that camps could host all migrants, research participants explained that, even in the cases where migrants attempted to move to camps, it had proven difficult due to limited capacities. For single men in particular, who fell out of priority lists based on vulnerability criteria broadly oblivious to masculine vulnerabilities, access to camps near Belgrade was virtually impossible. Many people also preferred to stay in self-organised places around Belgrade or near the country's borders, including in Šid and Subotica, due to fears that they would find themselves further away from the borders they wished to cross or the smugglers on whom they had become dependent to organise onward journeys.

This attempt at stopping grassroots forms of assistance towards refugees seems to replicate logics of deterrence and criminalisation existing in many other countries. Yet, beyond deterrence, the Serbian government engaged in a more thorough operation whereby it produced the refugee population outside the camps as legitimately negligible and unworthy of care. The Open Letter implied that refugees lived on the streets out of choice: they were thus responsible for their neglect and legitimate tar-

gets of harassment. By stating its capacity to take care of those willing to abide by its rules, the state produced a legitimate public deserving of attention while justifying its negligence towards others. The production of a binary between people inside and outside the camps moved the authority to govern away from society, thus, authoritatively reasserting the primacy of the state in governing and ruling over refugees and those supporting them. This move was a key pillar in the institutionalisation and restructuration of the field of refugee assistance in ways that placed the state as the key actor of ›migration management‹. The process was also a crucial step in the integration of Serbia within the EU border control regime and was made possible with European funding reserved for building and running camps.

This becomes clear when reflecting on the situation in »the barracks«, an important site of self-organised refugee accommodation in central Belgrade. The barracks were a series of abandoned warehouses behind the city's central bus and train station that had been used since 2014 to accommodate people on the move but were more largely occupied in late summer 2016, as people were pushed out of public parks and as temperatures started to drop in the autumn. They subsequently hosted between 1,000 and 2,000 people through one of the harshest winters in decades. The buildings lacked windows, heating, or hygienic facilities. Whilst conditions were extremely tough, a self-organised community emerged. People installed tents, makeshift toilets and collective kitchens, and organised life in the barracks with the support of volunteers and activists. Even after the issuance of the Open Letter, a number of groups and individuals decided to break the governmental order not to help. In fact, many participants thought that, for some time, in spite of the Letter, the authorities tolerated volunteer activities as a means to make sure people had access to minimum services for survival. As put by Mario: »it is a miracle that no one died of cold or starvation in the barracks« (interview with Mario, 26.04.2018). This tacit acceptance eventually receded and, on 10 May 2017, the barracks were evicted in dubious, reportedly violent, circumstances.[8] After they were made to exit the barracks, refugees were gathered in parks and boarded onto buses. They were all taken to camps. The next morning, bulldozers razed the barracks to the ground, together with personal belongings the residents had not managed to collect. This event was particularly shocking for many of the people I spoke to for this research. The above account was reconstituted on the basis of interviews, and it clearly appeared that this episode marked an important shift and left a strong impression on refugees and their supporters.

8 | Several participants confirmed the violence. Video footage of these incidents can also be seen (see Goddard 2017).

Indeed, this encampment was a key step in the state-led structuration of the refugee aid field and in the integration of the country into an EU-led regime of controlling borders and mobilities. Publicly displayed grassroots assistance—and the friendships and socialities that come from these encounters—became *de facto* impossible in Belgrade. In order to remain operative, aid groups had to register as official NGOs and gain access to camps through the Serbian state. In other words, the possibility to provide support and care to refugees became severely conditional on approval from the state. Informal groups and registered organisations with oppositional politics effectively saw their possibility to provide aid invalidated. A participant explained:

> »Just before destroying the barracks, the Commissariat had called a meeting… They wanted to tell us how it would work from now, and what we could do as NGOs in their new system… they didn't tell us the truth of how they would evacuate the barracks. But they were somewhat being nice, you know, they were kind of saying that if we help them with the situation, then we can keep working with the refugees… but in the camps.« (interview with Srdjan, 25.04.2018)

In other words, Serbian and local authorities institutionalised refugee assistance into a formalised field within which it concentrated the authority to select who could act and under which conditions. In order to assure the obedience of refugee support groups in Belgrade, they endowed themselves with a key leverage which could be mobilised to discipline or exclude groups that refuse to abide by the new rules: the power to decide who could gain access to the camps where refugees now resided.

This move had ideological implications: it was now expected that »civil society« would add its voice to that of the state in claiming that the only appropriate way to help refugees was through the state-controlled and EU-funded system. Institutionalised assistance became the only legitimate form of support. By forcing groups and individuals that had previously operated in independent, grassroots ways to become NGOs in order to remain operative, and by tying these NGOs to the securitised camp approach, the Serbian state established a disciplinary system within which actors were all encouraged to reproduce such forms of governance. It must also be noted that the management of this official aid field involves other organisations, perhaps most prominently the UNHCR who plays a key role in coordinating the activities and funding of various groups (including domestic institutionalised NGOs, governmental units such as CRMRS and ministries, and international NGOs) and officially acts in support of Serbian authorities.

Disciplining Solidarity

The establishment of an aid system strictly linked to state-run, EU-funded camps brought about further control both over refugees and over those non-state actors who had decided to continue their aid activities by registering and seeking approval from the government. Of course, this is not to say that there were no other reasons why people acting voluntarily in support of refugees in urban spaces became less mobilised over time. Among other things, one must take material issues preventing people from continuing to engage in unpaid, time-consuming activities into account, together with experiences of exhaustion. As explained above, solidarity actors faced various issues including financial precarity or a division of their time between political work and full-time employment that also contributed to activist fatigue. The very fact of being perceived as an activist was also a source of social difficulties. When I asked Mario what he thought were the biggest issues facing activists, his reply was multi-layered and shed light on the difficulty people mobilising against nationalist sentiments and the authorities could face in Serbia. He told me:

> »The Serbian society is still predominantly nationalistic and, as you know, the current government are the same people who were responsible for wars and crimes in the 1990s: that means that political activists can feel like complete outsiders to the dominant politics in Serbia… Actually, by fighting against nationalism, including by helping refugees in the barracks, we are just making our life harder in every sense—for our social experience as well as for ever finding a job.« (interview with Mario, 03.10.2018)

Mario went on to explain that this had a double effect: while it means greater difficulty and precarity for activists by enhancing feelings of social alienation and chances of fatigue, it also tightens links and care relationships within the activist community and can, thus, increase determination and feelings of mutual responsibility and resilience. He added:

> »Sometimes we need to back off, because we are exhausted, because of the whole context and the feeling it is us ›against the whole world‹, but also in a more practical sense because the burden on our backs is way too big, as for example in the barracks where there were hundreds of people in need, and resources were scarce. But this sense of catastrophe every day also forces you to continue. That's when it is important to be part of a group, to take some days off sometimes and have others to turn to and ask for support.« (ibid.)

In this context, the fact that some supporters of refugees decided to accept paid positions within the newly established humanitarian field can be seen as a response to the difficulty faced by unpaid volunteers and activists at social, physical, and financial levels. It may indeed have been perceived as a way to remain active in a more sustainable fashion and to keep engaging with people on the move while securing survival. In spite of these considerations, some of the activists who did not take this decision expressed their disagreement with this strategy. For instance, Fidel told me that:

> »In my understanding there are two kinds of people: those seeking job opportunities and who came here because they saw a chance of establishing themselves in the NGO sector, if possible in an international NGO, and in that way to gain profit. I am not saying they are always lacking ideology but even if they have it, they can put it behind if they have to. They are strictly focusing on doing their jobs and they don't care even if it contradicts their views.« (interview with Fidel, 23.04.2018)

As previously noted, this indicates the emergence of a strong divide within the loose network of volunteers and activists who had mobilised over 2015 and early 2016 to support refugees in the city. While it is likely that people's intentions for making diverging decisions were more diverse and complex than pictured in Fidel's account, his description still points to the serious compromises with their previous mode of engaging that had to be agreed on by people who started working in the official humanitarian field. A participant employed in a group that started in 2015 as an independent volunteer network and registered as an NGO in 2016 explained the radical change his organisation experienced:

> »For two years, their [his organisation, before he joined] entire work was taking place in Belgrade, first in the parks and then in the barracks… In a few days, it completely changed as these people we were helping were taken far away from Belgrade. We had access to the camps through an agreement with the Commissariat, so we started doing some activities there and that was all we could do.« (interview with Simon, 09.05.2018)

The literature on NGO-isation and professionalisation has documented their disciplinary effects and association with neoliberal modes of governance in a range of contexts (Omvedt 1994; Hearn 1998; Alvarez 1999; Hanafi/Tabar 2002; Jad 2004; Stubbs 2006). Arundhati Roy (2014) has equated NGO-isation, by which she means

the phenomenon through which the field of social change becomes characterised by a proliferation of funded, registered NGOs, with a denaturation of resistance and, in fact, politics. As neoliberalising states withdraw from providing public services in a range of areas, NGOs appear to »fill in the gaps« in ways that are limited or unaccountable to the people served through these services and biased by a dependency on donors. The NGO-isation of politics, she insists, turns rights into aid and political actors into recipients and victims. The effect on politics is substantial, as »NGOs [...] present their work in a shallow framework, more or less shorn of a political or historical context« in a process that »turns confrontation into negotiation [...] [and] de-politicizes resistance« (ibid.). These depoliticising dynamics are exacerbated for refugees who are turned into aid recipients within a camp-based system of humanitarian aid administration. As powerfully illustrated by critical scholars and activists, such modes of intervention based on charity and humanitarianism also have depoliticising and disciplining effects (Fassin 2011; Malkki 1996; 2015; Ticktin 2011).

In the regional context, Elissa Helms (2013) also shows how injunctions to become recognisable to the NGO-centric vision of donors transformed women's movements in Bosnia and at times weakened powerful practices of community activism rooted in the country's socialist past. Prescriptive demands from—Western—donors to conform to certain ideas of what »civic engagement« or »civil society« should look like are premised on essentialising visions of the region as suffering from a democracy deficit or civic underdevelopment often betraying a profound lack of understanding of local modalities of engagement and activism (Helms 2013). Here, funding again operates as a mechanism of power which successfully disciplines groups into modifying their behaviour in order to survive.

In the Serbian situation, »becoming an NGO« was also a process marked by the injunction to perform a sense of professionalism (Sapoch 2018; Pendaki forthcoming offers strong parallels in the Greek context). When I asked participants to reflect on what would guarantee access to camps and funding, they pointed to the need to present their organisation in a way that seemed in line with particular representations of civil society and professional aid providers. Spontaneous forms of relating with refugees, for instance, became increasingly discouraged within this model where the appearance of professionalism seemed connected to the assertion of a distance between the NGO and its »beneficiaries«. One participant explained:

> »[My organisation] started professionalising before the eviction [of the barracks], towards the end of 2016. This shift changed our way to work in the first place. But after the eviction, when we started working more in camps, then I can really say it changed a lot... in the way I speak

> with, work with, even I think ›deal‹ with the refugees. The context of the camp, I mean the setting, is different and it doesn't feel the same as if we are sitting on a bench in a park, even if the situation is hard, it is more like speaking to a neighbour, for instance. But just also now we are not like doing this as volunteers, we are staff, and we need to act in the way of staff.« (interview with Srdjan, 25.04.2018)

Unlike the solidarity interactions that Srdjan was previously engaged in, the relations he develops with refugees in camps as an employee of an official NGO that has secured camp access through the Serbian state and funding through international aid agencies are inherently »hierarchical, non-reciprocal, non-dialogical and mediatised« (Pendaki forthcoming for Greece). They are in this sense thoroughly depoliticised.

Moreover, as NGOs, these groups also had to engage in competition over access to funding. This competition had, at first, an effect on the relation between organisations. An employee for a recently registered NGO that started as a network of volunteers providing assistance in Belgrade's public spaces remarked:

> »Sometimes we are really walking on eggs… If other groups perceive that you are trying to infringe on their territory, they can become very nasty… In 2016 … we had a good working relationship with almost all the other groups; we could share information and resources like storage spaces and stuff like that… Well now, we don't see it like we need each other, rather, we see each other as enemies or like competitors … .« (interview with Simon, 09.05.2018)

As put by Srdjan, »helping refugees is only part of the job now… we still do that but also it is about making your space in the market« (interview with Srdjan, 25.04.2018). This was often referred to as an inevitable consequence of neoliberal capitalist modes of functioning which produce their own forms of control and governmentality:

> »The irony is that we now have interest in the system because it has become our jobs, our source of income… So we started by asking for government's action like for them to take responsibility for the people, and they didn't because they don't take care of the people as we are now in the capitalist system… and then… we became one of the organisations which need things to be like this to survive… So we started all this to change things and now we need the *status quo*.« (interview with Simon, 09.05.2018)

In turn, survival within the *status quo* also influences the way organisations speak and think of their work and report on their activities. Some participants complained that

other organisations inflated their activity reports, to »look as if they do more than the truth« and, thus, secure more funding or satisfy their donors (interview with Danika, 30.04.2018). Some participants explained that the pressure to find a particular organisational »niche«, a service area within which the organisation could present itself as competent and attractive to donors, became more important than the work done with refugees. This point was regularly repeated in relation to the criteria of vulnerability that often underpins calls for projects from large donors and institutions. A researcher who has also worked with numerous INGOs and local groups noticed:

> »Donors only focus on pre-defined vulnerable groups, mostly women and children. As a consequence, all NGOs who want to access funding have to create projects addressing the situation of women and children primarily. And so there is nothing for young men, including unaccompanied minors in their late teens. If you constantly ignore a group on the basis that it doesn't fit your vulnerability criteria, then you actually produce the most vulnerable group of all!« (Discussion with Jelena, 25.08.2018)

All in all, with the institutionalisation of the refugee aid field, NGOs find themselves subjected to particular forms of governmentality whereby they develop an interest in projecting and performing their alignment with official discourses and practices. In turn, they become themselves control elements of the Serbian and European border regimes.

The Political Economy of Migration Governance

This process is underpinned by a particular political economy in which the EU plays a key role. Serbia has been in accession negotiations since 2014: as documented, accession negotiations have a strong regulatory effect on countries. Scholars have in fact noted that EU influence is at its strongest during the accession process (Malova 2011). At the most concrete level perhaps, the overall EU framework around migration, characterised by closed borders and attempts at externalising migration control through the use of third countries as border guards, is the key element explaining why refugees found themselves stranded in Serbia. To this extent, the structural effect of the EU on the migration situation in Serbia cannot be overstated (Milan/Pirro 2018). Moreover, the EU has been the main donor to ›migration management‹ in Serbia. Between 2015 and 2018, the EU has officially disbursed over 100 million euros for this purpose. According to the European Commission, this money has been allocated

»to ensure the accommodation of migrants and refugees in accommodation centers; to support the delivery of health and other primary services to refugees, migrants and host communities; and to reinforce its border control capabilities« (EC Press Release 2017). A large part of these funds was disbursed through the state and the UNHCR, thus further reinforcing NGOs' dependency on those actors.

In other words, the process under examination in this paper, and which refugees and their supporters brutally encountered, is that of (further) integration of Serbia into the EU border control regime. To that effect, the EU operates both through its political capacity (reinforced by the accession process) and through its economic position as the main donor in the field. In turn, the field represents the EU's interest in the establishment of a functional asylum system and the reinforcement of border controls in Serbia. Serbian authorities have shown firm commitment to align their migration policy to the EU's regulations and approach, a position which is instrumental to their accession negotiations.

Moreover, the authorities' interest in aligning themselves with EU norms also lies in the large amounts of funds they have received and which have been largely unaccounted for. According to participants, vast amounts have not been spent correctly: prices for service provision, such as food in the camps, have been inflated and subcontracted to private companies with links to the government. A participant told me: »how comes that when it was Hot Food Idomeni, providing a hot meal cost less than one euro, and when it is through the government, it comes up to four euros per person?« (interview with Nino, 20.04.2018). Nino went on to add:

> »[...] they are happy that Serbia has accepted to control their borders for them. When you ask the EU Delegation: ›where is all the money; where did it go?‹, then they say: ›oh the only problem with Serbia is the reporting is not consistent yet, we are working on it‹. That means everyone is happy to turn a blind eye as long as migrants are kept outside Europe.« (ibid.)

There is thus a convergence of interest between the EU and the Serbian government about accommodating and, in fact, stranding people in state-run camps. For the EU, this means the eradication of the kind of street-level assistance that is associated with the facilitation of onward journeys—thus, making it more difficult for people to travel westward and enter the Union. For Serbia, this means a lucrative source of funds with little financial and ideological associated cost: none of the refugee assistance activities have been funded by the national budget and refugees are kept in camps isolated from the rest of society. Hence, the political economy of migrant governance in Serbia is such that there is an incentive for the authorities to keep people stranded,

socially isolated, and in limbo situations, which allows them both to comply by EU rules and to receive significant amounts of funds whilst not engaging in meaningful activities to make refugees' lives liveable in the country.

However, it has by now become apparent that stranding people in camps could considerably decelerate journeys yet not necessarily suspend them in the long run. For instance, as soon as a new route opened up via Bosnia, camps in Serbia started emptying as many people attempted to restart their journeys. According to an MSF representative, as a result, the EU has started questioning whether the large-scale encampment strategy deployed in Serbia was the most appropriate one for the purpose of keeping people away from its territory. Since 2015, only 37 people have received a protection status in Serbia. When I interviewed CRMRS representatives, they boasted of the comprehensive ›integration‹ program the country was developing. Yet, when I asked them how many people had benefited (in the way of accessing language classes, support in seeking work, and other activities deemed as promoting integration) from this program, the response was 12 (interview with CRMRS officers, 22.05.2018). In recent months, the EU has therefore been actively pushing for Serbia to be more proactive when it comes to ›migrant integration‹.

Conclusion

The institutionalisation of refugee support has produced a model of governance whereby actors in the field have been compelled to either professionalise or quit their activities on a meaningful scale. This mode of governmentality has had differentiated effects on different groups, depending on their ambitions, politics, relation to the state, and their sources of funding. Overall however, the field of refugee support has been restricted in ways that neutralise and marginalise grassroots, critical, and potentially subversive, actors. As a consequence, the prescribed identity for refugee aid groups has become a purely humanitarian, non-political one. In order to survive, they develop an interest in projecting and performing their alignment with official discourses and practices. In turn, they become key elements of the Serbian (and European) border control regime that brings together racialised border controls and securitised forms of humanitarian assistance.

Some of the participants working for NGOs seemed to embrace the apolitical identity of their organisation, yet more expressed their frustration with this assigned position. They found themselves in the vexed situation of having to enact behaviours they did not necessarily agree with on an individual level. Some of the people I interviewed mentioned that taking up paid employment in an NGO to work with refugees

was about »keeping an eye on what happens inside« and »seeing if there is room for change from within«, but ultimately most of those who made this choice hoping there would be a margin of manoeuvre expressed their disillusion and explained how this hope was vexed. As for activists who refused to be involved in state-led assistance, some were able to continue small-scale activities, but these have been made difficult and fragmented. Mario, for instance, continues to support a refugee family now living in one of the reception centres by arranging weekly visits to Belgrade for them and spending time with family members, mainly the children. Yet this has become disconnected from larger political activities or advocacy on behalf of refugees in Serbia as it operates on an individual basis.

What may we learn from the rise and fall of migration solidarity in Belgrade? This paper would like to close with a call for the recognition of potential common grounds for struggles between refugees and other social groups. Indeed, until people were transferred to the camps, the stage where much of the migration solidarity work unfolded was right in the centre of the city, close to other spaces of urban violence and struggle. While the possibility of a convergence between various urban struggles concerned with the right to presence in the city was not fully articulated in Belgrade, the prominence of a narrative that denounced the way in which neoliberal urban development projects such as the Waterfront affected the poorest in the city—migrants and locals alike—could have been pushed further in order to bring together seemingly separated struggles.

Indeed, while this paper focused on specific historical events and situated actors, thinking migration solidarity in Belgrade in relation to different fields and spaces of struggles encourages us to emphasise their possible connections. This effort to identify intersections and commonalities in turn opens up a space for more imaginative and interventionist propositions. As elsewhere, and without overlooking the specificities of the local context or the particular relationship between civic groups and the state in Serbia, it seems that the future of solidarity and the hope for its meaningful intervention on the political scene can be located precisely at the intersection of apparently separated struggles which need to converge in order for a more systematic critique and resistance to emerge.

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Transformations of Humanitarian Aid and Response Modes to Migration Movements

A Case Study of the Miksalište Center in Belgrade

TEODORA JOVANOVIĆ

Abstract: By following the transformation of one center in Belgrade, Serbia, the article gives a focused insight into the broader transformations connected to humanitarian aid and migration response that took place in the aftermath of 2015. Three modes of response to migration, which are sometimes intertwined, have shaped phases in the development of the Miksalište center: voluntarism, professionalization and re-statization. The end and the beginning of each phase have been marked by some changes in migration management as well as by changes in the modes of funding. The purpose of this paper is to unriddle the complicated relationships among categories of actors, the dominant modes of response to migration movements, the wider modes of migration governance, as well as migration-related policy and local contexts with a micro-level analysis.

Keywords: Refugee aid, voluntarism, professionalization, NGO, re-statization

During the »long migration summer of 2015« (Milan/Pirro 2018), »over 1000 of migrants per day« were transiting from Turkey to the countries of Central and Western Europe (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2015: 5). Since the 1990's, when hundreds of thousands of refugees from former Yugoslav republics arrived in Serbia, forced migration has not been a widely represented topic in the Serbian media and public. In 2015, this issue was brought forward, and many initiatives appeared to support the transit movements through Serbia. One of these initiatives, the ›Miksalište‹, a center for people on the move coming mostly from the Middle East and Africa, was established as a citizen and volunteer-based point which provided food and non-food items for refugees in transit in Belgrade in August 2015. After a while, the center began to be managed by a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing various services. Today, it is a ›one stop point‹ run by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia (CRM), the central state body in charge of reception and migration management, with a few NGOs involved. I myself was involved in many aspects of the center's work. My insider

position, academic background, and interests opened up a space for reflection about the changes of Miksalište.

I will analyze the case of Miksalište to demonstrate how the changes in Serbian migration policy in the context of the post-2015 EU border regime influenced the work and orientation of non-governmental and governmental organizations in Belgrade. Changes in the functioning and funding of Miksalište are understood as a reflection of broader changes in migration movements' management and migration governance. Changes occurred periodically and the paper is structured according to these periods.

This paper is thus an attempt to unriddle the complicated relationship among categories of actors, the dominant modes of response to migration movements, the modes of migration governance, as well as migration-related policy and local contexts with a micro-level analysis of the transformation of Miksalište. The categories of actors participating in responses to migration movement are determined by a conceptual difference in regard to government organizations (GOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, humanitarian organizations (HOs), volunteer groups, and social movements.

Three phases in the development of the Miksalište center have been identified, based on dominant modes of migration response: voluntarism, professionalization, and re-statization. Voluntarism is here understood as engagement, motivated by the need to help and »marked apart from remunerated or waged labour« (Malkki 2015: 108). Professionalization refers to a process of transformation of volunteer-based structures and activities into salaried aid work (see Sapoch 2018: 112). Re-statization represents an institutional incorporation of non-governmental migration-related structures into governmental structures (see Agrela/Dietz 2006: 220-221). All three phases analyzed in this paper are entangled, both conceptually and practically, with the concept of humanitarianism (Andersson 2017; Fassin 2007; Perkowski 2018; Sandri 2018), understood here as a more or less institutionalized form of moral action aiming to alleviate world suffering through various actions and missions (see Fassin 2007: 151). It will be shown how phases in the history of Miksalište developed and interfered and asked, what their main features and actors were, how they interrelated, and which issues they brought forward. However, the need to alleviate the »basic human suffering« (Malkki 2015: 6) through citizen volunteering also masks the deeply neoliberal process in which people have to »rely on compassion and goodwill of other people« (Brković 2016: 98–99) instead of state-provided forms of care.

Framed as a case study research, and by using an autoethnographic participatory approach,[1] I will interpret the developments in Miksalište as an externalization of EU migration control to third countries (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias/Pickles 2015; Hameršak/Pleše 2018; Kallius 2016; Stojić Mitrović 2014; Stojić Mitrović 2019; Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019; Tsianos/Karakayali 2010). One of the main arguments of the externalization thesis is that borders are not merely physical boundaries between nation-states, but are rather externalized and produced beyond the European Union territory, and that these all-pervading borders create pressure on other non-EU states. Agreements, treaties, and various migration policy documents are tools for the externalization of borders that consolidate legal fences (see Hameršak/Pleše 2018: 13; Kallius 2016: 135). However, some scholars have warned about a possible reductionism, if ›externalization‹ is merely understood as a linear and top-down process (see Heck/Hess 2017: 39). In order to prevent reductionism in externalization theory, authors suggest to focus on struggles, challenges, disruptions, autonomous migration practices and movements by understanding them as creative forces (see Casas-Cortes/Cobarrubias/Pickles 2015: 898; Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019: 14; Tsianos/Karakayali 2010: 386). Exactly the struggles, negotiations, and interactions of actors occupying different power positions in time will just as much be the focus of the text as the effects these had on the center in downtown Belgrade.

Migration and Border Policy in Post-Socialist Serbia in the Context of the EU-Accession Process

Right after the Slobodan Milošević regime was overturned in 2000 within the EU-framework of the ›Stabilization and Association Process‹,[2] Serbia initiated the accession process to the EU. Within this framework, Serbia is obliged to apply EU legislation, including migration-related policies defined by the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Serbia was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership

1 | Autoethnography of participation is a term used to describe both my volunteer and NGO-based participation in Miksalište, which took place before beginning my PhD and acquiring a research rank.

2 | The expression ›Stabilization and Association Process‹ was designed specifically for the ›Western Balkans‹, as a construct denoting former Yugoslav countries, without Slovenia and with Albania (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 32; Mikuš 2018: 71).

in 2003, the priorities for the country's membership application were set through the European partnership for Serbia in 2008, the status of EU candidate was granted in March 2012, and the formal start of the accession negotiations took place at the ›First Accession Conference‹ with Serbia in Brussels, January 2014 (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations 2019).[3] In order to harmonize legislation with EU regulations, the Law on asylum was adopted in April 2007. The adoption of this law marked the beginning of the independent asylum system in Serbia, making the Asylum Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia (instead of UNHCR) responsible for asylum applications (see Stojić Mitrović 2014: 1110). Accordingly, the externalization of EU borders is closely related to the process of harmonizing national asylum policies with EU regulations.

The EU accession process is a much deeper socio-political issue in Serbia, and it is not limited to asylum, migration, and border policies. Aid provision, as a wider mode of response to migration, offered by multiple actors in Serbia needs to be analyzed within the post-war, post-socialist, and neoliberal context of EU integration (Greenberg/Spasić 2017; Helms 2014; Mikuš 2018). During the civil wars in the process of The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia breakup, many refugees from Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo arrived and remained in Serbia (Lažetić 2018: 143). The 1990's experience of conflict-related migration in Serbia is certainly shaping representations about present-day migration movements that include people coming mostly from the Middle East and Africa. Institutions and actors that provide aid, protection, and services have a special significance in the framework of welfare restructuring. In this regard, »the transfer of welfare functions to various nonstate actors« has to be understood as part of a wider »neoliberal logic of (welfare) state transformation« (Mikuš 2018: 175) within which humanitarian aid and protection offered by the civil society emerge as an alternative to previous forms of state-provided care and social services. Furthermore, »the narrative of Europeanization«, as Mikuš writes, has become »firmly entangled with the scheme of transition« (ibid.: 84), not only in terms of migration and border policy but also in terms of actors or structures responsible for care, aid, and service provision.

3 | The chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security) in Serbia's EU accession negotiations are related to asylum and migration (Stojić Mitrović 2019: 21), and these two chapters were opened in July 2016 (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations 2019).

Modes of Response and Involved Actors

The opposition ›nongovernmental versus governmental actors‹ (Agrela/Dietz 2006) is rarely questioned and often taken for granted. While the notion of civil society may include many kinds of actors with different ideological backgrounds and positions, »in its dominant native sense in Serbia, civil society refers to the sector of liberal and pro-Western NGOs that are nominally separate from the state, party politics and business« (Mikuš 2018: 4), and »associated with foreign funding« (Helms 2014: 27). Here, it will be demonstrated that the GOs in Serbia also depend on foreign funding. There is also a growing recognition in literature that NGOs constitute only one part of civil society (see Mikuš 2018: 7) and that the category of civil society should not be reduced to ›Western-funded‹ NGOs. NGOs are usually non-profit organizations and they always have a specific aim, vision, and mission. It is also important to note that an ›NGO‹ does not exist as a separate legal category, and that these groups are registered in Serbian Business Registers Agency as ›associations‹ or ›foundations‹, like in the case of Bosnia (see Helms 2014: 27).

Humanitarian organizations are active in refugee assistance worldwide, and they are understood as »a specific form of NGO« that act under the principles of »humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence« (Müller-Stewens et al. 2019: 2). Powerful international NGOs (INGOs) constitute a »humanitarian government« that administrate people »in a name of higher moral principle« to preserve life and alleviate suffering (Fassin 2007: 151). In Serbia, local NGOs are partially funded by INGOs and international governmental organizations (IGOs). These groups are associated with (but not limited to) the notion of ›humanitarianism‹ as a mode of governance (ibid.; Perkowski 2018). In this article, professionalized humanitarianism is interpreted as a structured mode of action, where involved actors who provide aid are professionals employed in NGOs. This mode of governance is identified as prevalent in the second phase of Miksalište's history.

Social movements are less formalized than NGOs, and they usually function without payrolls and employees. Social movements often emphasize that they act in the name of ›solidarity‹, understood as a horizontal structure, and they oppose notions and practices of humanitarianism and ›charity‹, which are considered as vertical, top-down structures (see Birey et al. 2019: 11; Sapoch 2018: 70). In Serbia, participating in these kind of social movements is often considered as »activism« (see Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 318). Less structured volunteer and citizen groups working without clear political or activist agenda have also been involved in migration response in Serbia (cf. Brković 2016). The first phase of Miksalište's history more or less fits into the concepts of »volunteer humanitarianism« (Sandri 2018: 2) as activist

humanitarian help, »everyday humanitarianism« (Brković 2016), and ›voluntarism‹ as a more general type of unsalaried engagement.

GOs are included in the state or public system, and they are considered to be the most official and formalized structures of governance. GOs related to social, migration, and border policy are considered within the framework of this paper. The increased role of state actors in regulating and controlling migration is understood as a particular manifestation of a securitarian turn within the EU border regime (Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019). GOs nominally stand in opposition to above-mentioned actors. However, in examining the »supposedly self-evident distinction between states and humanitarians« (Fassin 2007: 150) or »non-governmental versus governmental actors« (Agrela/Dietz 2006: 205), authors have suggested that »the frontier of the state and civil society« appears as a »mobile and permeable socially constructed boundary« (Mikuš 2018: 142). This argument will be used to support the here presented analysis of the funding modes of government-provided migration assistance. In the third phase, when Miksalište as a coalition of NGOs became ›re-statized‹, GOs acquired the dominant role.

The different modes of response to migration movements as well as the involved actors should not be interpreted as absolute, static, and mutually exclusive. This paper is rather an attempt to show how certain macro-processes have an effect on the micro-level, and how dominant modes of response to migration movements could be divided into phases in the case of Miksalište. Moreover, more changes regarding the center's function could appear in the future.

VOLUNTARISM: ›OLD MIKSALIŠTE‹

In summer 2015, a large number of refugees coming mostly from the Middle East and Africa were transiting to Schengen countries, and migration movements in Belgrade became more visible (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 4). Shortly after, these movements were channeled through the formalized corridor (frequently called the Balkan route), which made a swift transport of people from one state to another easier (see ibid.: 61). On 5 August, ›Mikser house‹, a private cultural center and club in the Savamala area in Belgrade, and NGOs, called for ad hoc humanitarian action, inviting people to donate clothing and hygienic items for refugees. Three days later, ›Refugee Aid Miksalište‹ was officially opened behind the Mikser house. Mikser house was located in Karađorđeva 46 and Refugee Aid Miksalište in Mostarska 5 (hereafter ›Old Miksalište‹ because a new center called ›Miksalište 2.0‹ was opened later at another address in different capacity). Citizens of Belgrade responded to

the call and brought clothes, shoes, hygiene items, food, and water to the newly opened center. A lot of locals from the Savamala area and Belgrade in general as well as foreigners, often »young people travelling around the Balkans who would stop after being emotionally affected by the plight of refugees in Serbia« (Milan/Pirro 2018: 144), started volunteering to distribute the collected aid. Old Miksalište was operating during the fall and winter of 2015/2016. The space was a half open-air site with stands for distribution, mobile showers, toilets, medical help etc. It was the first regular aid distribution in Belgrade (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 43). Gradually, international and local NGOs recognized the potential of this space and started to participate with projects, activities, and funding. Many solidarity actors, both grassroots groups and NGOs, reacted to help people in need (see Milan/Pirro 2018: 131).

The ›emergency response‹ by these solidarity actors was recognized by Serbian officials (see Stojić Mitrović 2019: 20). In this period, the Serbian government formed the Working Group for Solving Problems of Mixed Migration Flows (Working Group for Migration), and the following reception centers were opened to accommodate refugees: RC Preševo, RC Adaševci, RC Šid, RC Principovac, and RC Subotica (CRMRS 2019). Politicians expressed their support of citizen volunteers in the media, and they praised their efforts to help the refugees. The most frequent representations in Serbian media were the narratives about the ›refugee crisis‹ and the kindness and hospitality of the Serbian society (see Galijaš 2019: 101). At the same time, Hungary was constructing a physical fence on its border to Serbia (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 55) and preparing the ground for more restrictive legal fences (see Kallius 2016: 135).

The driving forces of Old Miksalište were local citizens and international volunteers. They did most of the organization themselves, but also physical and practical work. More than 1200 volunteers from 60 different countries helped in some way during this first phase of Miksalište (WYSTC 2016). The intersection of local and international volunteers was facilitated due to the fact that there were many hostels in the Savamala area and parks where migrants were gathering. Many international volunteers stayed for several weeks in these hostels close to the local parks. Local CSOs, such as ›Ana and Vlade Divac foundation‹ (a humanitarian organization) and ›Initiative for Development and Cooperation – IDC‹ (a local branch of an international volunteer organization), were helping by bringing their volunteers to distribute aid. Students also got involved in order to do research or internships for their college or university (volunteer-researchers, internship volunteers). International, humanitarian, and more professionalized organizations, such as Médecins Sans Frontières and

Save the Children, were also present with installed facilities and offered services and aid.

In early fall 2015, one group of international volunteers separated and became ›Refugee Aid Serbia‹, because of the tensions that existed among some individuals and disagreements about the way in which work and available resources should be organized. In the very beginning of this phase of voluntarism, the divisions between different groups or organizations did not exist, or they were at least not so important. As new funds came in, many of these informal groups became professionalized. Former volunteers, sometimes with no prior experience in humanitarian aid (see Milan/Pirro 2018: 144), showed good managing skills, acquired social capital, and became in charge of the organization.

Voluntarism was the main, but not the only, type of response in Old Miksalište. The aid work done by volunteers in Old Miksalište was free of charge. Within the ›refugee crisis‹ discourse created during the summer of 2015 in Belgrade, voluntarism emerged as »a reaction to the bureaucratic and at times slow procedures of aid agencies in emergency situations« (Sandri 2018: 10). The support to refugees in this period was »framed in emergency terms« (Stojić Mitrović 2019: 20) and focused on provision of food, medical aid, and non-food items for people transiting through the corridor. In this context, the ›emergency response‹ discourse was created and practiced.

As I mentioned above, different civil society actors were providing aid and were involved in the first phase (international and local volunteer groups, institutional and non-institutional). Participation of local volunteers and citizens was understood as »everyday humanitarianism« (Brković 2016), spurred on by significant and generally positive coverage of the so-called ›refugee crisis‹ in Serbian media, which awakened empathy towards people in trouble. Also, the participation of volunteers from »60 different countries« (WYSTC 2016), who stayed in Belgrade after being affected by the ›refugee crisis‹ narrative, could be conceptualized as »volunteer tourism« (Sin 2009). Volunteer tourism or volun*tourism* (not to be confused with voluntarism) is understood as »a form of tourism where the tourists volunteer in local communities as a part of his or her travel« (Sin 2009: 480). Of course, motivations for volunteer work and subcategories of volunteers are neither fixed nor one-dimensional. In reality, these motivations overlap and, thus, also these categories. In the following phase, a more professionalized form of humanitarianism was introduced.

Meanwhile, the so-called Balkan route underwent significant changes. After the first March of Hope in early September 2015, which was an organized attempt of migrants and activists to resist the asylum policies in Hungary, the Hungarian government started to implement more restrictive EU asylum legislations in order to block

transit through their country, such as re-establishing Serbia as ›safe third country‹ (see Kallius 2016: 140). On 15 September 2015, Hungary closed the border to Serbia (see Hameršak/Pleše 2018: 10). Migrants redirected their movements to the Croatian border. On 8 March 2016, the borders along the corridor were officially closed (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016: 49), and ten days later, on 18 March 2016, the EU Commission together with Germany and Turkey introduced the »EU-Turkey deal« (see Heck/Hess 2017: 36).

Besides this cross-national migratory and border context, changes on the local level also had an impact on events that occurred in the Savamala area, where Miksalište is located. Namely, just a few hours after polls closed in the general (parliamentary) elections on 24 April 2016, and the ruling party (Serbian Progressive Party) won the majority of votes, masked men with baseball bats enforced the overnight demolition of several Savamala buildings that stood in the way of the Belgrade Waterfront project (see Delauney 2016; Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 322). The Belgrade Waterfront is a construction project that the Serbian government signed with Eagle Hills, a company from the United Arab Emirates, which includes the construction of luxury residential and office buildings, a hotel, a shopping mall, and other buildings along the Sava River. Also, the coordinators of Miksalište received an order from anonymous attorneys to move out in 48 hours. On 27 April 2016, Old Miksalište was demolished to make space for the Belgrade Waterfront (see Dragojlo 2016; Medić 2017: 47; Cantat 2019: 172). These three major shifts—the closing of the borders for transiting people on the move, the EU-Turkey deal, and the demolition of the Miksalište center in Mostarska street—opened a new chapter in the development of the Miksalište center.

PROFESSIONALIZATION: ›MIKSALIŠTE 2.0‹

Although there was no official center any more, in May 2016, the Miksalište team continued with the distribution of essential clothing and hygienic items and with organizing children's activities in the ›Bristol‹ park, alongside other organizations present there, such as ›Info Park‹. At the same time, they were searching and preparing for a new location of the center. On 1 June 2016, the center was opened at a new location in Gavrila Principa 15, a street in the same area just around the parks (hereafter ›Miksalište 2.0‹). The object in Gavrila Principa is owned by Preduzeće Ivan Milutinović (PIM), a company famous in Yugoslavia for waterways engineering and construction, now in the process of restructuring (economic process related to privatization in Serbian context), which by coincidence is also the owner of the buildings of the

›Krnjača‹ Asylum Centre. PIM has been renting the facilities in Krnjača to the CRM since 1992 to accommodate Yugoslav IDPs, and has been doing the same for asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa since 2015 (see Galijaš 2019: 90). However, CRM did not sign the contract with PIM for the holding of Miksalište 2.0 until April 2019, in the third stage of the institutional biography of Miksalište center. From June 2016 to April 2019, Mikser house and its partner organization ›Mikser Association‹, which founded Miksalište center in the first place, were the contract holders.

Miksalište 2.0 was upgraded with several services. Many local and international NGOs implemented their projects in the new center. In July 2016, the center was temporarily closed because neighbors from surrounding buildings were complaining about the refugees. The center was reopened after one month. For the next four months, the center was very busy: the distribution of food and non-food items took place every day from 9am to 4pm.

During this period, the professionalization of volunteer-based NGOs working with refugees intensified. Professionalization was achieved both through employing local volunteers and transforming volunteer-based or grassroots groups into formal, registered, and structured NGOs. Employees of professional, non-profit humanitarian organizations could be called »aid workers«, »humanitarians«, or »emergency relief workers« (Malkki 2015: 30). As professional humanitarian organizations elsewhere, the employees of the refugee-assistance NGOs in Belgrade wear uniform, including the logo of the organization that they work for. At the time, newly employed volunteers generally perceived this change as positive, because they felt that they were finally rewarded for their efforts.

The main reason for professionalizing the Serbian NGOs involved in the distribution of aid and giving general support was access to grants (see Sapoch 2018: 117). As manifested so evidently today, the contemporary system of humanitarian aid depends on grants, donations, and projects. It has already been suggested elsewhere that »the management of humanitarian aid and assistance has gradually become the business of professionals« and that humanitarian organizations worldwide »are managed more like global private companies« (Müller-Stewens et al. 2019: 4). Local NGOs for refugee assistance in Miksalište (e.g. the Crisis Response and Policy Centre, The Center for Youth Integration, Novi Sad Humanitarian Center, Praxis, etc.) are financed mostly through INGOs and IGOs (e.g. International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, UN Refugee Agency, UN Women International Organization for Migration, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council), but are also funded by independent donations or other projects. The INGOs in turn are financed through large international funds. In 2015, 2016, and 2017, the main EU fund for refugee assistance in Serbia was the European Civil Protection and Hu-

manitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) (The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia 2016). As for other types of NGOs in Serbia, the EU has been one of the biggest donors, which strongly favors established, large, and financially strong organizations because they are able to co-fund the projects (see Mikuš 2018: 101).

In November 2016, another important shift occurred that shaped the type of aid offered to refugees. As complaints from the host community increased and anti-immigrant petitions were created, GOs began to blame the NGOs for migrants not registering or staying in government provided centers (see Lažetić/Jovanović 2018: 10). The Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (hereafter Ministry of Labor) sent an open letter to NGOs operating in Serbia on 4 November 2016. With this letter, the NGOs were informed that all necessary assistance was available within the official reception centers, and, accordingly, assistance in the form of food, clothing, and footwear outside of the reception centers was no longer acceptable (see MS 2016). The staff of Miksalište was ordered to stop the distribution of food and non-food items. The distribution of breakfast and lunch was stopped immediately, and the distribution of clothes ceased a few days later. Any aid provision of materials was considered to be a ›pull factor‹ for refugees to stay outside the official centers. At this time, the Balkan corridor was not in function anymore, and migrants were forced to choose between three options: either cross the borders irregularly, go back to their countries of origin, or stay in the offered reception centers in Serbia. »Although the Open letter was not a formal piece of legislation, it came with important consequences for groups supporting migrants«, and »it reasserted state control« (Cantat 2019: 173) by giving the CRM a more dominant role in refugee aid.

The Open letter scared the staff and volunteers working at the center. Organizations assumed that they had to stop giving humanitarian aid to refugees. They feared to lose the status of an NGO (see ibid.: 173). Certain big organizations started to withdraw from Miksalište as they no longer saw an opportunity to help and redirected the funds towards NGOs working in reception centers. For me and other workers, it was hard to explain to refugees why they could no longer get food, shoes, jackets etc. Many of them stopped coming to Miksalište center because they could no longer get necessities, and the number of people coming on a daily basis drastically decreased. As I found out in conversations back then, many of them thought that humanitarian workers were simply hostile to them and did not want to help them anymore. Additionally, organizations whose main activity was aid distribution had to reinvent their programs and projects. As a result, one of the two barracks in Miksalište center was reconstructed into a classroom instead of a distribution stand. There were more social or occupational activities, such as language (English, German, Serbian, Italian,

French, Farsi and Arabic) workshops, art classes, and games as well as ›psychosocial support‹ services.

In December 2016, in the process of reinvention, Miksalište started to work 24/7. The 24/7 reception service was supposed to compensate the rupture in distribution and to help in the process of registering newly arrived migrants. This practice is called ›legal aid‹ or sometimes ›protection‹ in NGO vocabulary. The services of ›legal aid‹ include informing refugees about the asylum system in Serbia, escorting migrants to the police station for registration, and contributing to the asylum granting process. NGOs providing legal aid services were present in Miksalište center before this shift, but, from December 2016 onwards, their role increased. The asylum office, an organizational unit of the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for the registration and asylum procedure. NGOs cannot register newly arrived migrants, but they identify unregistered people and refer them to the police station, where they are registered by the Asylum office. A new rule was established then: only registered migrants who belonged to ›vulnerable groups‹ (women, families with small children, unaccompanied minors, and injured people) and were waiting to be transferred to a reception center could spend the night and sleep in Miksalište center. The NGO staff worked at the center during the night.

With the example of NGO services, such as legal aid and protection, one can achieve awareness for the complex relationship between humanitarianism, human rights, and security (see Perkowski 2018: 466). Governmental and non-governmental organizations regularly interfere with one another in this context (see Fassin 2007: 155). In this case, NGOs actually help the government to do their job and register newly arrived migrants. An issue that is often addressed by humanitarian organizations is the protection of ›human rights‹ of those who are vulnerable in which NGOs tread on thin ice in balancing between humanitarianism and securitization. By insisting on vulnerability, NGOs do not only identify and divide individuals into »victims in need« and »others« (Perkowski 2018: 468), but they also, unwillingly, further confirm the security norms. While the humanitarian-security nexus is more evident in organizations that levitate between militarization and humanitarianism in their operations at borders, such as Frontex (see Andersson 2017; Perkowski 2018), the nexus may also be recognized in the work of NGOs that advocate for the protection of ›vulnerable‹ people (e.g. unaccompanied minors or single women) in opposition to those deemed not ›vulnerable enough‹. The dualism between »deserving« and »non deserving« (Sales 2002, quoted in Fassin 2005: 377) is the ultimate outcome of imposing a criteria of vulnerability to refugee aid.

In the beginning of 2017, around 2000 refugee men were living in the ›barracks‹, which were presented in international media as a »Serbian Calais« (Mac-

Dowall/Graham-Harrison 2017; Sapoch 2018). The ›barracks‹ is a colloquial term for a large site composed of several connected dilapidated warehouses behind the Belgrade railway station. Harsh winter conditions at the beginning of 2017 created hazards for refugees living outdoors, in the barracks, or non-weatherized shelters, making them vulnerable and in need of protection from the perspective of people providing aid, while, at the same time, refugees were perceived as a ›threat‹ by right-wing groups. Government officials were concerned about health and security issues. Media reports on fights and robberies involving migrants and local smugglers increased, which made the local population nervous (see Lažetić/Jovanović 2018: 9-10).

In April 2017, a group of students from the Faculty of Economics announced a protest against the migrants in the park in front of the faculty. This was odd, because migrants had been present in the park in front of the Faculty of Economics for two years, and there were no complaints from students thus far. The protest was canceled in the end, but the cancelation did not stop the impact of this campaign to induce a negative perception of refugees living in the barracks on the side of the local population. Several days later, a group of Savamala residents organized a protest against the refugees using right-wing rhetoric, and they clashed with a local antifa group that showed up to counter the protest. The group of locals who wrote an anti-immigrant petition also got involved in the organization of the protests.[4] Some members of the protesting group live in a building next to the Miksalište center. In 2018, tenants even organized themselves to build an actual metal fence between their building and Miksalište in order to prevent contact with migrants. The construction of the metal fence in the Savamala neighborhood was very symbolic and showed how EU border policies materialized and stretched from the external borders to internal and local ones (cf. e.g. Kallius 2017: 19).

The government responded to the increase in numbers of ›stuck‹ refugees living outdoors and in the barracks by investing in a new reception center in Obrenovac

4 | Theoretically, grassroots right-wing and anti-immigrant movements, which are part of the »nationalist civil society« (Mikuš 2018: 108), are an additional category of actors responding to migration movements. They are also under the influence of various international far right actors in a way that we can even discuss a »Europeanisation« of the Serbian far-right (see Lažetić 2018: 151). However, this topic and discussion are beyond the scope of this paper. The activities of local anti-immigration movements are not analyzed as separate phase in the development of Miksalište because they were not directly involved, and they were not a part of the center's programs, even though they were an external, silent factor in the development of Miksalište that periodically caused ripples in the public sphere.

near Belgrade. The new reception center in Obrenovac was an old military quarter, reconstructed into a reception center. The transformation of military camps into »humanitarian sanctuaries« (Agier 2002: 319) is a practice documented worldwide. Another response to the barracks situation was a discreet permission of the government to Oxfam, to implement an emergency relief project distributing winter clothes and sleeping bags that was performed ›under wraps‹ and in despite of the aid distribution ban. This connivance can be understood both as a temporary rupture in the re-statization of humanitarian aid and a continuation of humanitarian-security logics (see Kallius 2016; Perkowski 2018; Petrović 2018).

Activists, international volunteer-based groups, and social movements using the rhetoric of ›migrant solidarity‹ also started distributing aid in the barracks (e.g. No Name Kitchen, Hot Food Idomeni, Help-Na, BelgrAid etc.) and »broke the governmental order not to help« (Cantat 2019: 175). However, narratives that interpret the Open letter only within the framework of the »criminalisation of solidarity« (ibid.: 171) and tend to equate solidarity with aid distribution have certain limits. The barracks, located around ten minutes away from Miksalište center, definitely was »a space of struggles« (ibid.: 184) for all sorts of actors involved in migration movement response. These struggles included migrants' hunger strikes as well as clashes between GOs, NGOs, and volunteer-based organizations. The final outcome of this »recursive and cross-hatched mix of institutions and people« (Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 322; see also Cantat 2019: 174; Sapoch 2018: 56) were relocations of migrants to reception centers all over Serbia with the help of CRM and the eviction of the barracks in May 2017. The dominant motive behind the demolition of these informal settlements of migrants in the Belgrade city center was, as stated above, the construction of luxury buildings as part of the Belgrade Waterfront project (see Lažetić/Jovanović 2018: 10).

In June 2017, the Mikser house cultural center and the club in Karađorđeva street, which founded Old Miksalište and continued to be the coordinating body of Miksalište 2.0, was closed. The closure of Mikser house was the result of »conflicting top-down business interests« (Medić 2017: 53) expressed by local real-estate owners who wanted to build more up-scale clubs and restaurants on the location. The closure was important for the way the Miksalište center operated because, up until June 2017, most of the costs (monthly bills and rent) of Miksalište were covered by the Mikser house owners and modest financial aid from some other NGOs. By closing down the cultural center, organizations within Miksalište found themselves in another situation of reconstruction. All NGOs inside the center were asked to contribute financially. The solution was to create a ›Memorandum of Understanding‹ with precisely defined duties of each organization within this space that formalized Miksalište 2.0 as ›a

coalition of NGOs‹. CRM did not provide any kind of financial support at this point, but rather only wrote a ›letter of support‹, which was sent to major donors. This letter explained how Miksalište center was one of the most important places for refugee aid in Serbia. At this moment of crisis, the INGO Save the Children was covering most of the costs. Eventually, the financial gaps were covered by several international organizations, and Miksalište survived. One of the problems was that the owner of the space, the previously mentioned company PIM, due to legal and economic difficulties, agreed to only sign a contract for a year. A one-year contract with the owner of the space was an obstacle for many donors and organizations to invest. INGOs feared that their investment would not pay off, if the space were used for something else after the one-year contract had expired.

The status of Miksalište as a professionalized coalition of NGOs was reinforced by the creation of the Memorandum of Understanding, but, shortly after, it was shaken again. The end of the professionalization phase is marked by the withdrawal of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO), the main source of humanitarian aid funding in Serbia, in March 2018. The main concern among NGOs was what would succeed ECHO in terms of funding response measures concerning migration in the area of civil protection. Meanwhile, the interest of the state sector in the Miksalište center was rising. GOs, the Ministry of Labor's Centers for Social Work, and the CRM, in particular, had been gradually bringing employees into Miksalište center. The cooperation between GO field workers and NGO field workers was improving, which represented once more the intersections between professionalized humanitarian and state modes of response to migration. Mutual information exchange became more intensive. This allowed CRM to officially enter Miksalište as a crucial actor.

Re-statization: ›One Stop Point Miksalište‹

In the ›Law on Migration Management‹, the CRM is defined as an organization that performs tasks related to migration management (Migration Management Act 2012), and, in the latest ›Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection‹, as an organization that provides material conditions for the reception of asylum seekers (Asylum Act 2018). In May 2018, CRM started to cover the night shift in Miksalište center because NGOs did not have enough funds for their employees. I will take this event as the beginning of the re-statization phase within the institutional biography of Miksalište (even though CRM officially started to run Miksalište center one year later, in April 2019), because I believe that the relocation of refugees to reception centers became the main

purpose of Miksalište center at that point, and GOs received more international funding than NGOs. In June 2018, the Centre for Social Work brought more employees to Miksalište in the course of the ongoing project MADAD 2 giving »further support to Capacity Building for Managing Migration Crisis at the Republic of Serbia« (The Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy of the Republic of Serbia 2018). The main activity of social workers employed by the ministry was the support of unaccompanied minors.

MADAD 2 is a project financed by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, and the value of the project is 16 million euros for 15 months for The Ministry of Labor, plus five million euros for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis 2017). The so-called MADAD fund replaced the ECHO fund in terms of representing the central funding source for most of the GOs and NGOs working with migrants in Serbia. The objective of the MADAD action plan was to cater »to the resilience needs of migrant or refugee populations in the Western Balkans, in particular in Serbia, through support to the national authorities, including enhancing shelter capacity and delivery of services« (EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis 2017: 6). ECHO's objective was, on the other hand, »to provide emergency humanitarian aid to vulnerable refugees, asylum seekers and migrants transiting or staying in the Western Balkans« (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2015: 11), mostly through civil society organizations. ECHO was supporting emergency humanitarian help and CSOs, while MADAD was reinforcing the role of the national authorities and living conditions in reception centers. By following the central funds coming from the EU, one can examine how modes of response to migration have changed in relation to the projects' objectives.

These major changes did not happen over the night, rather, the state sector gradually permeated through the civil sector. With the appearance of the Open letter in November 2016, the responsibility of humanitarian aid provision was transferred mostly to GOs and NGOs working in reception centers. Even though CRM became the main actor in protecting migrants, the protection and aid provision was not financed by a state budget. Migration management in Serbia is economically dependent on funds from the EU (see Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019: 12). In Serbia, more generally, project financing is not only a feature of the civil sector but also of state institutions, and this is happening within the context of post-socialist transformations and accession to the EU. Mikuš extends the notion of »project society« (Sampson 2002, quoted in Mikuš 2018: 43) and argues that Serbian project society is constituted both by the state and civil sector. By observing how resources from the MADAD 2

project enabled GOs to consolidate dominance in migration response, the specific »projectification of the state« (Mikuš 2018: 142) comes to the fore.

The centralization of EU project funding in the Western Balkans is another tool for imposing control over migration movements outside of the EU and for externalizing EU borders. Small, local organizations, even with the support of international organizations, still have to respect government provisions and harmonize their projects according to those rules. Even though they are non-governmental organizations and are seemingly independent, the government and donors have considerable leverage over them, such as if they are perceived to work against particular interests. As the refugees' needs are often incompatible with the government's interests, local organizations have to balance between the needs of refugees, government orders, and the INGOs' rules. In this way, local NGO workers and activists »seem to feel ethically compelled to work both in resistance and solidarity« (Greenberg/Spasić 2017: 322); to improvise and adapt to new circumstances.

In the beginning of 2019, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) attempted to change the course of action in Miksalište by bringing the BelgrAid volunteers to run the showers and washing machines. BelgrAid is a volunteer organization in Belgrade that gathers international volunteers who want to help refugees and migrants and who usually only stay at a site for a few weeks or months. MSF has been present with providing and supervising showers and washing machines in Miksalište since December 2016. They also run a clinic across the street, in Gavrila Principa 18. MSF cooperates with international volunteer groups in Serbia, by supporting them and funding their activities, and together they often oppose the government's migration policy. After its foundation in 1971, MSF, one of the largest international humanitarian organizations, »constructed itself ›against the state‹ via rhetoric that affirmed its independence by denouncing established powers« (Fassin 2007: 150). The MSF branch in Serbia is not as powerful as in France, but it uses a similar rhetoric. MSF's attempt to bring BelgrAid volunteers to Miksalište (which was not yet officially run by CRM at the time) can be interpreted as an endeavor to disrupt the processes of re-statization and to induce a type of response to migration that is based on humanitarian volunteer work. However, after BelgrAid's volunteers were present in Miksalište for only two months, CRM signed the contract with the owners of the space and decided to leave both BelgrAid volunteers and MSF out of the picture.

By examining migration-related governance structures and practices in Spain, Belen Agrela and Gunther Dietz have analyzed re-statized NGO services and argued that there has been a lot of »back-and-forth movement between public and private actors at the lower levels of immigration policy« (Agrela/Dietz 2006: 221). The beginning of a re-statization of migration-related governance in Serbia can be traced

back to the passing of the Law on Asylum in 2007/2008, when the Asylum Office of the Ministry of Interior started to process asylum applications instead of the UNHCR. The take-over of the NGO-run center by a GO, as in the case of Miksalište, could be interpreted as an example of the re-statization of migration response.

In April 2019, CRM officially took charge of the center. The name was changed to ›One stop point Miksalište‹. The prefix ›Refugee Aid‹ was omitted. In 2015, while the migration corridor which connected Turkey and Austria was developing (Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016), and alongside existing asylum centers for migrants who showed the intention to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia, the state opened so-called transit and transit-reception centers near main exit spots: first on the border with Hungary and later with Croatia. The ›one stop‹-center format had also been established in 2015 in order to enhance the registration of migrants entering Serbia. The first one stop-center had therefore been put in use in Preševo, on the main entry border with Macedonia (see Contenta in this issue).

The Miksalište space was reconstructed once again to be consistent with the new functioning of the center. The center was redesigned to look more official, neat, and minimalistic. Drawings, posters, and other materials created during the workshops were removed from the interior walls, except the so-called ›children corner‹. A mural on the exterior walls of the center was almost entirely overpainted: only small segments of blue paint with the captions ›hope‹ and ›love‹ were left. The main purpose of the Miksalište center turned into the relocation of refugees from the Belgrade city center to official reception centers. Only those who wanted to register (to be exact: express their intention to seek asylum), or who were already registered, could linger in the center. As one volunteer giving recycling workshops in the center said: »Miksalište is now the center for the distribution of people and not the center for the distribution of aid«. The role of NGOs inside the center was limited to legal aid services and protecting the vulnerable population. CRM also took over the responsibility of crucial aspects of funding.

The ›securitarian turn‹ in Serbia's migration policy can be traced back to the second half of 2016, and it is the result of political developments in the region and pressures in the negotiation process with the European Union (see Stojić Mitrović 2019: 24). However, CRM's role is not only reduced to security. Providing aid to those who want to be accommodated in reception centers is one of its main tasks. The »security-humanitarian policies« (Petrović 2018: 46) reveal the tendency to protect the ones who simultaneously pose a threat, by placing them in a controlled environment and providing them with food, water, and shelter. Reception centers in this security-humanitarian context thus appear as the only ›solution‹ for refugees and migrants. The predominance of reception centers is one of the most important manifestations of

the »convergence of humanitarianism, human rights and security« (Perkowski 2018: 457), even though the reception centers in Serbia are not closed centers (they are, at least nominally, open-type centers, meaning that people can go out and come back).

Care for the basic biological needs, on the one hand, and control of movement, on the other hand (see Petrović 2018: 51), are at the core of the security-humanitarian mode of governance. Therefore, »even though the humanitarian and securitarian principles of responding to migration movements can be seen as opposites, in practice, both use the same metaphors from the position of power: who may receive help, who has the right to decide on this, who provides assistance and who receives it, who has the power to organize assistance, choose, and control actors and activities« (Stojić Mitrović 2019: 24). The security-humanitarian mode of governance transgresses the differences between states and humanitarians (see Fassin 2007: 150), non-governmental versus governmental actors (see Agrela/Dietz 2006), and the state and civil society (see Mikuš 2018), and shifts the focus towards less self-evident mechanisms of migration governance.

CRM, as a governmental organization responsible for the provision of material resources concerning aid and reception, confirmed the role of main actor in response to migration movements within a security-humanitarian framework by taking over the Miksalište center. Enhancing the registration process and transfers to reception centers has become the main purpose of the center. Material resources and the support-structure of the EU contributed to this shift.

Conclusion

The history of Miksalište center is marked by three dominant modes of response to migration: voluntarism, professionalization, and re-statization—or, to be exact: volunteer humanitarianism, professionalized humanitarianism and securitarian humanitarianism. Changes in modes of response on a community level were the result of the changes in policy on national and regional levels. First, while migrants were visibly transiting through Belgrade in the summer of 2015, the Old Miksalište center in Mostarska street was open. The main objective was to help people during the ›refugee crisis‹, and many volunteers responded within this emergency discourse. Second, the corridor which enabled many refugees to cross the EU borders without major obstacles was closed, and so was the Old Miksalište, due to the local government's decision to make room for the Belgrade Waterfront project. The new center, Miksalište 2.0, was opened at a new location. The professionalized humanitarian approach was predominant here. The open letter to NGOs, issued by the Ministry of Labor, Em-

ployment, Veterans and Social Affairs, indicated a re-statization of NGO-provided services. Third, the new Law on Asylum was adopted, governmental organizations received most of the EU funding, and the main priority of One stop point Miksalište was to facilitate transfers of migrants to reception centers in Serbia—this all led to a consolidation of the re-statization phase.

While Miksalište center was constituted of many actors and groups deriving from parts of civil society in the first and partly the second phase, it was gradually becoming a center run by a particular coalition of professionalized NGOs. This second phase was marked by professionalized humanitarianism. Every stage had its own dynamics. Sometimes, the differences between the modes of response to migration were not so clear-cut or obvious. The dualism between government and non-government actors may seem unquestionable, but by following the transformations of the Miksalište center, we can observe that these two overlap, not only practically but also conceptually. Practically, their roles and domains of activities interfere, support, and confront each other depending on a whole spectrum of wider socio-political and economic factors in which regional migration policies are important. One might say that the institutionalization of the formerly informal and volunteer-based humanitarian center was the highest recognition of the center's efforts. Others would say that it is a manifestation of total control by the state. Conceptually, humanitarian NGOs form a specific kind of ›non-governmental government‹ with their own rules, based on their moral authority. Also, the devotion to protecting basic human rights blurs the boundary between humanitarianism and securitization. In this context, the individual needs to be recognized and registered by the state in order to achieve these basic human rights. Invisibility may be dangerous and make migrants vulnerable to human rights violations. This amounts to a double-edged sword, intrinsic to the humanitarian-security nexus.

Conceptual categories (voluntarism, professionalization, and re-statization) guide the activities practiced by different actors (volunteers, aid workers, and governmental organizations workers). People who act within ›civil society‹ and the ›state‹ do not exist in a social vacuum. Rather, they are connected and interdependent, struggling to survive and find solutions in the Serbian post-socialist ›project society‹, which is trying to join the EU in hope for a more stable future. In Serbia, the relationship between the state and civil society is understood as antagonistic and binary because of the way the liberal-democratic state was created after the year 2000. In fact, though, both state and civil society organizations are involved in similar issues and depend on international funds and policies.

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Artistic Contribution

The Shining

From an Anonymous Wall to Madina Hussiny Square

SELMA BANICH

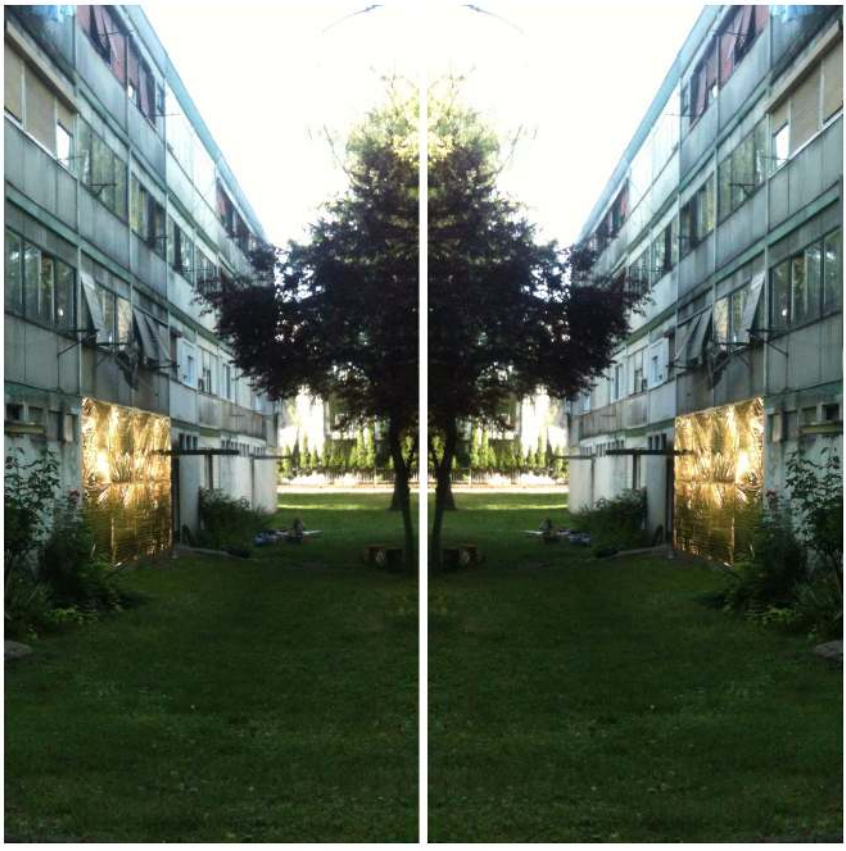
Abstract: A collection of fragments titled *The Shining: From an Anonymous Wall to Madina Hussiny Square* assembles artist statements and descriptions of an ongoing series of site-specific interventions in Zagreb made of heat sheet and white masking tape as well as the author's personal notes on the brief but thought-provoking encounters with Y., H. and K. The ›light‹ interventions in conjunction with the powerful migrant stories speak of fragmented, incomplete, and unfinished struggles and display disrupted narratives. Performed and written in solidarity with all the incarcerated and in memory of all the deceased.

Keywords: Balkan corridor, Balkan route, site-specific interventions, heat sheet, freedom of movement

Everything emerges and submerges in the same place: in the (un)inhabited ›squares‹ of soil. But in order to foster a community, merely building a ›settlement‹ is not enough. Because once settled, though physically living almost conjoined, we are rarely together. And even when miles and continents separate us, our entire fabric of being co-exists simultaneously. If we were to simply stop at any coordinate along this mega-narrative and look at the world long enough, we would recognize our own contours emerging from this global tapestry.

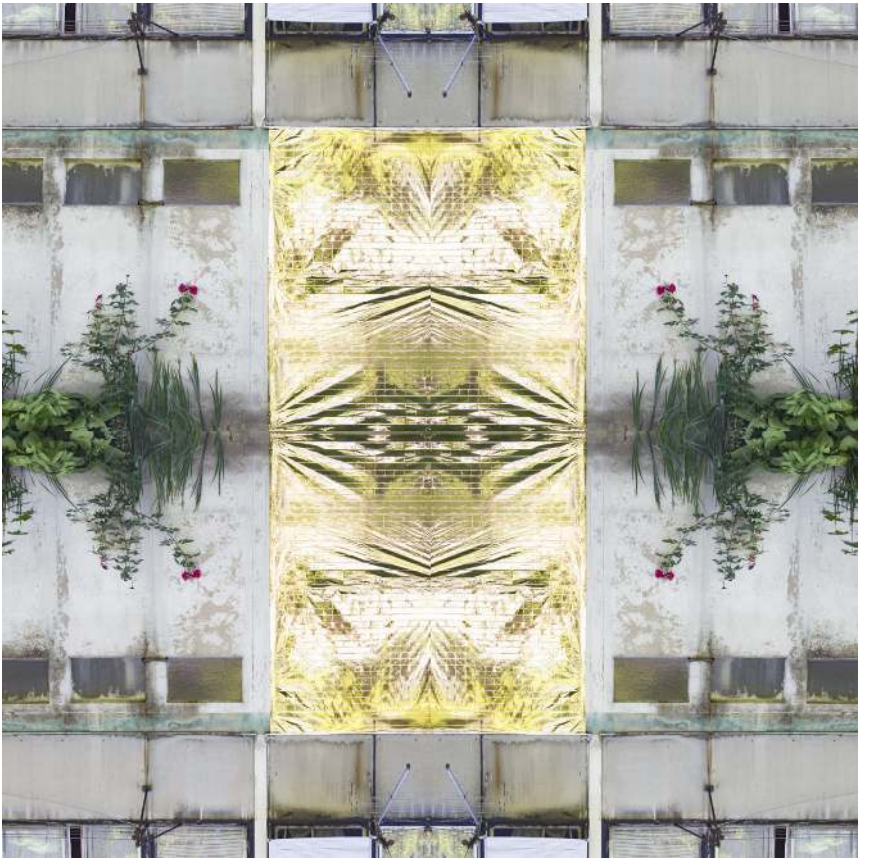
Here, coexistence is implied, but our relationships often do not develop spontaneously, organically, or through shared experiences. And while the political, social and economical conditions for the organization of life are extremely simplified, and the communities worldwide are systemically impoverished and artificially parceled, the gap becomes almost insurmountable. The attempt to reestablish the connectivity seems in vain, even structurally impossible.

We have confined ourselves to walls, boundaries, property, and profit. Radical connections are undesirable, and subverting ›the structure‹ is strictly forbidden, rendering us permanently ›unavailable‹ for the global uprising—powerless in our collective ›shining‹.



The Shining. Photo by Selma Banich, 2017.

The neighborhood of *Folnegovićevo naselje* in Zagreb is one of many post-Second World War modernist settlements in Europe. Through a closer study of the local imprint, this neighborhood reveals a ›conflict map‹ representing global phenomena reaching from a planned settlement that indirectly includes a class division, a post-socialist period of privatization and urban deindustrialization, a neighborhood antagonism concerning ethnic origins and the class affiliations of its settlers up to the history of migration and refugeeism related to ongoing wars, global economy, and geopolitics.



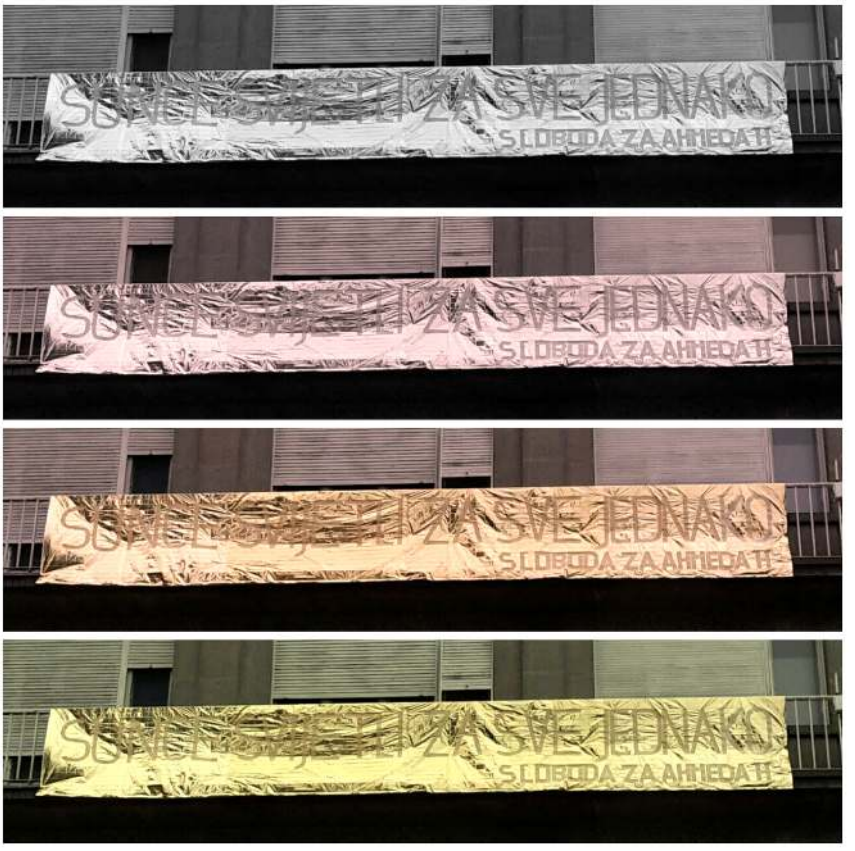
The Shining. Photo by Matija Kralj, 2017. Collage by Selma Banich, 2020.

The Shining (2017),[1] a temporary intervention on the surface of a social housing façade in *Folnegovićevo naselje*, attempted to establish a connection between the various inhabitants of the modernist buildings (the prefab ›tin-can‹ housing units built in the 1960s that require urgent solutions for both their dampness and dilapidation

1 | *The Shining* is an intervention performed by Selma Banich in cooperation with neighborhood inhabitants as an epilogue to the *Communities of Care* research project. *Communities of Care* was conducted by Selma Banich, Marija Borovičkić, Mila Čuljak, Ivana Rončević, and Ana Vilenica within the framework of *Invisible Belonging*, curated by Ana Dana Beroš. The project was a local, Zagreb segment of the international project *Actopolis*, produced by the Goethe-Institut and Urbane Künste Ruhr (2015–2017).

The Sun Shines Equally for All. Photo by Lea Horvat, 2018. Collage by Selma Banich, 2020.

as well as a ›remedy‹ for the class divisions between the co-owners), phenomena related to refugees that have left traces throughout the neighborhood's recent history (from the post-Yugoslav Wars, the Arab Spring up to the Balkan corridor-period), and the collateral scars of the global capitalist war (with its Croatian involvement in the global arms trade and war industry). With such a complex patchwork at hand, this symbolic act of shining from an anonymous, porous wall incites us to devise political imagination beyond obedience and to produce resistive practices, reflected in the global struggles for justice and equity.



The Sun Shines Equally for All. Photo by Matija Kralj, 2018. Collage by Selma Banich, 2020.

I met Y. at Zagreb Central Station in February 2016, just before the closure of the so-called Balkan corridor.[2] We have remained in contact since. He was traveling from Morocco with three other friends and was forced to continue the journey forward. To this day, Y. has not ›settled‹ in his new country of residence—and it is still questionable if he ever will. The repressive and racist European migration regime has made him a modern-day slave—forcing him to survive on 20 euros a day, picking apples on fruit plantations in the north of Italy. There, he joined a workforce of tens if not hundreds of thousands of

2 | Some names in the article have been deliberately abbreviated to protect the identity of the people and also to put a graphic emphasis on ›light‹ interventions.

Renaming the Republic of Croatia Square into Madina Hussiny Square. Photo by Maddalena Avon, 2018.

voiceless migrant workers, abused and exploited for private profit by the large economies.

During the peak of the so-called refugee crisis in Croatia, the general populous kept calm. They continued buying ›Italian‹ fruits at supermarkets throughout the country, and apples handpicked by Y. easily found their way to our family tables.

To call those affected by war, poverty, or climate change ›a (refugee/migrant) crisis‹ deliberately misleads us from the core causes of contemporary migration and obscures the importance of fundamental human rights: freedom of movement and our unconditional right to choose where we want to settle down. I

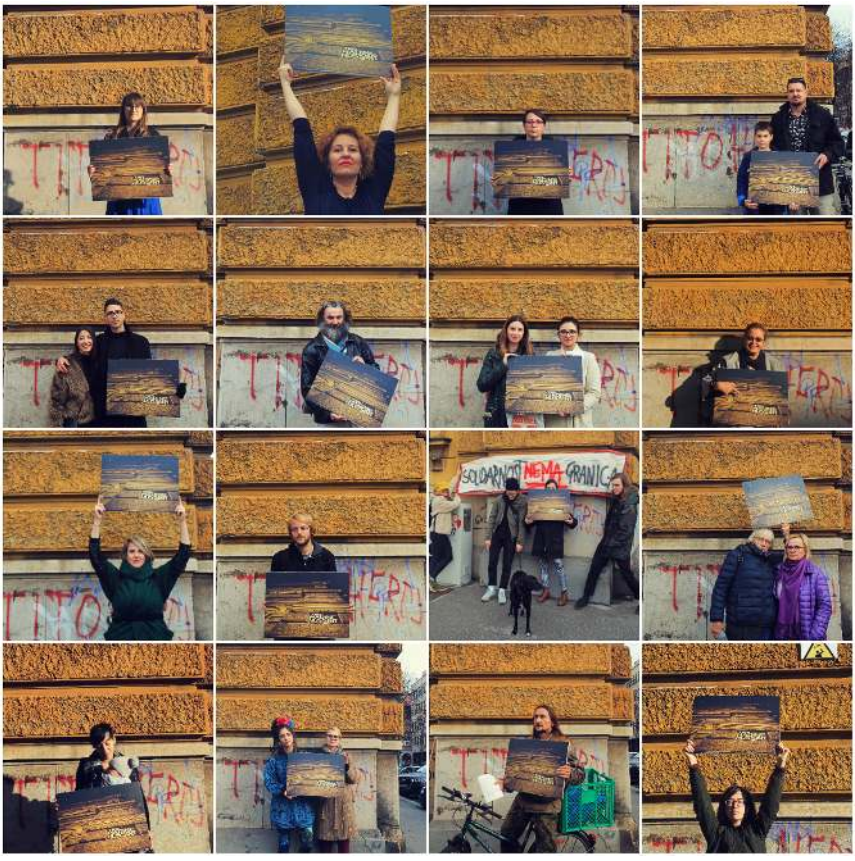
Renaming the Republic of Croatia Square into Madina Hussiny Square. Screenshot Wikipedia, 2018.

believe each person should be able to move as freely as I do and to be able to choose a home as I did. Why was Y. denied that right?

The Sun Shines Equally for All (2018),[3] is a collaborative trans-action whose aim was to express comradeship and transnational solidarity with Ahmed H.,[4] Röszke 11

3 | Action performed during the public presentation of the 101st issue of the journal *Život umjetnosti* (Beroš 2017).

4 | Ahmed H. was convicted for ›terrorism‹ in Hungary, because he protested with thousands of refugees at the Serbian-Hungarian border crossing of Röszke in September 2015 (Free the Röszke 11 2019).



Justice for Madina Hussiny (2019), follow-up action organized by the Activist group of the *Welcome! Initiative.* Photo by Ivana Perić, 2019. Collage by Selma Banich, 2020.

and campaign activists, political prisoners, and detained migrants in Hungary and beyond. Golden during the day and black during the night, the banner displayed on Zagreb's main square demanded the immediate release of Ahmed and all other prisoners held by the racist, neo-colonial ›fortress‹ of Europe. The symbolic act of the heat sheet shining on Zagreb's main square sent a powerful message to the ›fortress‹ rulers: you can not rule what is ungovernable.

Some days ago, I posted a status: »Sorelle e fratelli uniti, fanculo al razzismo e al capitalismo«, with a link to an Italian rap song telling the story of a boy forced to cross the Mediterranean sea in a »death boat«. H., who himself undertook that journey, replied within minutes with a sequence of emoticons: thinking face

emoji, green heart, red heart, and a power fist. He wanted to cheer me up. As if I was the one forced to take that journey next. H.'s gesture reminded me of K.'s question.

I met K. at Zagreb Central Station in March 2019, during the intensified period of violent police push-backs from Croatia to Bosnia. He walked for thirteen days, trekking through a mountain range in order to reach Zagreb. He had been lost without any form of communication, was malnourished, and exhausted from a lack of sleep. He came a long way, desperate to seek asylum in Croatia, but was incarcerated instead.

Upon his release from the *Ježevo* detention center, which only occurred once he had withdrawn his asylum claim, we met again. It was then, before his departure back to Albania, that he asked: »Is there a way I can help you?« I froze… Not because I thought I did not need help, obviously, I did (at the time, I felt as manipulated and harassed by the Croatian police and migration officers as he did when assisting him with the asylum claims), but—honestly speaking—I did not know how to reply. If caring is connected to privilege, what could I possibly ask of a person in such a precarious position? Still, the practice of radical care is an empowering act. No one can prescribe whom we can or cannot care for. Although I did not entirely succeed to help K., we were able to mutually empower each other by exercising our right to care as humans and as political subjects.

Renaming the Republic of Croatia Square into Madina Hussiny Square (2018) was an intervention performed by the *Initiative for the Madina Hussiny Square* in memory of Madina Hussiny, a young girl from Afghanistan whose tragic end was the result of a senseless persecution by the Croatian police. The (re)placement of the heat sheet, tape, and cardboard plaque with Madina's name placed at the former *Republic of Croatia Square* was an act of uncompromised naming—a political, but also profoundly human gesture. It did not call for yet another reinterpretation of a historical event or figure, but was an immediate act of demanding accountability for actions committed and for the irreversible loss of life; because no one: no nation-state, government, military power, economy, or political regime has the right to decree one life valuable and another dispensable.

The encounters with Y., H. and K.—like with so many others—are a constant reminder of how every dangerous, life-threatening journey, every act of systemic violence, and every violation of human dignity endured by so many is, in fact, endured also for our own personal and political freedoms. With every contingent encounter, every boat departing, every plane deporting, and with every violent push-back, detention, incarceration, and torture testimony, we are called to join the liberation movement and its uprising.

I would like to thank Iva and Alex Masters for friendly proofreading.

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Essays

Notes from the Field

»Migrant Crisis« in Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina

AZRA HROMADŽIĆ

Abstract: In March 2018, Bihać, a city located in the northwestern corner of Bosnia and Herzegovina, emerged as the newest »hot spot« on the so-called »Balkan migrant route«. This is due to the city's proximity to Croatia and thus the European Union's (EU) border, and because of the closing of borders and routes elsewhere in Europe. The city is currently harboring around 3,000 people from South Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa who are trying to cross into Croatia and the rest of the EU. While waiting to cross into the EU, these individuals navigate and manage everyday living with, next to, and among the people of Bihać. In this account, I attempt to capture some of these dynamics by focusing on multiple encounters between the people of Bihać and *migranti* with a special focus on the local people's perspectives.

Keywords: Migrant crisis, nature, infrastructure, Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In March 2018, Bihać, a beautiful yet devastated city located on the northwestern edge of Bosnia and Herzegovina near the Croatian border, emerged as the newest »hot spot« on the so-called »Balkan migrant route«. This is due to the city's proximity to Croatia, and thus to the European Union (EU), and because of the closing of borders and routes elsewhere in Europe. The city is currently harboring approximately 3,000 people from South Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa who are desperately and repeatedly trying to cross into Croatia and the rest of the European Union.[1] While some successfully cross the rivers, streams, fields, and mountains dotted with landmines and heavily patrolled by the Croatian police, new people arrive daily, hoping to eventually cross the same border. The human flow of weary bodies and bruised souls continues, fragmented and ridden with deadly obstacles.

In the meantime, while waiting to cross into the EU, these individuals navigate and manage everyday living with, next to, and among the people of Bihać with support

1 | This number is an estimate. No one in Bihać could tell me how many »people on the move« were there exactly—some local Red Cross workers estimated that there are around 5,000 individuals in Bihać at the moment, but others saw that number as too high.

from local people, Bihać's Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and with little help from the Bosnian state or the Federal government. The situation is further complicated due to the fact that many Bihać people were refugees during the Bosnian war (1992-95) and thus (claim to) »know what it is like to feel violently uprooted, displaced and unwanted«. This propels many to help *migranti* (migrants) while simultaneously wishing them gone. These seeming contradictions, layered distinctions, and experiences of refugeeness create unique convergences of people and histories in Bihać.

In this account, I attempt to capture some of these dynamics by focusing on multiple encounters between the people of Bihać and *migranti* with a special focus on the local people's perspectives. In the process, I reveal how larger geo-political restructurings—including capitalist extractions and political upheavals—and their violent manifestations unfold within the city. While there are numerous academic and journalist accounts attempting to make sense of, historicize, and/or humanize the »migrant crisis«, this contribution is not directly concerned with that body of literature. Furthermore, the sections and vignettes in this article do not have consistency—some are written as specific entries on a particular day, and others are more of a meditation/reflection. Some are personal and some more sociological or analytical.

I attempt to create a mosaic of these seemingly disconnected and abrupt notes from the field—vignettes and fragments of social life—in order to portray the ways in which these encounters articulate themselves in the unique context of Bihać. These new encounters require new *grammars*—layered, coded, and reshuffled local meanings and historical artifacts—that are often overlooked in academic writings and journalistic accounts. Some of these new idioms include *war analogies* (Srebrenica, Gaza, Partisan Cemetery, and AVNOJ[2]), *nature* (rivers and trees), and *infrastructure* (ruinous socialist buildings and public spaces). By focusing on these local articulations, discursive spaces, and historical conjunctions—which materialize in relation to the new world (dis)orders—I offer a brief account of what coming together, living together, and surviving together feels like and looks like from the perspective of a citizen of Bihać who lives elsewhere, but who annually and loyally returns to the city.

2 | Bihać's Partisan Cemetery was built after WWII in honor of the Yugoslav Partisans of Bihać who were killed during WWII. Bihać was embedded in history as the place of the First Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) where, on the 26th and 27th of November 1942, the future post WWII Yugoslavia was first postulated.

Migrants resting at the Partisan Cemetery. Photographs by Amir Husak, 2018. Published with the permission from the photographer.

POSITIONALITY/REFLEXIVITY

I was born in Bihać in the 1970s. A unique Yugoslav brand of socialist self-management—its ideologies, political economies, and socialites— profoundly shaped my view of the world. I was 16 years old when my home town was violently besieged by the »Serb army«; a blockade that would last for over three years. I witnessed a painful, material, and deeply visceral transformation of an industrial, socialist, and relatively progressive town into a town choked by a three and a half year-long siege. The town's population changed drastically during the war and so did its streets, which transformed from places of tireless social gathering to ghostly zones of abandonment (Biehl 2005) covered with »human waste« (Bauman 2003) and non-human rubble (Stoler 2008). After the war ended, people who survived the siege, either in town or in exile, returned to the streets and ›normal‹ life, however changed, returned in the city. At the same time, socialist infrastructure—buildings, industrial zones, social services, and public spaces—continued to decay and peel off, generating frustration of local populations and corrective narratives to the popular »western« discourses of linear, regional postsocialist transitions from socialism and war to democracy and peace (see Hromadžić 2019). Even though I moved to the US in 1996, I continued to

visit the town and its people and places annually, witnessing their often complicated postwar and postsocialist alterations. What follows is deeply rooted in and colored by my unique experience of socialist Yugoslavia and the Bosnian war.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Wars (June 2018)

Today, Bihać looks different. It has been a year since my last visit and this time the town appears uncanny—familiar but not mine. While I have witnessed many transformations of Bihać in the last three decades, I was, yet again, caught unprepared, intellectually and emotionally, for this most recent change. The main public spaces—parks and the river's banks—are layered with groups of devastated people, the »global outcasts« or »human flow«. They are mostly young males, products of war-generated violences and of »savage sorting«—the destruction of more traditional forms of capitalism by more advanced capitalist forms in much of the world (Sassen 2010). They are sitting in parks, usually on the grass, suspended in their waiting to cross into the EU. Some are sleeping in larger groups next to each other, the bags, their only possessions, under their heads. Stray dogs, another symbol of Bihać's postwar »transition«, are roaming around them. While walking next to these sleeping and resting bodies, I start to grasp and embody the seemingly contradicting sentiment that people in Bihać have been articulating for months: on the one hand, there is a genuine empathy and desire to help the unfortunate people *on the move* whose lives were transformed—by global capitalist economies and contemporary warfare—into the »scum of the Earth« (Arendt 1951: 267). On the other hand, the local people, devastated by catastrophic unemployment and political impasse, are genuinely terrified of »losing« the last places that bring moments of joy and an appearance of »normalcy« (see Greenberg 2011, Jansen 2015) to town: its beautiful river Una and numerous other public spaces of socialization, such as parks and pedestrian streets dotted with coffee shops. The sight of ›elsewhere‹ people, who out of necessity and misery ›colonized‹ Bihać's public spaces and river banks, and their undeniable, evident suffering felt devastating, unbearable, and dystopic to many people. This convergence created the ›limit‹—existential, emotional, and semantic.

Not that I was not warned. When I called a friend several days prior to my arrival and asked: »What's new in town?« she responded, unhesitatingly: »There are many new *tamnoputi* [dark skinned people] here. Azra, they are everywhere.« Her racist and xenophobic comment paralyzed me for a moment; I caught myself judging her.

Migrants resting at the Partisan Cemetery. Photographs by Amir Husak, 2018. Published with the permission from the photographer.

Now, however, I find myself avoiding certain— central—parts of the town, remapping the city. I am not alone. Many of the people I converse with tell me that they do not move around the city the same way anymore. Rather, they avoid certain routes and create new ones. »You know what it is like? It feels just like that time right before the war started« one acquaintance remarked. »Remember the atmosphere? We were all tense, confused. We were saying: ›This cannot be happening to us!‹ That is how it is now. We do not nonchalantly stroll around town anymore like we always did. Rather, we move with purpose, we walk quickly. We go from point A to point B. We lock our homes and our fences. We do not go out much at night. No one strolls anymore.«

This link between the perception of current danger and the pre-war atmosphere is only one of many ways in which people in Bihać understand and live their new predicament. The trope of war emerged in multiple conversations and bodily practices. First, the people used their experiences and memories of the Bosnian war to paint themselves as different, better, and more understanding than other states and nations, which mistreated and rejected *migranti*. Rather, people I talked to often stressed that they—who themselves were shot at and made into refugees two decades ago—understood the refugee predicament. And this sentiment did show in instances in which ordinary people dressed and fed *migranti*, saving their »bare lives« (Agam-

ben 1995), while not necessarily wanting to get to know them as individuals with particular histories and struggles. Rather, *migranti* were seen as a bare, dark skinned sea of humanity (Malkki 1996) that embodied and displayed universally recognized forms of human suffering, while confusing some categories of bare humanity (the ideal, innocent sufferer is a socially isolated, apolitical, teary eyed black African child who stares at us from the UNICEF's flyers, or a young, dark skinned, sexually assaulted female. These ›new‹ *migranti*, however, are mostly young, able-bodied dark skinned males, equipped with cell phones). At the same time, these visibly suffering humans were being stripped of their sociality and historical particularism. They were simultaneously made into superhumans (suffering) and dehumanized (people with no name or historical ›roots‹) because their social and political struggles—their real life (his)stories—were uninvited and thus made invisible in the name of shared and bare humanity (see Malkki 2017). This recognition and stretching of categories (»bare life« and »suffering, universal human«) allowed the people in town to simultaneously feel for *migranti* and wish them gone.

The Bosnian war(s) and the current predicament of refugees and migrants from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia found their convergences in other unexpected and historically potent ways. One day, my friend and colleague, who also lives and teaches abroad, was passing by Borići (Small Pines), a forested area near the then largest migrant encampment in Bihać. He spotted migrants sleeping in the *Partizansko groblje* (Partisan Cemetery), which was built during socialism to honor those Yugoslav Partisans of Bihać who were killed during World War II. Migrants took naps and rested next to these graves, creating novel historical intimacies and layers of bones and flesh, cement and grass, visible and invisible names, lives and deaths.

Another day, as I was walking through Aleja, an alley of trees next to the Partisan Cemetery at the end of which many *migranti* found their precarious shelter in an unfinished, socialist-built student dorm, two migrants from ›who knows where‹ walked in front of me. One of them wore a white shirt given to him from ›who knows whom‹. The back of the shirt read: »*Srebrenica – da se ne zaboravi genocide*« (»Srebrenica—never forget genocide«). This painful overlapping and literal collapsing of the Bosnian war's most painful history of the Srebrenica genocide, when more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were captured and killed in three days by the Serb Army in the UN Safe Zone of Srebrenica in 1995, and the history of violence, exclusion, and despair that brought the shirt-wearing migrant to Bihać was devastating; it created both a limit of the comprehensible and tolerable, and it marked an excess of suffering.

Partisans and migrants. Photograph by Azra Hromadžić, 2019.

Nature (July 2018)

Some of the most important symbols of Bihać are its famous Una River and its surrounding trees and forests. In this most forested European country, which ›hides‹ some of the last and biggest fresh water repositories in Europe, Bihać is exceptional due to its greenness. The Una River is famous for its beauty[3], fast currents, emerald color, water quality, tourist potential, and for keeping Bihać's population sane and safe during the 1990's war. The link between the people and the river is socially produced and exceptionally strong. As one resident told me: »Without her [the river], I would not know who I am. She makes me sovereign.« Another added: »If I were to be born again… I would like to be a fish, so that I can live in the river.«

The river flows through the very center of town, both dividing and uniting it. It should therefore not be surprising that the majority of *migranti* spend their time

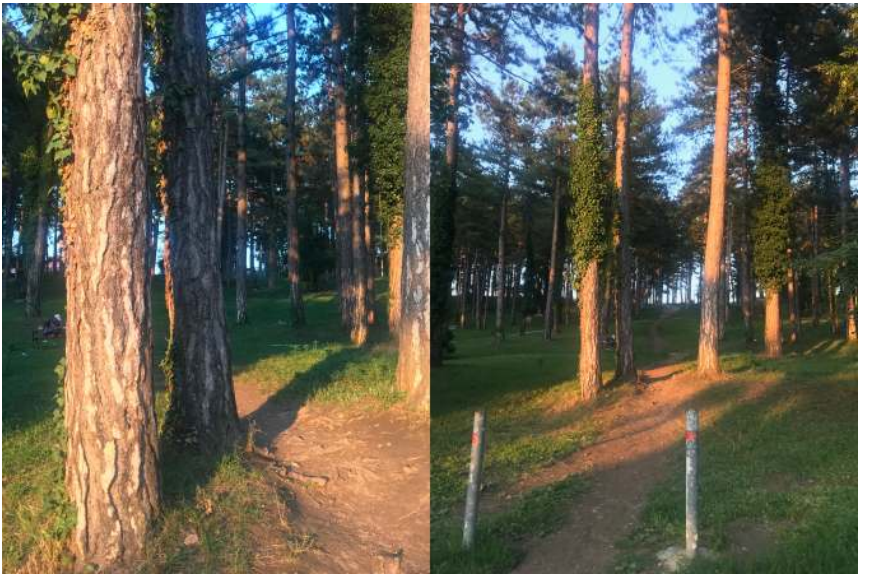
3 | According to the legend, Una was named by Roman legionaries who, upon seeing it for the first time, exclaimed: »Una! – One and only!« (s.n. s. a., page 1).

around the river. For many of them, the Una River provided the only source of hygiene and, possibly, moments of joy. The residents of Bihać were both understanding (»Where else would they go to wash?«), inclusive (»They know how to properly use public spaces!« exclaimed one local architect in awe), and alarmed. These alarming discourses were multidimensional, often combining compassion and racism, and xenophobia and care. For example, one person exclaimed: »I fully understand that they have to wash their clothes and their bodies [in the river]. They have no access to bathrooms and showers. But this river is so clean, we protected it. We do not wash clothes in it anymore because we know that detergent is bad for the fish.« Here, *migranti* were seen as both needy and polluting invaders—contaminating the sacred, socially produced bond between humans and non-humans, people and the river.

Another alleged migrant practice provoked an outcry: eating the river's ducks (Degirmendžić 2018). The Una River harbors many of these animals, which are ›consumed‹ by the local people in the city as attractions, but never as food. These city ducks, ›our ducks‹, are often (problematically) fed bread by the locals, especially children. (There used to be two swans in the river as well— the first postwar mayor, I was told, illegally smuggled them from Italy). Simply put, the river's ducks are the locals' pets. The idea of *migranti*, »catching and roasting ducks at the banks of the river«, was the limit to many. While some people saw these practices as a desperate move of hungry people, others saw this as a sign and confirmation of their incivility and backwardness: »It is possible they are eating [our] ducks. I would not be surprised if they were to start eating each other«, whispered one local man (Degirmendžić 2018).

The river's banks and lush vegetation also offered secluded spaces for refugees and migrants to defecate. One day, as we were walking by the river, two friends and I tried to maneuver this ›mess‹. A friend remarked, »This is *Put govana!* [the Road of Shit!]«. He was alluding both to the path by the river covered in migrants' feces that we were navigating, and the parallel road on the other side of the river known as Put AVNOJA. This Put AVNOJA was built during socialist times and it connects western and eastern Bosnia. It is possibly the second most frequented road in the country. Contrasting Put AVNOJA and the Road of Shit, the friend was bringing together two seemingly disconnected and incommensurable experiences and uneasily converging histories—socialist modernity and development on the one hand, and the contemporary ›migrant crisis‹, infrastructural ruination, shit, and decay on the other.

The river was not the only natural landmark around which tension born out of forced coexistence between the local population and *migranti* was articulated. Borići, a forested area near the largest migrant encampment in Bihać at the time, became another conflicting space of lament and compassion, xenophobia and critique. This area, adjacent to the main soccer stadium, was forested by the socialist youth in the



»Invasive Species«. Photographs by Azra Hromadžić, 2019.

seventies and eighties of the last century. Several years ago, the Extreme Sports Club »Limit« remodeled the space and converted it into a well-kept nature walk and exercise path where many locals escaped the city's dust to breathe some fresh air. In March 2018, this area, however, became the main space where several hundred *migranti* created a make-shift camp dotted with improvised tents. This camp emerged in and around the former student dorm— a symbolic postwar and postsocialist ruin of the future past[4]—tacked in behind the exercise path. Images of the Borići's trees being stripped down of their bark (for heating purposes) provoked an outcry among those who planted the trees and others who lamented the »lungs lost«. Others were upset »with those among us who forget what it is like to be a refugee«. An American acquaintance, seeing my images of the »naked« trees, and without knowing much about the context, asked me nonchalantly: »Are these pine beetles?«, alluding to an invasive species that attacks pine trees. This question literally collapsed the boundary

4 | The phrase »future past« is the construction of Reinhart Koselleck (2004), a historical theorist who in his famous work *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* explores, among other things, the experiences of the past that impose modernity.

The Una River and *Dom penzionera* in the background. Photo by Azra Hromadžić, 2019.

between the human and non-human, where *migranti* and »invasive others« (Ticktin 2017: xxiii) collapsed into one, dangerous category.

Infrastructure (July 2018)

When I visited Bihać in the early summer of 2018, one of the main places where *migranti* were temporarily staying was a never completed socialist retirement home or *Dom penzionera* located on the banks of the Una River in the center of Bihać.

The building remained eerie and skeleton-like for decades, a shadow and a symbol of the unmaterialized socialist past and the perpetually transitioning postwar present. More specifically, over the last 25 years this unfinished building, instead of its imagined inhabitants—elderly socialist workers who were going to age and die in it peacefully—has been housing and co-producing multiple unexpected residents: the transition's »wasted humans and human waste« (Bauman 2003). These residents include disillusioned Bosnian youth and, more recently, *migranti* (see Hromadžić 2019).

Dom's ruinous, dangerous, skeletal structure was, at the time of my visit, occupied by several hundred refugees and migrants. The conditions in the building were un-

Dom penzionera and *migranti*. Photographs by Selma Selman, 2019.

hygienic and structurally unsafe, highlighting the forms of precarity and despair that enveloped these migrant lives. The extremely unfavorable social (over-crowdedness and internal disputes) and material conditions born out of Dom's dangerous physicality, continued to produce violence and death, including the death of a 37-year-old man from Afghanistan who fell through the open elevator shaft and broke his spine, which lead to his death (Faktor.ba 2018). Five days after that tragedy, another young man lost his life while swimming in the nearby Una River. These tragedies point at yet another non-linear historical twist: instead of the socialist worker-pensioners, who were supposed to age slowly and peacefully next to the florescent and calming Una River, the lives of young male migrants from the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa were being violently taken by its currents (Krajina.ba 2018; see Hromadžić 2019).

Planet Sarajevo (October 2018)

For the most part, Bišćani (citizens of Bihać) do not blame *migranti* for the overwhelming situation in their town. Rather, they blame ›Europe‹ and the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. They have witnessed their city being overwhelmed with refugees, more so than any other town or city in the country. While this is a state-

wide problem, they feel the state does not help them. The situation in which hundreds of new people are coming through Bihać daily trying to cross into Croatia, has overwhelmed the city of 45,000 inhabitants, which is already dealing with (post)war destruction, high poverty, extreme unemployment, and infrastructural ruination. The people of Bihać once again feel betrayed by Sarajevo and Sarajevo-oriented politicians for neglecting *both* them and the refugees. They recount ways in which »the government in Sarajevo tries to channel *migranti* to Bihać [and the rest of Una-Sana Canton in which Bihać is located] just to get rid of them and send them to us. And we want to help them. But government in Sarajevo is not helping us help them. They just encourage them to take buses and trains to Bihać, and they leave the rest to us. What kind of government does that?« People in Bihać feel *uncared for* by their government as well as misunderstood, alone, and exhausted.

Months of this bubbling emotion lead to a protest in October 2018. The protest was interpreted by many, including Sarajevo-based and European media and publics as well as civic society groups within the region, as anti-immigrant, racist, and xenophobic. Many local people were shocked by these misreadings; while some anti-immigrant and racist sentiment was present and clearly articulated in one of the signs visible at the protest, which read »Immigrants Go Home« (and not accidentally, this was the main image that circulated through social media), painting the protest as such is too simplistic. I was repeatedly told that the main target of the protest was not *migranti* but the Bosnian government in Sarajevo which is »doing nothing« for Bišćani who deal with the crisis daily. The town was at the brink of collapse, and a »humanitarian catastrophe«, and Bišćani felt those in Sarajevo did not care.

This feeling of being neglected by Sarajevo was then linked to the experience during the war (1992-95), when the people in the besieged region of Bihać felt similarly abandoned by the central government. In 1993, during the Bosnian war, Fikret Abdić—a local businessman turned politician from a town located 60 kilometers north of Bihać—and his followers declared independence from the Bosnian government in Sarajevo and its army. Immediately they began cooperating with Serb forces in Bosnia and Croatia which besieged the region for more than a year at the time. This further aggravated the situation in the Bihać region, which was split into two halves (a pro-government one and a pro-Abdić one) that started a war against each other. This propelled some in Sarajevo to see the people in the Una-Sana Canton as traitors. The people's protest in Bihać in 2018 built on this uncomfortable history of exclusion, abandonment, and betrayal, and it linked that long-lasting sentiment to the contemporary, unexpected, *migranti*-related predicaments. The protest was therefore another attempt by Bišćani to interpellate the government in Sarajevo to respond and move to action. People asked the government to »appear« with a plan and a vision of

the future. They demanded a »system«, but as a result, the protest organizers were fined for organizing the protest. People were shocked, hurt, and angry. In the local people's opinion, their actions were, however, misunderstood and misinterpreted as anti-immigrant, even racist, and once again they felt abandoned. That is, until Europe »showed up«.

Fortress Europe and Bosnian Gaza Strip (Fall 2018)

In the fall of 2018, a series of meetings took place between the Cantonal Minister of Education in Bihać and the parents of children enrolled in the elementary school *Brekovica* in the village with the same name located some eight miles from Bihać. The meetings revolved around one main issue: education of »migrant children« from the nearby hotel *Sedra*. The hotel has recently been remodeled by the IOM in order to house 300 *migranti* with children. The presence of IOM in Bihać reminded people of the heavy yet complicated involvement of the »international community« in postwar reconstruction after the Bosnian war ended. This ambiguous and insufficient presence of Europe was yet another link between the war and the current predicament.

The issue arose when the children from the ›hotel‹ had to start school. According to *The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (2016) that paved the way to the adoption of two global compacts on migration and refugees in 2018, education is a critical element of the international refugee response. Many local people were aware of this, but once they were faced with the ›problem‹ of migrant children attending ›their‹ school, they threatened to pull their children out of school. As one parent said: »Of course the migrant children need education. But they are living in such unhygienic conditions, our state and the world are not really helping them … And all we want is to make sure that there is no spreading of diseases… . We also have to protect *our* children.«

Seeing this parent discuss this issue on a local TV channel, a friend commented: »Of course… . inclusive education. But they [Europe] are so hypocritical. They built their Fortress [Europe], they put their security cameras, police, barbwire and cannons on their border… and every time these same children try to cross, that same Europe sends them back to Bihać and our canton. But they are scolding us for not educating them! Isn't that hypocritical?« What these remarks illuminate is the politics of »armed love« (Ticktin 2011: 161) where care replaces cure (Ticktin 2011) and where the moral imperative to act is accompanied, explicitly or implicitly, by practices of violence, exclusion, and containment. Many of the people in the region felt this double, hypocritical nature of ›European care‹ that was turning Bihać into, as one acquaintance remarked, the ›European Gaza Strip‹. This seemingly unexpected

and unfounded comparison of Bihać and Gaza is a perceptive commentary on the contemporary forms of savage sorting and transformation of certain world geographies—and people historically attached to them—as spaces of misery and »bare life« (Agamben 1995). These regions are besieged by palpable, militarized borders, where contemporary »human and non-human waste« is dumped, monitored, and (attempted to be) depoliticized and contained.

Another Bišćanin explained further: »On the West side, you have Europe with its barbwires, its walls, its security apparatuses. On the East side, you have Sarajevo and its government, which is doing everything to get rid of migrants by sending them to our canton. They *encourage* them to come here. And we are struggling with our own issues. But both sides are accusing us to be racist and xenophobic. Isn't that crazy? And we are actually the ones feeding the migrants and living with them, trying our best to coexist somehow.« Commenting on this situation, another person told me: »Did you know that Croatia closed the border crossing with Bosnia [the entry point near Velika Kladuša, another town in the Canton with a big refugee and migrant population] for a few days because of the hectic migrant situation? We are turning into Gaza, where they [the West] will dump all the migrants they catch in Europe. They even bring here, to us, those *migranti* that never passed through Bosnia on their way to Europe. That is illegal!… . Yes, they will give us some money for infrastructure [IOM invested some funds in repairing tokens of infrastructure in the city] and then, they will make us into a dumping ground.«

This idea that Bihać and its canton are being sacrificed by both Europe and Sarajevo and turned into a European Gaza—a forcefully enclosed dumping ground for modernity's »global outcasts« that are understood as dangerous, racially marked, and strategically produced as superfluous populations—was wide-spread in Bihać. It is here that the overlap of dispersed peripheries—Gaza and Bihać - and postwar, post-socialist, postcolonial, and imperial geographies and histories, forcefully converged to challenge our analytic vocabularies, research methodologies, and attempts to create clean categories of analysis. These painful, unexpected and highly visible convergences of seemingly incongruent bodies and souls, political bureaucracies, resistance, diplomatic strategies, humanitarian regimes, and economic calculations revealed new world orders, encounters, and experiences. These intimate convergences especially exposed the nature of politics of European care, which offer only a temporary and superficial fixing of »wounds«. Furthermore, it disclosed the European morality of »armed love«; regimes of exclusion and punishment emerging in the name of human rights, compassion, and inclusion (Ticktin 2011).

The Game (March 2019)

On an exceptionally warm and sunny afternoon, a friend and I were watching a soccer game at the main stadium in Bihać. *Jedinstvo*, the local team with long tradition, notable past and unremarkable present, was playing against the team from Herzegovina today. The game was painful to watch: the quality of the team was declining together with the city itself. The stadium is located in Borići. Due to the proximity of the IOM-run migrant camp—a partially renovated ruin of the former student dorm—to the stadium, migrants became regular fans at these games. On this day and any other day, they were vocal supporters of the team loudly cheering in those rare moments when *Jedinstvo* scored.

Migranti usually sit on the north side of the bleachers right next to the city's most vocal and incident-prone fans. The stadium is in a state of ruins and ruination. It is yet another token of decaying socialist infrastructure— another ruin of a future past—and its socio-material »living, breathing, leaking assemblage of more than human relations« (Anand 2017: 6). The IOM, following its twisted logic of humanitarianism, committed to repairing some of the stadium's decaying infrastructure and has already begun with the works. This added another layer of ambiguity to the already complicated relationship between the local people, the refugees, and Fortress Europe.

The local team barely won. As we left the stadium, we encountered another group of migrants walking towards us on their way to the Plješivica Mountain. Their steps were determined and in sync. They walked in an army marching formation— their steps regular, ordered, and synchronized. They carried backpacks and sleeping bags, and they walked faster than the rest of us determined to cross the mountain into Croatia. Migrants call this attempt to cross into Croatia »The Game«. One of multiple explanations for this name is that the whole experience resembles a cat and the mouse game. As they ›play‹ the game they often get caught by the ›cat‹—the Croatian police—which is heavily patrolling the mountain. »It is interesting« my friend remarked, »that they are using the same route to cross that we used to illegally cross into Croatia during the war to escape the siege«. This comment collapsed the time/geography between the two events. Refugees, near and far, blended into a sea of walking humanity, »the flow of humans«, seemingly without history. I imagined this group, marching in their decomposing tennis shoes, sleeping in the snow-covered, landmine-decorated mountain that night.

If they are captured, they will most probably be beaten up by Croatian police and forcefully returned to Bihać. Their few possessions will be taken. And then they will try again, sometimes over ten times, until they finally reach what one refugee called »a place of peace« in the Fortress Europe, which is decorated with the discourse of

human rights and politics of barbwire. Or they might freeze in the snow-covered mountain never to be identified. It is a *game*, after all.

Landfill, Landmines and the Wolfs (July 2019)

In July 2019, I returned to Bihać. This time, the town was quiet and eerie. I walked its streets, measuring its silences and sensing the heaviness that often accompanies the proximity of human tragedies. Soon, I learned that after more than a year of waiting for the Bosnian state, Europe, or any other actor to help them manage ›the migrant crisis‹, further propelled by several instances of violence between different, antagonistic migrant groups in town, in June 2019, the City of Bihać and the Una-Sana Canton singlehandedly started forcefully removing migrants from their semi-licit, crowded, and in apt dwellings. While some local residents protested this »hunt on people«, others in town welcomed this intervention. One person told me enthusiastically: »We took our city back. A day after the migrants were relocated, I went out with friends. We were all dressed up; I even put on lipstick, and we had coffee in the very center of town.« While welcoming this »take over«, many people were very concerned about the means of forceful removal of people and the inhumane location of the new camp. The migrants were sometimes patrolled by the police and made to walk for six kilometers in a prisoner-style single file formation with their right hand on the shoulder of the man in front of them. After a public outcry about these practices, which were reminiscent of war, refugeeness, and imprisonment, *migranti* were bused out of town to the forest clearing, a former communal landfill located six kilometers from Bihać near the village of Vučjak in the foothills of the heavily mined Plješivica Mountain.

Vučjak etymologically stems from *vukovi* or wolfs, connoting a daunting space where wilderness and animals dominate over humans. The rumor has it that the city government decided on this problematic location in order to provoke some response from the irresponsive Bosnian state and passive, hypocritical, and moralizing Europe. As a local professor told me, »no one expects this to last. There is no way *migranti* could survive the winter there. They will be relocated again.«[5] Both the Bosnian government and many EU and international bodies, NGOs, and media outlets condemned the choice of location (citing both the violation of human rights and fear that the camp was physically *too close* to Croatia) while failing to offer, so far, any concrete solution, recommendation, or assistance. Most care, including two daily meals, come from local people and the local Red Cross. Meanwhile, Vučjak be-

5 | The camp was indeed closed on December 10, 2019. Most individuals from Vučjak were bussed to Ušivak, a village close to Sarajevo.

Map of the suspected landmine area distributed to the migrants in Bosnia by the Red Cross. I am grateful to David Henig for sharing this map with me.

came yet another »jungle« produced at the intersection of near and far violences, and Bišćani's despair and their historically rooted sense of disappointment in the Bosnian government and the world/Europe »that keeps on looking«.[6] These forces generate dehumanized (im)mobile humans—suspended in time and space—who are literally sleeping and waiting on tons of toxic garbage, surrounded by still unexploded landmines from the most recent war (there were three explosions near Vučjak since the war ended), and encircled by wolfs. What is more, this heavy human activity on top of the landfill is producing untreated human waste, feces, and garbage, which are seeping into the porous soil. According to some experts and experiments, these contaminants need less than a day to travel underground to reach one of the main fresh water springs in the town of Klokot ironically circling back into the bodies of local people. These anxieties produce new convergences of local people and *migranti* as well as new water markets and habits, expert knowledge, (non)governmental projects, deeper political resentments and accusations, bodily concerns, and precarious, unsettled and unfinished ways of being in the world.

6 | I use »jungle« here to make a connection between Vučjak and the »Calais« jungle in France. Between 2015 and 2016 this area was a large, controversial and globally well-known refugee and migrant camp near Calais, France.

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A Volunteer's Diary

We Did a Better Job in Serbia

PATRICIA ARTIMOVA

Abstract: In 2015, Europe faced significant migration movements heading towards the European Union via the Balkan route. In order to relieve the situation and to support migrants, the groups of so-called independent volunteers, not members of any existing organization, started to travel to the most critical sites. I have been personally involved in volunteering for about four years in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The direct experiences with volunteering in the field are presented as time lapse diary notes, what allowed me to demonstrate the diachronic line of both personal engagement as well as gradual developments in the field.

Keywords: Crisis, migration, volunteering, diary, perception

In 2015, Europe faced significant migration movements heading towards the European Union via the Balkan route. In order to relieve the situation and to support migrants, the groups of so-called independent volunteers, not members of any existing organization, started to travel to the most critical sites. At the same time, I graduated in International Relations and Diplomacy with a thesis on human rights and migration. Therefore, my involvement in volunteering in 2015 was partially a result of a professional interest in the ways all actors cooperated and how states managed the situation. On the other hand, as I used to be active in different volunteer positions giving support to others before, personal motivation played an important role in getting involved in the field.

At the time of my decision-making, several initiatives organized donations or travelled to the borders. But there was one organization among the others that became especially popular on social media. The group I volunteered for had already been present in the field for a while and had a more or less functional system of recruiting volunteers, of delivering actual information on developments on the spot as well as on the group's need for new volunteers, the best ways of transport, or on legal and administrative support for volunteers. With such a system in place and with recommendations from friends, contacting the group and planning the trip was easy.

I have been personally involved in volunteering for about four years. The first time, I travelled and volunteered at the Serbian-Croatian border, the Berkasovo - Bapska border crossing, in 2015, and the last stay in Serbia took place in December 2017. The length of my stays varied and depended on actual needs in the field and at centers. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, I firstly visited Sarajevo in July 2018 and then moved further north, to Bihać, where I stayed for more than a month. Later, I came back a few times, and I volunteered there in December 2018 for the last time.

Such direct experiences with volunteering in the field allowed me to collect research material in its raw form and on a more or less regular basis. The following text is, thus, composed of three types of data: first, personal notes taken as a supporting material for my broader research of the so-called migration crisis; second, diary notes other volunteers made available for me as discussing and sharing personal and moral issues related to migration was, from my point of view, common, but depended on relations and increased during the time spent together in the field; and third, partial transcriptions of interviews with co-volunteers based on the initial purpose to prepare academic papers on the motivation of volunteers that were not published in the end. As most of the original data was already in a diary form, the processing only required small corrections, e.g. contextual information on places or events. Also, time lapse diary notes allowed me to demonstrate the diachronic line of volunteers' personal engagement and gradual developments in the field.

The following text is a collage based on these diverse materials put together and rearranged in order to present the complexity of the topic. The paper shows factors of various impacts on volunteers and their work in the field, reaching from very personal issues to the management of the situation by states. The importance of the factors is then compared to time periods and different places.

The opinions mentioned in the text do not represent official statements of the volunteers' initiative. Furthermore, names of volunteers, migrants, employees, and organizations have been erased to ensure the anonymity of respondents.

SERBIA: OCTOBER 2015-MARCH 2016

15.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

Well, I am here. Our co-volunteer kept preparing us for the field during the whole ride to Serbia. But the reality surprised me anyway. First of all, that awful smell in the air, then, thousands of people actually waiting to cross the border, the lack of the big organizations' presence on the spot, and, finally, a feeling of great confidence

of migrants towards volunteers. My first contact with a refugee was when a poorly dressed lady put her newborn into my arms because she saw I wore a sign of volunteers, and she went away to rest a bit. I just stood there and had no words. I didn't expect this at all.

17.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

Nights are always worse. It is really cold. Nobody can actually sleep. Kids are hungry and frozen. It feels as though other organizations are not present on the spot. The only thing we can offer to those people is the sweetest tea on earth and efforts to moderate communication with police on both sides of the borders. It really beats me when I see police separating families from their kids.

19.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

The situation here is truly awful. Watching what is actually happening here is something that I just can't note down properly. I have an education in humanitarian aid, but I still don't get what is going on. On the other hand, there are also beautiful moments in this hell. I admire co-volunteers who have refugee experience, and now they are here. Or yesterday, a group of refugees and volunteers sang some known songs the whole night. I loved when they chose »Don't stop me now« by Queen. What a bitter coincidence.

25.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

The second day with closed borders. Nobody knows what is going to happen. Migrants are accumulating on the Serbian side, and everybody is starting to be pretty nervous. From time to time, the Serbian or Croatian police close the borders on purpose for a few hours. But now it just lasts too long. And also the weather is supposed to worsen these days.

26.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

As presumed, a few people didn't hold their nerves, and it ended with a fight. A few migrants, including kids, were hurt. Fortunately, Croatia opened the borders again. And all migrants are thanking us. We actually did nothing special.

28.10.2015, Šid

I am definitely starting to make a list of people who don't want to be in touch with me on social networks. One picture of me volunteering in Serbia is surprisingly enough to call me a »traitor of traditional values« and stop talking to me.

29.10.2015, Berkasovo-Bapska

I woke up at 4:00 am because of the coldness. As I heard some noise, I decided to check what was going on. It was the classic night shift story: all of the main humanitarian organizations left the spot, migrants started to accumulate here, and one lady almost delivered. Although, they didn't want to allow her to cross the border at the beginning, we managed to transfer the lady to the closest hospital situated in Croatia.

10.12.2015, Šid

Finally, migrants stopped being sent directly to the border. Instead of that, the buses stop at a former hostel on a highway to Zagreb next to the border to Croatia. Migrants have at least some time to rest, and we can provide them with few things they need. Work is divided among the state institutions, main humanitarian organizations, and volunteer initiatives, and we must accept it.

14.01.2016, Adaševci

Our coordinator warned us not to cooperate with local employees working for state institutions because, from his point of view, they are using the situation of migrants for their own profit. But, my co-volunteer came with a better field strategy than arguing over the best crisis management. If we manage to make some tea or coffee, she always goes and offers it to them. The shift is much less problematic then.

05.02.2016, Šid

We had a nice talk about breakups in the evening. We found out that almost every one of the volunteers here either broke up with their partners because of their direct involvement in volunteering or at least know somebody who did.

07.02.2016, Šid

So, I spent last night on a shift and then cleaned our volunteers' house. The shift was as usual: really cold, a lot of migrants, nervous bus drivers and local employees, and everybody in a great hurry. »Is there anybody in need of some boots, hats, gloves, hygienic products, or diapers?« And the cleaning was, well, cleaning. I don't get those people pretending to be volunteers saving the world and not being able to wash the dishes.

10.02.2016, Adaševci

Today's night shift was a bit different. Few families came and stayed in the rub hall during the whole night, and we were supposed to watch if everything was going well. My foreign co-volunteer refused to stay there because the atmosphere and inside look of the tent for him recalled a concentration camp. So, I stayed with another volunteer. Migrants were calm and everything was going smoothly. But later, my colleague started to behave strangely. Later today, we found out he has some psychological issues. Obviously, he somehow forgot to inform anybody. What a responsible attitude.

20.03.2016, Šid

EU-Turkey migration deal: since the deal, the crossing has been significantly restricted for migrants. As a result, migrants and refugees have said to accumulate in several places in Serbia, and new centers have been opened. Since then, volunteers have been active as a part of those officially established camps.

Serbia: November 2016-January 2018

10.11.2016, Šid

One of my best friends told me he had no understanding for my work with »economic migrants pretending to be refugees«. In two days he leaves for the United Kingdom to work there...

12.11.2016, Adaševci

We spent another night shift only by talking with migrants and with almost no sleep. Hearing all those stories make me feel a bit sick. Those people escaped from a war, they lost family members, and they are on their way for years… And we still think they don't deserve to come.

18.11.2016, Principovac

Thanks to our way of funding, we are able to ensure things migrants are lacking and other NGOs can't buy: for example, all kinds of hygienic products for more than 500 migrants. Yes, there are toilets; however nobody distributes the toilet paper. We do.

11.02.2017, Principovac

During the hygienic products distribution, we had more time to talk with migrants: those who knew English came and shared some of their stories. Suddenly, one of them showed me his scars of a gunshot wound. I had no words for it.

15.03.2017, Šid

One of our volunteers found out that an anti-Islamic group added me on their list of persons supporting terrorism and Islamization of Europe. At least I am not alone there. It is a truly long list.

17.03.2017, Adaševci

We ran out of powder in the laundry room again. When trying to get the new one, we struggled to find anybody who knew something about it. So, we waited and tried to calm down angry migrant women that had waited for their laundry time for a week. I must admit, after such a long time here, I am pretty resistant to their excuses or reproaches. However, their stories are truly sorrowful sometimes. Today, a lady from Afghanistan explained her sad experience with a typical use of refugee language: »Me five bibi, husband Daesh, mushkila, mushkila […]« and so »I have five kids and my husband was killed by the Islamic state, it's a big problem […].«

19.03.2017, Šid

After four months, I am back in the field. So, I started with an update on information and changes since my last stay here. Good news—there are no more lice here. Bad news—night shifts are still on, and I start tomorrow. Everything else has stayed the same.

10.04.2017, Principovac

Yesterday's night shift was just nonsense. Everything went smoothly until somebody called us to help one guy. We only knew he had drunk a bit of alcohol, and then he started to have problems with breathing. After a while, my co-volunteer stayed with him, and I decided to call an ambulance. The official employee was nice and gave me his cell to call the paramedics.

When they found out he was a migrant who needed their help, they ignored everything. Just looked at him, and, because he had drunk some spirits, they refused to help him. Also, they informed us not to call them again. We stayed with that migrant all night. In the morning, we informed a doctor who came to the center. She asked about the medicine the paramedics had given him. And she was quite surprised by their behavior.

Later today, we found out he drank because he had been informed of his mother's and sister's deaths in Afghanistan. Doctors in the camp then cared about him because of his bad mental and health conditions…

20.04.2017, Šid

I just don't get why people think migrants form a homogenous group of Muslims ignoring others. No refugee ever questioned my religion. If somebody does it, it's always some colleagues surprisingly asking, »And you really are Catholic?«.

25.04.2017, Šid

I hate this kind of management. Our coordinators have so many ideas, but no real thought on their realization. So, it is usually me who must finish their job and watch their commitments.

06.05.2017, Adaševci

Ah, lovely day again. We were a bit late, and it meant migrants were waiting for us with their laundry and started to be nervous. The washing machines were immediately full, and I had no idea whose laundry was there. Within five minutes, another migrant came claiming she had to go to a doctor with her baby. Of course everybody is sick when there is a laundry day…But later she came with a real paper from a doctor confirming her story. I really need some rest to become human again.

09.06.2017, Šid

Today, I again received a few hateful messages. I really think I am getting used to the fact that some people would like to »cut me to pieces« or »beat me and my family« only because of my field work.

12.07.2017, Adaševci

In closer cooperation with the center management, we started to organize the movie nights. Sometimes it is pretty difficult to agree on a movie that is not offensive to any nationality; but migrants appreciate it. Especially kids. And we also prefer them watching movies and not playing on a highway…

03.08.2017, Principovac

When we came to a camp today for the distribution, a few migrants ran to us shouting: »Big problem my friend, big problem!« Expecting a new casualty, theft, fight, or something else, we asked what had happened. They explained they had played and kicked all soccer balls to the other side of the border, to Croatia. And then, the Croatian police weren't willing to give them back to them. After bursting out in laughter, we promised to buy some new balls for them. Tough life in a refugee camp.

20.11.2017, Šid

While buying homemade *ajvar* at the market, we again had to explain what we are doing here. It is always the same. After the »where are you from?« and »what are you doing here?«, an about twenty-minute-long monologue about the local situation starts. And it usually ends with »the European Union does nothing« or »they (migrants) are ruining our town. I don't want to help them anymore«.

23.11.2017, Šid

A migrant girl was hit by a train while trying to cross the border with her family. We knew them. And we also know such things as suicide attempts or abuses that happen here as well. We are just not prepared to solve this kind of situation, neither officially nor at the internal level of our movement.

27.11.2017, Adaševci

As we achieved all our goals in the field, we decided to leave Serbia and cede our activities to local volunteers and employees. Fortunately, they don't need our constant help anymore.

14.12.2017, Šid

My last day in a field. After three years of traveling to Serbia, I must admit, I look forward to rest a bit. The work we did here in cooperation with other organizations and local employees is so visible: it reaches from chaos at the border crossing in the middle of a field to well organized centers for migrants with all services. Good job, volunteers.

03.01.2018, Šid

Our mission in Serbia has officially ended, but not completely. Thanks to our good cooperation in the field, we agreed on ongoing mutual support. And who knows, maybe we will come back one day…

Bosnia and Herzegovina: July 2018–December 2018

06.07.2018, Sarajevo

First day in the Bosnian field. Not surprisingly, there are a lot of migrants, shelters in very poor conditions, few actors that seem to be doing everything and nothing, no relevant information, and omnipresent chaos. So, it seems to be a good place for us.

08.07.2018, Bihać

After the first days, I started to work with locals in a field kitchen. It is a lot of work, but I enjoy it. People here are perfect. They need help, they appreciate it and don't mind my humble knowledge of the Bosnian language that much. On the other hand, their boss is still not quite sure if I am allowed to work there. So, until he finds out, I will stay here and do my job.

10.07.2018, Bihać

During the food distribution today, I met two families that I know from the Serbian centers. They remember me too. I am happy they have moved on their way but, on the other hand, conditions here are much worse for migrants with kids.

11.07.2018, Bihać

A new volunteer came yesterday, but he was not allowed to work with us. They said to come in the afternoon so they have time to prepare his registration or something. But it's his second day here and nothing has really happened. We will try again tomorrow.

20.07.2018, Bihać

Today, I met a researcher from some Bosnian city living abroad. She came back to see what is going on and to help. But while talking to her, she always compared the current situation with her own war experience. It was really interesting to hear her story, on the one hand. But on the other, I am not sure if her visit helps her or migrants somehow.

23.07.2018, Bihać

I had my first free day! Perfect! I went for a walk and then worked on a field plan for our organization. As I found out, my coordinator thinks our volunteers should do more important jobs because we are much more experienced, thanks to our previous mission in Serbia. I agree with experience, but we are not really allowed to do more than what we keep doing now. And actually, I don't mind because I can really see that my local co-workers need my help. So, according to the needs and possibilities of the field, I don't think there is much room for a personal or organizational fight for better statuses.

25.07.2018, Bihać

We have been here only for a month, and we are all already tired of this chaotic system with a lack of information. We are in the middle of the decisions of official actors and governmental institutions. Trying and doing something until a competent person comes and informs us that what we do is not forbidden, but it is also not recommended to continue our activities. So, we change our activities to improve hygienic conditions here, assisting the distribution of food or the opening of new camps, and the way we have responsibility for the quarantine. But our activities are dependent on the agreement of all the competent actors here who change their decision almost every day.

03.08.2018, Bihać

Our article on the situation here has finally been published. I must admit, for now, I am quite surprised only one person wishes me to »drop dead«. The rest thinks I am only stupid. I can live with that.

05.08.2018, Ostrožac

The center for so-called vulnerable migrants was opened today. We spent the whole day assisting, and waiting, and improvising. No matter how many organizational meetings we have, things always go different here, and we never have enough plans for all possible situations [...]. Nevertheless, a few migrant families finally have a bit better place to stay. But at the end of a day, those kids are just being moved from one camp to another and from one country to a new one. However, they seem to be more used to such transfers than their parents.

18.08.2018, Velika Kladuša

The number of casualties occurring during push-backs from Croatia is increasing. From time to time, also kids and women are injured. And now, it is difficult to provide them with appropriate medical help. Doctors are not always willing to provide them with treatment because of unclear payment for a medical intervention, ambulances refuse to come, and transporting people to hospitals by car might be considered as aiding illegal migration. Fortunately, with common local support, we managed to help those in really bad shape. However, it just can't go on like this.

02.09.2018, Bihać

Everything went wrong today. We were denied access to a camp where we were supposed to work today. And we didn't get any information on the reasons for this or if we could work there tomorrow. Everybody is just exhausted of this lack of relevant information. And after months here, we still have no clue on who is responsible for decision-making.

18.09.2018, Bihać

Okay, so, one of the main humanitarian organizations was officially refused to work in a field today; just because somebody said so. Excuses are being said, but who knows where the truth lies. We all are angry because there is no adequate replacement for them.

29.09.2018, Bihać

I came back after some time. My former co-workers welcomed me as if I had never left. It was nice. I feel here as if I was at home. On the other hand, other things haven't actually changed. Only the number of incoming migrants is higher. And a new center has been opened. But the rest is the same.

03.10.2018, Bihać

My friend messaged me today asking why I still worked with migrants and when I planned to stop making a fool of myself. I ignored it. Once I am in a field, I really don't have energy to reply to this kind of messages.

15.10.2018, Bihać

At the end of a day, one local lady who was watching us collecting and sorting donations came to us and asked how she could help us and migrants. This kind of local support is really a heartening experience.

28.10.2018, Bihać

On 28 October 2015, I was in Berkasovo. I was freezing, hungry, ankle deep in mud, working all days and all nights, arguing with policemen on both sides of the border.

Now, three years later, I am in Bosnia and have just met my favorite Afghani migrant family that spent more than one year in the Serbian center (»Me five bibi, [...]«). They came here yesterday and stayed on the street during the night. Sometimes, I just have no idea what ›management of migration‹ means. I still struggle to react neutrally when I meet more and more faces from Serbia...

07.11.2018, Ključ

As our supplies of donated clothes and material were huge, we decided to help our friends in another town that became a new critical spot. There is no camp, no place for migrants to stay under a roof, and they are being forced to stay under the sky in no matter what weather conditions.

10.11.2018, Bihać

It took months until we managed to meet with other groups and actors and actually work together to improve the situation. I still don't get what the motivation is for some people doing fieldwork when they refuse cooperation with others. We face the same problems after all...

20.11.2018, Bihać

Winter is coming, and we still struggle to coordinate the donations. The supplies of the humanitarian aid came today. What a chaos! Again, nobody knew what was going to happen. We spent the whole day trying to get any information on where to park a truck or where to put down the shipment. And our volunteers spent days in a camp supervising the quarantine. When we came there in the evening to bring them more supplies of cloth, we found out that somebody had just dispersed it. It sounds reasonable, scabies and lice are obviously not that big of a problem in a camp of 1,000 people when they don't have beds for everybody...

20.12.2018, Bihać

After hard work in the field and efforts to stay present and help here, we as well as a few other international volunteers were told to leave the country or change our plans significantly. With the experience we had from Serbia, it was really sorrowful to accept this message. But in the end, it is still better to leave with as many good relations with everybody as possible. Who knows, maybe we will meet again. But

for now, comparing what we managed to do in the same time during our previous mission, we must admit, we did a better job in Serbia.

The author would like to thank volunteers and colleagues for sharing their precious experience and opinion. The author would also like to show gratitude to all volunteers and employees of the organizations and institutions active in the field for their cooperation and work that aimed to help migrants and relieve the situation in the most critical spots on the Balkan migration route since 2015.

Interview

The Push-Back Map

Mapping Border Violence in Europe and Beyond. A Collective Self-Reflection

PUSH-BACK MAP COLLECTIVE

Abstract: This is a collective interview, more specifically a dialogue among members of the Push-Back Map Collective, a project dedicated to mapping the institutional violence of the European border regime. It explores the idea behind it by positioning this work within political struggles against a set of particular brutal practices of the border regime. It carves out its main aspects and investigates the potentials of political organising based on mapping – by making an invisible structure visible.

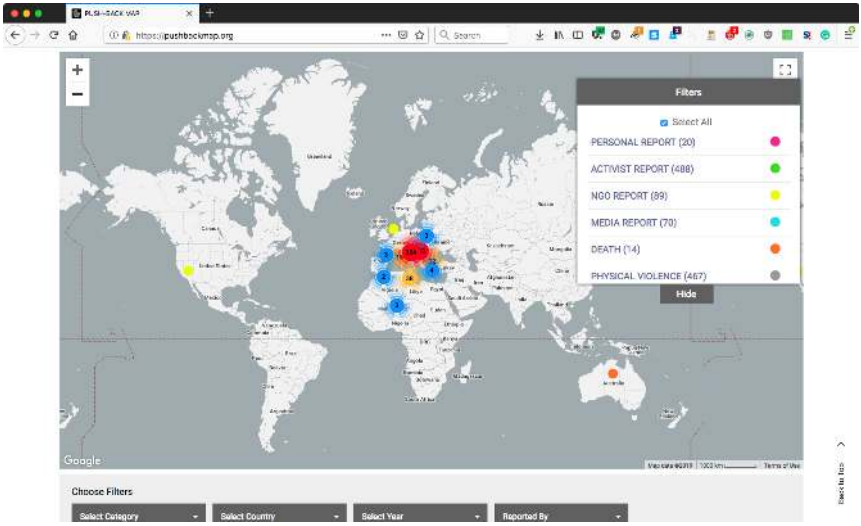
Keywords: Push-backs, mapping, Balkan route, institutional violence, transnational organising

COLLECTIVE INTERVIEW PART I

PBM 1: So, how are we going to do this self-interview? Shall we start from what is the Push-Back Map Project? I mean what's the idea behind it? Why did we decide to do it?

PBM 2: Yes! The idea behind the Push-Back Map is to provide a space for the visualisation, documentation, and denunciation of push-backs. It was started by several groups and individuals who are, or have been, active on the Balkan route since 2015. The Push-Back Map is a collaborative project of activists from different countries some of whom made their way across the Balkan route themselves.

PBM 1: And is the map only reporting push-backs happening in the Balkans?
PBM 2: The project is not limited geographically, although it has been initiated by groups and individuals mainly active in Southeastern Europe. But push-backs and border violence are happening in so many places—it is a global phenomenon.



Screenshot of the Push-Back Map of 23.09.2019.

PBM 1: To make it clear: can you explain the point of this map? Why focus on push-backs?

PBM 2: The history of push-backs is also a history of resistance with relentless movements across borders and activist struggles. Some of them are at times unsuccessful, still others at times successful—and never stopping! This map intends to document this continued struggle collectively and hopes to empower people to report experienced or witnessed push-backs and keep the struggle up!

PBM 2: I think if we really want to explain we need to describe the map. It is a website: pushbackmap.org. But what does it do?

PBM 1: It is an online documentation tool. It provides a space to visualise the systematic and institutionalised nature of push-backs conducted by the authorities. The map is an inclusive and open tool for people targeted by, witnessing, and counteracting push-backs. It serves as a live tool as well as an archive. We are also mapping reports from newspapers and NGOs and all other related documentation about push-backs. It collects and centralises evidence and aims to increase the visibility of the systemic

practices of expulsion. We hope to contribute to exposing the resulting harassment, violence, and death.

PBM 2: Ok, and from a more practical point: I am at the border; I want to report a push-back, but my internet connection is really bad, and I don't speak English. What do I do?

PBM 1: The map is a multilingual platform: there is a form for reporting experienced or witnessed push-backs and uploading evidence. There is also a mobile phone application for easier access. The map offers an option, a tool, and aims to encourage people who experience push-backs to themselves document what is happening at border areas, rather than being continuously identified as victims who cannot speak for themselves. Our position is not only to counteract and denounce push-backs and border violence, but also support the right to move freely and safely across borders in order to enjoy a life in dignity. We are aware of the constant daily struggle of people on the move, and it would be naive to believe that this tool can revolutionarily redefine their precarious journeys; however, we believe it is an option that must be there.

PBM 2: Alright, this is great, but I am going to be very blunt. What does push-back actually mean?

PBM 1: A push-back occurs when people are expelled shortly after entering the territory of a country without being granted the possibility to start administrative procedures to stay, to access the mechanisms of international protection, to explain their personal circumstances, or to object to their treatment. Push-backs are expulsions, direct deportations, readmissions, or other forms of immediate involuntary return across one or several territorial borders. Depending on the regulatory framework in place, these forms of forced displacement can be legalised under national law—as in Hungary—or semi-formalised, for example by relying on bilateral agreements or informal practices. They put those in danger who attempt to cross borders by pushing people to risk their lives once more with arduous crossings. In many cases, push-backs are also combined with violence and different sorts of degrading treatment. This institutional violence follows a clear deterrence and containment strategy aiming to control and restrain people's movement.

PBM 2: But push-backs are not a new practice in any sense and have occurred before the ›summer of migration‹ of 2015.

The opening of the Balkan corridor partially halted these brutal practices. However, push-backs started to re-emerge with the gradual closure of the Corridor. So, we decided to start documenting push-backs since March 2016 when the Corridor was closed. With its closure the practices strongly increased. Similar developments can also be observed at sea where the refoulements to Libya or Turkey have been halted for some time, but are now occurring regularly again (see Alarmphone reports).

PBM 1: Can you explain how you understand the practice of push-backs within the broader framework of the EU border regime?

PBM 2: We see push-backs as an ›institutional practice‹ of the European Union. Mapping them can be a way to outline their dimensions and their meaning for the European border regime. It therefore means to reconstruct and, in a sense, map and visualise this invisible ›institutional practice‹. There is simply no other way to make the institutional practice visible than by mapping it out. So that is what we aim to do: counting and pinning every single push-back. The institutional practice of push-backs does not have a headquarter in Brussels or Warsaw, no press conferences, and there is no website to refer to and no spokesperson; meaning that, on an institutional level, push-backs remain an opaque practice literally happening in the dark since they mostly remain officially undocumented by the conducting authorities.

So how to deal with this ›invisible institutional practice‹?

PBM 1: From a migrant solidarity perspective, it should not exist; neither with, nor without a headquarter anywhere. It simply needs to stop. The legal void in the lawless border zones needs to be addressed at its roots: the vulnerability of migrants because of their status in Europe. I think this concept of ›institutional practice‹ should be better unpacked. Maybe we can see it from the angle of institutionalised violence that is inherent to state authorities. There is no authority without violence.

Can you tell me, politically speaking, what does it mean then to map push-backs apart from the visualisation of these events?

PBM 2: Concerning the idea of creating a document that allows us to witness the dimensions of push-backs in Europe, ›mapping‹ push-backs means four things that belong together: first, to visualise single events from a multitude of different sources and second, to thereby proof the existence of the European-wide practice of expul-

sions. We can, literally, ›zoom out‹ and get a bigger picture of what is happening all over Europe, particularly—but not only—at its margins. We can then virtually see each of these single events as a manifestation of a European-wide phenomenon. So, thirdly, the map brings to mind the importance of push-backs—despite being predominantly ›illegal‹—for the functionality of the EU border regime.

And last but not least, to map these events also means to counteract the structure of the situation in which the invisibility—of state actors, of the course of events, and of the migrants who are pushed back—is the key to its functioning. In this sense, making push-backs visible and naming them as an institutional practice is a crucial political act. In this sense, we are inspired by projects such as the Watch the Med Alarm Phone or Forensic Oceanography.

PBM 1: To end with an outlook: what are the potentials and limitations of the Push-Back Map project?

PBM 2: As a transnational collective from different fields of radical politics, we also want to stress the political approach to our work and to migrant solidarity in general. We see our work embedded in a broader genealogy of anti-capitalist, antifascist, and feminist struggles. We don‘t want to cooperate with any authorities or improve ›border management‹. We struggle for borderless and classless societies. We know that mapping testimonies has many limitations. But one main goal of the mapping project is also to provide a platform for transnational, non-hierarchical, radical grassroots organising, intervening, and exchange. We try to frame the Push-Back Map as a space and a platform for collecting reports from a broad variety of sources and places. We thereby hope to support, supplement, and embed the impressive work that is continuously done by different structures and somehow enhance the ›toolbox‹ of possible interventions.

PBM 1: Agreed! But now, what about the limitations?

PBM 2: Well, documenting in itself is limited. There is always the urge to do more, more concrete, and more ›radical‹ stuff. There are already hundreds, if not thousands, of reports on the subject yet little has changed. We often ask ourselves if the map could possibly become a sort of ›Alarmphone‹, initiating direct interventions.

Could it become a live tool where direct action follows a submitted report?

PBM 1: In some contexts, this has been tried already on a small scale. But it is certainly difficult to do on a larger scale as it is not based in one legal framework of one national law. It would be necessary to have local actors involved in each country.

PBM 2: But that is exactly where we also see a potential of the map: as an open, inclusive, and multilingual tool, it can serve as a stepping-stone for transnational organising, building on and strengthening transnational ties among groups, activists, and people on the move in different locations. This is in fact already happening.

PBM 1: In fact, the main task of the project we see at the moment is to remain vocal and not shut up about these horrendous practices: The institutionalised daily violence of push-backs at borders cannot remain invisible. It has to stop! By witnessing, documenting, and denouncing push-backs, we support the continuous struggle for freedom of movement and the right to stay for all!

Collective Interview Part II— After long meetings and Skype Calls

PBM 1: So, quite some time has passed since we did our collective self-interview. Since the end of February/beginning of March the situation has escalated so drastically and rapidly that we thought we needed to update it. The escalation at the Greek-Turkish border was followed by the massive outbreak of the Covid-19 virus across Europe. These events are profoundly changing the border regimes. So, the question we are asking to ourselves is: *Does it still make sense to continue with the mapping of push-backs in the current situation?*

PBM 2: What has been happening in Greece since the beginning of March 2020 is a very extreme suspension of basic rights: The Greek government has suspended the right to submit asylum applications; they are detaining every new arrival, including babies, children, and people with serious health risks; they have decided to push-back everyone attempting to cross the EU/Greek border with Turkey. By implementing these practices, the Greek and EU authorities have basically legalised push-backs and they use FRONTEX openly pushing people back at sea. The EU has financially and politically invested into this. This situation is a clusterfuck!

PBM 1: Yes! Additionally, in February, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg passed a judgement that more or less legalised Spain's push-back practices

at the Moroccan border fences of Ceuta and Melilla. This means to me that the legal way to counter push-backs has reached its limits. The decrying of push-backs as ›illegal‹ has become meaningless. The normalisation of push-backs, and the violence that comes with it, has been the first step to subsequently legalise these practices. It is a tendency that we have observed for a while now. For example, in the Balkans, the normalisation of institutional violence was, and continues to be, the daily reality for far too many people.

PBM 2: Yet, I think we are witnessing a turning point regarding border practices and push-backs. In the beginning of the year 2020, only a few governments wanted to openly admit that they were conducting extremely violent push-backs on a daily basis. Within a few weeks, all main EU authorities have suddenly become confident in supporting Greece in their push-back practices to Turkey. Previously it was only the right wing populists, like Orban or Salvini, encouraging push-backs, today, the head of the European Commission, Van der Leyen, is applauding Greece for being Europe's ›shield‹, approving a wave of renewed nationalisms and nationalists which feel confortable to shoot people at the northern Greek-Turkish border.

PBM 1: True. And this martial language is further accelerating with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. What is currently happening across Europe is every authoritarian's wet dream: fundamental rights are being curtailed, borders are closed, and freedom of movement is abolished. But this time for the entire population! Although the virus targets everyone, no matter their legal status, it also renders structural inequalities more apparent: who has a house to stay in during the quarantine, and who hasn't; who has access to hygienic and medical care, and who hasn't; who is able to physically distance themselves, and who is confined and crammed in a camp with hundreds or even thousands of other people.

PBM 2: So let's try to analyse this: the EU just pulled off its mask, or its multiple masks made of all these nice old concepts of good liberal European middle class people, who believe in human rights, cultural diversity, and so on. Today, many are ready to openly say: we need to defend the borders. It makes me really angry!

PBM 1: The pandemic increasingly appears to be used to re-fortify the nation-states along their national borders. We should not let this happen! There are a number of moments of solidarity, not only on a local level but also transnationally. However, we have to rally for a solidarity that includes everyone, that leaves no one behind,

and not out on the streets, not in factories or exploited in the agricultural fields, not at militarised border zones, not in overcrowded camps, not in deportation prisons!

PBM 2: I agree, but to get back to the topic: What about our mapping? What do we do with the map? Does it still make sense to continue revealing one push-back after another, when the EU has suspended all border crossings for an unknown amount of time on top of normalising and basically legalising push-backs?

PBM 1: I think collecting testimonies of individual push-backs remains an important act of solidarity with the people on the move. It may be legalised and normalised, but it will never be ok, and we will continue to struggle against this and for the freedom of movement and the right to stay for everyone. Within the current Agambian-Foucauldian nightmare of a biopolitical state of exception, it is more important than ever to witness and report on the acts of authorities.

PBM 2: But it has also become much more difficult! Politically, though, I think the strategy can no longer be only collecting reports of push-backs, but we need to show the system behind it. We should try to visualise that push-backs are an institution within a broader system which is profiting from push-backs. We have been discussing this for a while now. Already before the current escalation, we thought we had to make the ›infrastructures‹ of this ›institution‹ visible.

PBM 1: True. The idea is to add one more layer into the map. We jokingly called it the ›Know-Your-Enemy Pin‹. This pin maps data on the infrastructure behind push-backs across Europe. In other words, it collects places as well as legislative elements of the anti-migration and fortification regime: police stations, prisons, and other official and unofficial places of confinement, but also court rulings, or policy decisions.

PBM 2: The push-back infrastructure pin is already on the map and ready to be filled with content. The aim is to make clear that push-backs are just one of the many tools that would not exist without the structure and logistics to support them. With the data collected, we can create a new layer on the Push-Back Map—a kind of counter-map—and reveal how the practice of push-back is embedded in a variety of anti-migration infrastructures, which all contribute to normalising the European border regime and more than ever as Fortress Europe.

Artistic Contribution

Mapping In-Betweenness

The Refugee District in Belgrade in the Context of Migration, Urban Development, and Border Regimes

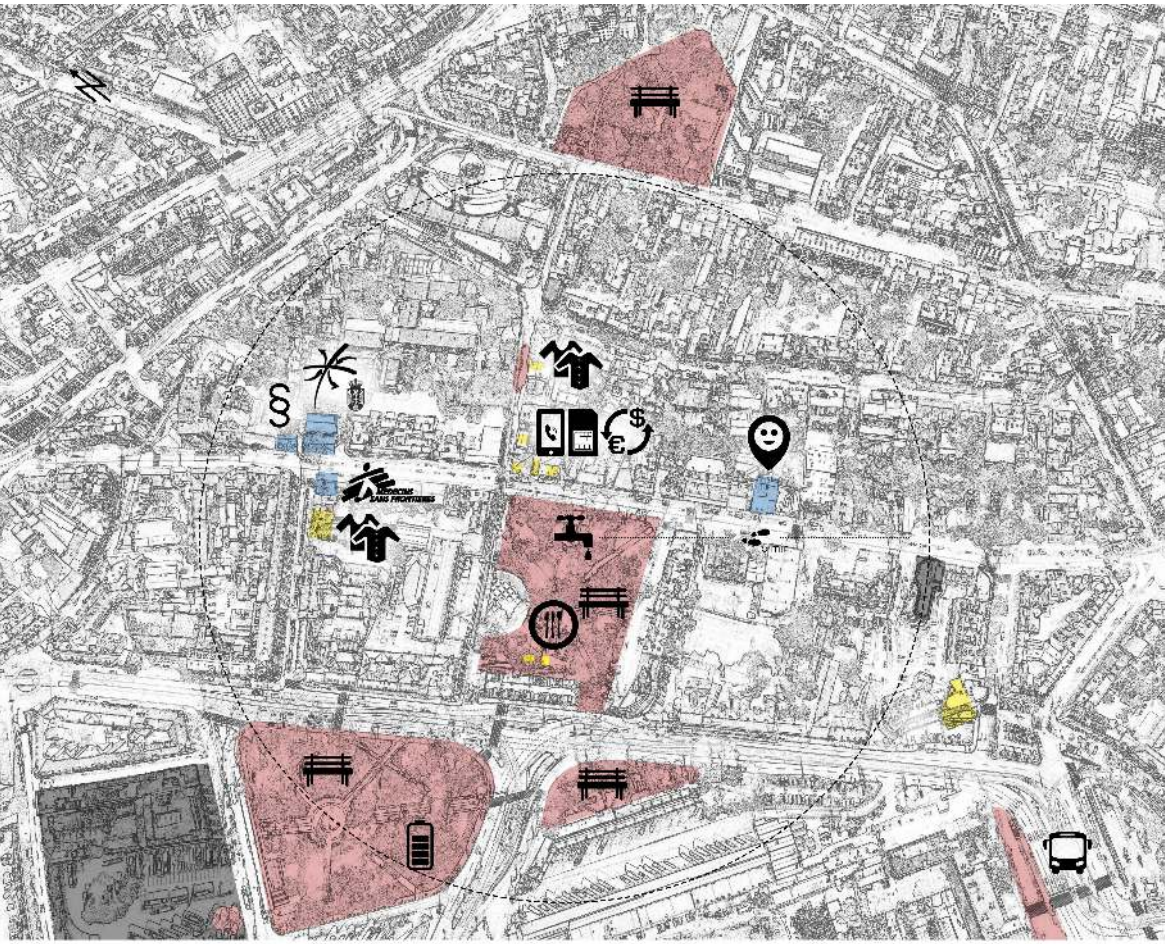
COSIMA ZITA SEICHTER, MIRIAM NESSLER, PAUL KNOPF

Abstract: The contribution explores the migratory situation on the Balkans and more specifically in the so-called *Refugee District* in Belgrade from a spatial perspective. By visualizing the areas of tensions in the *Refugee District*, the city of Belgrade, Serbia and Europe it aims to disentangle the political and socio-spatial levels that lead to the stuck situation of in-betweenness at the gates of the European Union.

Keywords: Balkan route, European border regime, mapping, migration, urban development

In December 2017 and September 2019, we visited Belgrade in Serbia, a country at the edge of the European borders. Both times, we researched the so-called *Refugee District* and faced a state of exception and normality at once; a situation that has been going on for years. As the European border regime is gradually closing its borders, instead of dealing with the actual causes of migration, a rising number of people on the run and migrating find themselves in a desperate situation. Coming from somewhere else, they are in search of a place in peace, safety, and better perspectives in Western Europe. In Serbia, they are living in limbo, waiting for a possible continuation of their uncertain journey that potentially will never be fulfilled.

We come from a German, *white*, and academic context. This background shapes the perspective we take for reflecting on our role within the EU in relation to the situation in Belgrade. In this sense, we are dealing with the question of how this stuck situation, which is especially visible and tangible in the *Refugee District*, could arise, and how it is produced and challenged by practices of refugees, the urban development of Belgrade, the Serbian migration management, and (inter)national and European migration policies. The *Refugee District* in Serbia, thus, serves as a starting point for decoding and disentangling the situation at this specific place outside of the EU but within the EU border regime from a political and socio-spatial perspective.



areas of stay

benches

drinking water fountain

free charging station (out of order)

bus station

former areas of stay

specialized retail

clothing and supply shop

food shop

phone shop

SIM shop

money exchange

info point

Miksaliště - Commissariat for Refugees and Migration

free legal advice for asylum seekers

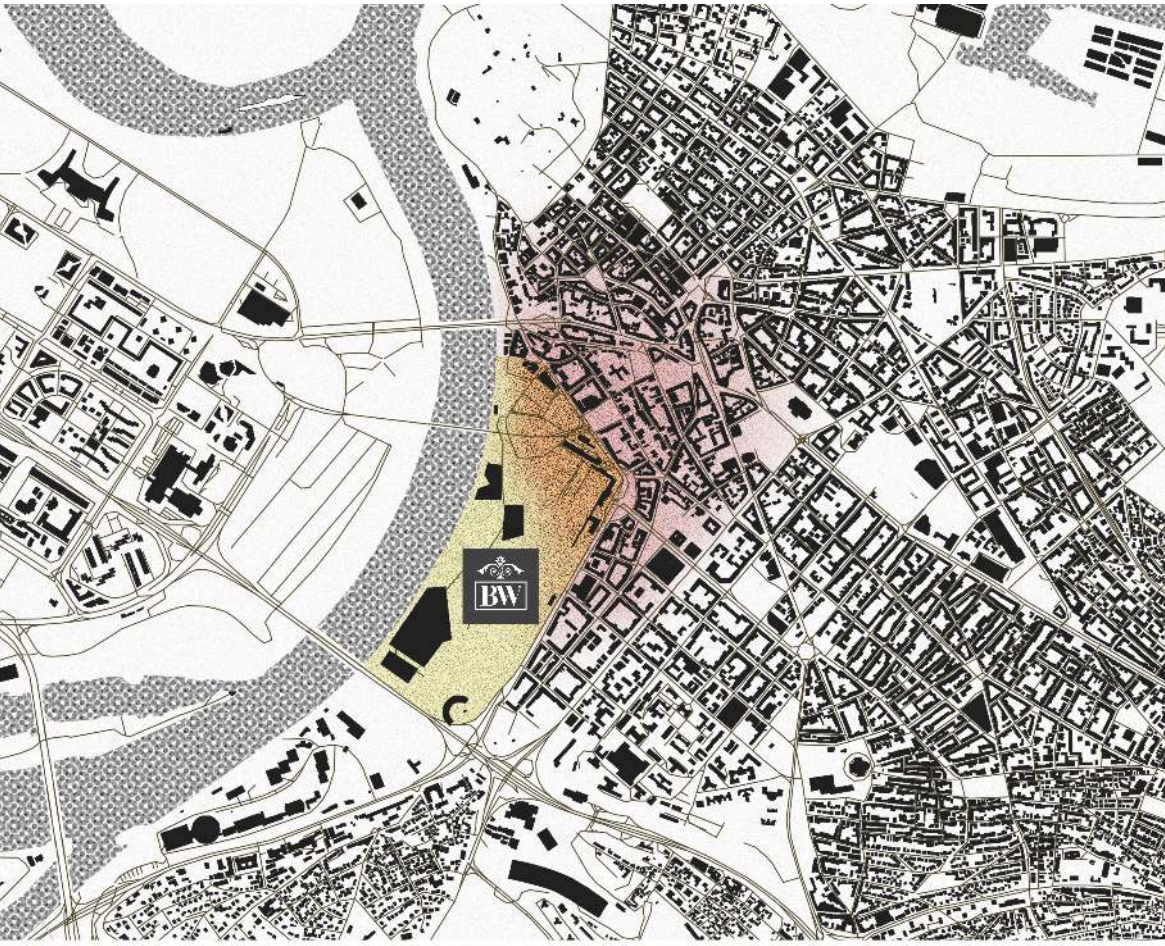
Medecins Sans Frontieres

Info Park

five minutes walking distance radius

Map 1—Refugee District
REFUGEES IN THE REFUGEE DISTRICT BETWEEN DISPLACEMENT AND SPATIAL APPROPRIATION
The map shows the Refugee District at the end of September 2019.
The changes in the Refugee District refer to the previous research undertaken in December 2017.

The *Refugee District* is located in the heart of Belgrade, Serbia. Since 2014/2015, it became a hub for refugees on their route through the Balkans. Not only due to its close proximity to main transport facilities and related infrastructures supporting travel but also due to the location of many humanitarian aid organizations and even flight related services, the district functions as a place for refugees. It constitutes a space for information, networking, travel preparation, and for awaiting the ›game‹, the irregular migration towards the EU. Its physical structure, including parks with benches, a water supply, and abandoned houses facilitates practices of talking, eating, shopping, praying, sleeping, etc. But the refugees' practices and the supporting infrastructure are threatened by the demolition and decay of places as well as people being prohibited to use certain spaces. Also, the NGOs' work that includes medical treatment, information, free spaces, law advice, and more is restricted and controlled by prohibiting them to support people in the streets and those who are not willing to be registered. Despite attempts to restrict and regulate the infrastructure for, and the presence of, refugees in the *Refugee District*, refugees have been appropriating spaces in the centre of Belgrade for years: they have claimed their right to be there and to continue their journey towards the EU. They constitute a »non-movement« (Asef Bayat) for a global freedom of movement. The *Refugee District* can be seen as a condition as well as product of their practices, which is constantly undergoing changes depending on environmental, social as well as political processes on the urban, national, and transnational scale.

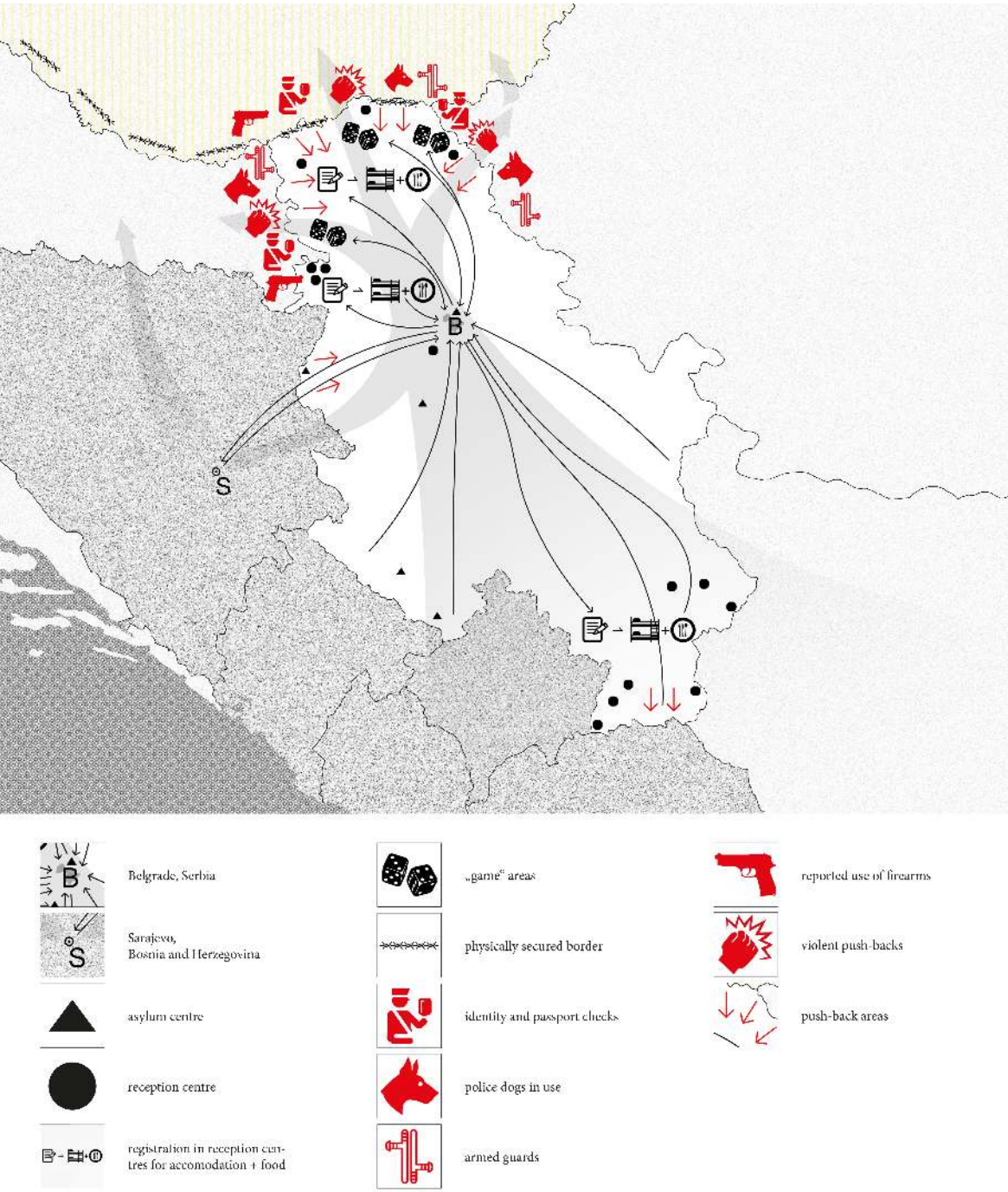


Refugee District

current Belgrade Waterfront development area

Map 2—Belgrade
THE REFUGEE DISTRICT AS A PLAYGROUND FOR NEOLIBERAL URBAN POLITICS: BETWEEN INVISIBILISATION AND TEMPORARY NICHES
The map shows the status at the end of September 2019.

Looking at the issue from an urban level, the neoliberal development of the city politics inevitably becomes apparent. Belgrade, as a city within the context of globalisation and its competition between cities, is under pressure to expand and valorise its economic potentials in order to increase the private accumulation of capital. The current project *Belgrade Waterfront* is the dominating incarnation of this development. While step by step this megaproject in the city centre of Belgrade is planned and realised, refugees are passing through Belgrade. Their way of appropriating public space is classified as informal and precarious, which does not fit to the image of an entrepreneurial city and, hence, should be made invisible to the public eye. Their displacement in terms of space (e.g. through the demolition of inhabited abandoned barracks and houses or their expulsion from public space), society, and discourse leads one to presume an existing relation between the neoliberal developments and the intention to banish them from this area. The ongoing construction site and the ceased maintenance of spaces, though, constantly offer new niches. The refugees appropriate those places and thereby express their inevitable presence and right to freedom of movement. Thus, the *Refugee District* shows that flight, refugees, and their spatial impacts cannot be rendered invisible in the city.



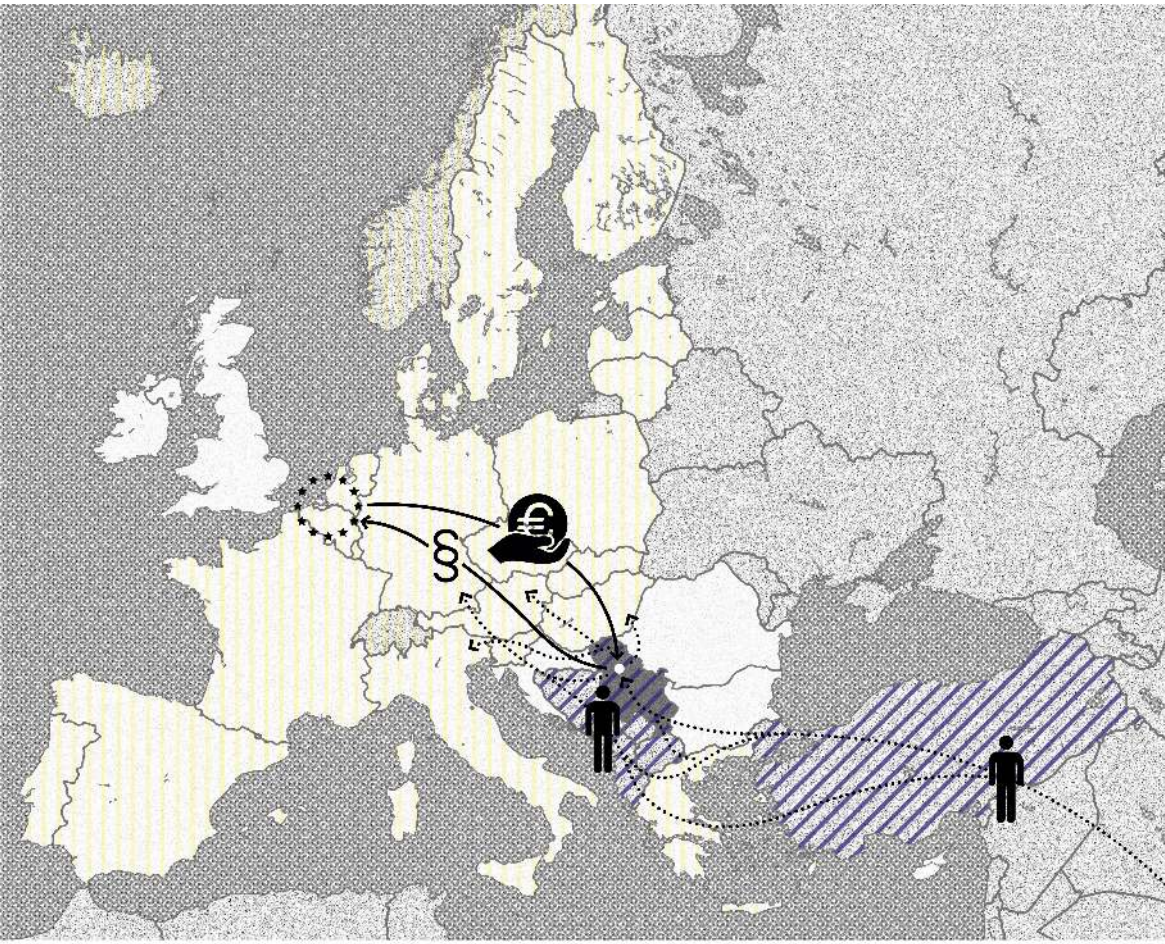
Map 3—Serbia

THE REFUGEE DISTRICT IN THE CONTEXT OF SERBIAN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT: BETWEEN REGULATING AND TOLERATING

The map shows the status at the end of September 2019.

This map focuses on the inner-Serbian pendulum migration between Belgrade, the reception centres, and the borders. In reaction to the recent changes of migration in the Balkans, migration flows to Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the Bosnian-Croatian border were added. After failed attempts to cross the border due to push-backs, many refugees return to Belgrade and Serbia in favour of better formal and informal support infrastructures.

Serbia is perceived and positions itself as a transit country. It is, though, not experienced as such by refugees who have to wait for months and even years in reception and asylum centres in order to proceed their journey to the European Union. The Serbian migration management reacted—with institutional and financial support from the European Union—with a closure of the EU's external borders. There is a tendency towards professionalising the management of migration (in terms of accommodation, integration measures, such as the schooling of children, etc.). Within this context of migration management, the *Refugee District*, as a hub for migration on the Balkan route, serves as a central place for registering and transferring people into governmental structures. Therefore, Serbia has expressed the need to control the flow of information, which can be observed in governmental actions restricting places and activities of self-organisation between refugees and other people as well as with the take-over of the formerly privately-run NGO *Miksalište* in the district by the Serbian government. The *Refugee District* equally constitutes a place of departure for the ›game‹, for those who try to cross the border irregularly. In the context of Serbian migration management, pictures of refugees and a state of crisis help to uphold international financial support. Only by ignoring the ›game‹ and the *Refugee District's* central role in it, transit can remain possible for refugees and, consequently, Serbia's position as a transit country. Its positioning as a transit country is further enabled by the increasing role of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an entering point to Croatia since 2018. People try the ›game‹ via Bosnia and Herzegovina and even come back to Serbia because the accommodation structures are better. Within this context, the *Refugee District* still serves as a hub in this enlarged space of informal mobility in the Balkans.



Schengen area

EU candidate countries

non EU countries

EU countries

migration route to the EU

legislative changes in Serbia in favor of the EU, e.g. regarding migration management

EU financing the Serbian mig ration management system

Map 4—EU

THE REFUGEE DISTRICT AS A MIRROR OF POWER HIERARCHIES BETWEEN THE EU AND SERBIA

The map shows the status at the end of September 2019.

The route on this map only resembles the officially closed but still existing Balkan route. It does not give any information about the final destinations of the refugees after entering the EU.

Serbia directly borders on EU-states and is, thus, located between the countries of origin and destination countries of refugees—the Balkan route. This specific location impacts its geopolitical relevance: while the Schengen Agreement facilitates more and more freedom of movement within the EU, the need to isolate itself from the outside is increasingly regarded as necessary. Within the context of migration towards the EU in the 1990s, the term ›externalisation‹ was coined in reference to EU-migration policy. The EU systematically outsources border control and dealing with ›illegal‹ migration to local authorities and, thus, evades respecting civil rights by passing the task to others. The externalisation of European borders is often observed in relation to African countries like Tunisia or Libya, although similar practices can be traced in Serbia. In Serbia's case, the processes are highly influenced by Serbia's own interest in becoming an EU member state. Hence, during the ›formalised corridor‹—the temporal formalisation of irregular migration in participating countries along the Balkan route—Serbia was motivated to act in a relatively humanitarian way in order to present itself as an organized state respecting human rights. As soon as the formalised corridor was gradually closed by the EU, Serbia adapted its strategy and performed a ›securitarian turn‹. On the one hand, Serbia acts on its own behalf; on the other hand, the EU wants to codetermine how migration moves through Serbia. By securing the EU border by externalizing it to Serbia's territory via hard border technologies (like thermal cameras or a fingerprint database), push-backs, and financing the Serbian refugee accommodation and treatment, a huge border space was created in Serbia. Peoples journeys towards the West are limited on behalf of the European border regime and, thus, their freedom of movement. As Serbia itself is in the process of EU accession, it even does not shy away to make legislative changes in order to promote the process. This development has recently been enhanced through EU agreements with Serbia allowing Frontex to assist in border management in the near future. Hence, a correlation has evolved between the European border regime and Serbia that highly shapes the situation of refugees in the country and in the *Refugee District* in Belgrade.

Interventions

Border Violence as Border Deterrence

Condensed Analysis of Violent Push-Backs from the Ground

KAROLÍNA AUGUSTOVÁ, JACK SAPOCH

Abstract: Thousands of people on the move, travelling through the Balkan route to Europe, are caught in a cycle of structural violence marked by repeated denials of access to asylum procedures, physical attacks from EU border authorities, and collective expulsions. Since May 2017, the grass root organization No Name Kitchen has been collecting testimonies of border abuse in informal transit camps in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While being present along the Balkan route, we have observed an increase in the deployment of police forces and violent practices, making legal and safe transit to Europe impossible. We have received consistent reports from men, women and children, of abuses that remain either uncovered or denied, leading to a lack of real prosecution of the perpetrators and continued border violence. This research report, derived from 338 interviews with people on the move, communicates the diverse practices of violence communicated through an increasingly securitized EU border apparatus. We focus on the lived experiences of border abuses, as narrated by the people on the move, by exploring who the victims and perpetrators of this violence are. We argue that violent push-backs demonstrate a flagrant violation of international, European and national laws by EU border authorities, leading to slow destruction of lives of people searching for safety.

Keywords: Migration, push-back, border violence, European Union, Balkan route

Thousands of people on the move are attempting to travel through the Balkan routes with hopes of reaching asylum or safety in the EU. Either seeking asylum or economic safety, people lack legal border channels: visa, family reunification programs, and asylum procedures. Consequently, they are left with limited options upon their arrival to the EU's external borders, leading many to play the ›game‹, a term, which is used to describe an unauthorized border crossing. Instead of reaching safety, the vast majority are ›pushed back‹ over the border to the country they just left; they are denied access to asylum procedures, often attacked by border patrols, expelled, and then deported back to marginal and temporary living conditions in Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). Since May 2017, the grassroots organization No Name Kitchen,

together with a range of other partners,[1] has been collecting testimonies from the victims of illegal push-backs by EU authorities in Šid, Serbia, and Velika Kladuša, BiH.

While providing assistance in makeshift transit camps on the Balkan routes, we have observed an increase in the deployment of police forces and violent practices making legal and safe transit to Europe impossible. We have received consistent reports of abuses from people on the move that remain either under-reported or denied. In this paper, we present a condensed analysis of the violent practices, places, and victims and perpetrators of the increasingly securitized EU border apparatus.

METHODOLOGY

Our data consists of 338 semi-structured interviews: 215 interviews were conducted in Serbia from May 2017 to May 2018) and 123 in BiH from June 2018 to December 2018. While interviews were conducted with groups of between one and five individuals, the transit groups which these respondents represented ranged anywhere from one to sixty individuals. Those involved in the study were selected on the basis of circumstance and snowball sampling techniques driven by the aim to collect cases of border abuses for legal and public advocacy. In practice, people approached us after they had been pushed back and used our services in the camps. The objectives of reporting violence were explained consistently within the transit communities, resulting in a snowball effect wherein camp residents passed along the option to report violent incidents to others who later approached us voluntarily.

When necessary, we utilized translators to receive reliable and accurate information from the people of various national and cultural backgrounds. This research was conducted with respect to informed oral consent, confidentiality, and a sensitive documentation of each individual case. We used photo documentation of injuries, destroyed possessions, administrative and medical documents, and screen prints of geolocations as additional evidence to the narratives. To protect the anonymity of the participants, none of the images contain identifying features and their names have been changed.

1 | These partners include: S.O.S. Velika Kladuša, Balkan Info Van, Are You Syrious?, Centre for Peace Studies, the Border Violence Monitoring Network and Rigardu.

Men showing damaged phones after being pushed back from Croatia to BiH, July 2018. Photograph by Jack Sapoch.

PUSH-BACK

The term push-back is a key component of the situation that unfolded at the EU borders (Hungary and Croatia) with Serbia in 2016 after the closure of mostly unidirectional transit along the Balkan route (see Beznec et al. 2016). It now continues along the Croatian border with BiH. We base our own use of the term off of the description offered by the Push-Back Map Collective and published in this issue:

> »Push-backs are expulsions, direct deportations, readmissions, or other forms of immediate involuntary return across one or several territorial borders. Depending on the regulatory framework in place, these forms of forced displacement can be legalized under national law—as in Hungary—or semi-formalized, for example by relying on bilateral agreements or informal practices« (PBM Collective 2020).

The involuntary nature of push-backs is particularly demonstrated in systematic and structural uses of violence against people on the move within due process. Such violence, including the denial of administrative procedures to protection, explaining personal circumstances, or objecting to state authorities' illegal procedures taking place inside of EU territory (Croatia and Slovenia), plays a fundamental part within migration regimes of EU countries.

THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

Left with no options for legal transit, individuals moving along the Balkan route are regarded as irregular border crossers and treated as criminals (see Fabini 2017) while being exposed to punishments through violent push-backs. Those who were abused at the borders and spoke to us consisted of a range of nationalities: our interlocutors came from, among other places, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Morocco, and Algeria. We have observed that the most typical victims of this violence are young able-bodied men (17 to 30 years old) traveling without their families. Still, this is not the only demographic that reported physical attacks; elderly men, as well as minors with visible physical disabilities recorded similar testimonies. Those physically attacked during push-backs often attempted to express their wish to claim asylum in Croatia or Slovenia or tried to negotiate their rights with police officers. Simply by asking, they were deemed to be provoking the police officers.

Those subjected to push-backs and violence along the borders have also been women and children who, like adult men, have limited legal transit options and play the border ›game‹. For families with small children, the ›games‹ are particularly harsh as they often struggle to walk for days in mountain terrains and accordingly rely on people smugglers in order to be transported from Croatia further to Europe by car. Families told us that they often ended up waiting for days in remote locations with limited food and water for a car to arrive only to be discovered by state authorities and pushed back. In several cases, children and women reported that they either had to observe violence against their family members or were indirectly physically attacked themselves during the push-backs from Croatia. For example, Azir (39, Iran) said during the interview: »I was holding in my arms my three-year-old daughter and they kept beating me while I was holding her, so I fell on the ground and my baby injured her back.«

THE PERPETRATORS

Those engaged in carrying out push-backs and violence against people on the move were mainly Croatian police officers collaborating with Slovenian and Serbian police. These perpetrators operated in groups predominantly, but not exclusively, consisting of male officers.

People described being mainly abused by police in black or dark blue uniforms. A few reported being attacked by men dressed plainly in civilian clothes. Often, those who were expelled from Croatia to BiH reported being pushed back and attacked by

units whom they refer to as »commandos«; officers dressed in black wearing ski-masks. Testimony reports and previous video evidence of push-backs (see Border Violence Monitoring 2019) identified the Croatian Ministry of the Interior's Intervention Police as consistent participants of push-backs along the Croatian-Bosnian border. In rare cases, participants described that individual officers tried to protect them against violence by attempting to de-escalate the violence of other officers. One Afghani family also said that an officer apologized to them while transporting them to the Bosnian border before their push-back: »Sorry. I don't want to do this, but I have to follow the orders.«

Push-back procedures often draw on an interconnected network of actors. Some testimonies alluded to the involvement of the civilian population in this system of control. Individuals described witnessing Croatian and Slovenian officers paying locals bribes in exchange for acting as informants in the initial detection of people passing through border areas.

It is also important to consider the tacit support that EU institutions offer through its financing of technical equipment and training used in push-back procedures. The European Commission has brought the total emergency funding for migration and border management in Croatia to almost 23.2 million euros (see European Commission 2018), which comes on top of nearly 108 million euros allocated to Croatia under the national programs of the AMIF and ISF.[2] While millions of euros have been spent for border restrictions, almost no efforts and finances have been dedicated to the establishment of safe and legal routes. EU political support has also emboldened the Croatian Ministry of Interior to continue to deny, diminish, or discredit allegations of violence. For instance, German Chancellor Angela Merkel praised the Croatian border authorities for an »excellent and professional job of border protection« in line with (inter)national asylum standards (Vladisavljevic 2018). Croatia further uses violent border protections as crucial elements to eventually join the Schengen territory: »When Croatian borders become Schengen borders as well, they will be even better protected« said the Croatian president Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (see Schengen Visa Info 2019).

2 | These acronyms stand for Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and Internal Security Fund.

PUSH-BACK PRACTICES

Denial to Asylum

Around 60 percent (126) of people, whom we spoke to in Serbia and 80 percent (98) in BiH told us that they were denied the access to asylum procedures. When the respondents expressed their wish to apply for asylum in Croatia or Slovenia, police refused their requests without due process. Some groups described their requests being either ignored or shut down by words, such as »shut up«, »asylum is closed«, »no place for you here«. Many who have tried to articulate their asylum requests verbally have been targeted disproportionately and silenced by verbal or physical attacks. Those in the custody of border police officers were forced to comply by remaining silent, for example: »We asked for asylum in Croatia a few times. But the police just kept telling us to be silent« (Tahir, 17, Pakistan).

Theft and Damage of Personal Items

In Serbia, the robbery and damage of private belongings only took place in one third of the push-backs (55). In contrast, 80 percent (98) of the people pushed back to BiH reported that the Croatian border police stole their money, ID cards, bags, and power banks. Mobile phones, in particular, have been common items of theft or destruction by Croatian authorities. Smashed smartphones have been almost more common than working phones in transit camps in BiH. In the winter of 2018, the trend of Croatian police burning belongings, such as sleeping bags or winter coats, became more frequent as well: »The [Croatian] police took my money and broke my phone. From home, they sent us money, we bought new phones and power banks. But everything we bought, they stole and broke again« (Ibrahim, 22, Algeria).

Physical Violence

Interacting with individuals who have experienced push-backs, one can quickly notice the hallmarks of violence. Black eyes, sprained ankles, broken legs and arms, pepper spray burns, and footlong bruises from baton strikes all signify the extreme violence practiced by border police during their push-backs. Our participants were treated by Médecins Sans Frontières who confirmed treatments of individuals with injuries varying from soft tissue injuries to bone fractures consistent with exposure to physical force on the body.

The makeshift Trnovi camp in Velika Kladuša (BiH), December 2018. Photograph by Adis Imamović. Published with the permission from the photographer.

Over 100 (82%) participants told that police used violence against them during push-backs to BiH and 99 (45%) participants in Serbia described similar experiences. The most common violent practices have been carried out using batons, kicks, and punches. In few cases electrical devices were used: »When I was on the ground, the policeman gave me electric shocks into my neck. I told him that I had heart problems. But he kept beating me. He stopped beating me when he seemed to be tired of it« (Serhan, 32, Algeria).

Participants often said that once they had arrived at the border area, police opened the door to their van and pointed torches into their eyes to make them blind. Then, one-by-one, the officers took them outside and forced them to run through twin parallel lines of police officers swinging batons as they run through. This tactic is colloquially referred to as the »tunnel trick« by victims. Others described encountering »traps«, such as ropes strung between trees with the intention to make people trip over them. Once a person fell, officers physically attacked him/her with batons, kicks, and punches. Some attacks took several minutes until the person suffered several injuries. Other groups, particularly those interviewed in the winter, described be-

ing surrounded by a small contingent of police officers and then corralled under the threat of police batons to run into near-freezing waterways along the border. Some identified violent practices were in line with the United Nations' (1975) description of torture, understood as the intentional and systematic infliction of severe physical and mental pain and suffering perpetrated as forms of punishments outside of lawful sanctions.

Detention

People also described further mistreatment by being confined for hours as a means of punishment. People were being kept in cells during detention or driven to the borders in prisoner transport vans, which were effectively mobile isolation rooms with no windows, light, and ventilation. These vans were fitted with a fan system that could pump hot air into the darkened passenger area. Victims described nausea and vomiting brought on by motion sickness. Several reported police officers using pepper spray inside of the vans in which people were driven to the border: »They [Croatian police] put us into a very small van, into a boot, with the children. They were driving very fast, like on purpose. Some started vomiting inside and children were crying… It was harder than the beating« (Ahmad, 32, Palestine).

Intimidation

Around 15 percent (32) of the people interviewed in Serbia and 72 percent (89) in BiH described being subjected to discriminatory messages and threats during push-backs. The verbal insults often concerned their country of origin, race, or religion. Some were called »terrorists« by the officers due to their national and religious identity. Other verbal abuse consisted of making false accusations concerning people's affiliations with smuggling simply based on an open GPS application, an ability to speak English, and/or being repeatedly apprehended in a border zone. Several people also reported being threatened with the use of firearms, such as instances where authorities placed a gun against their heads or were shooting either into the air or around their body. For example, Izad (42, Iran) said: »[At the Bosnian border], [Croatian] police took a gun and put it to my head and shouted: ›Go! Go! Go!‹ and I was so scared, I thought he was going to kill me.«

Sexual Harassment

Respondents, particularly women, reported being inappropriately body-searched by border authorities. Women said they had been stripped naked and sexually harassed during detentions or push-backs, such as being touched on the breast or genitals by male officers during body frisks. These incidents happened in front of their children and partners who could do nothing due to the lack of power they had against the police forces. Dawud (29, Iran) was forced to observe such body frisk of his wife and daughter: »[Croatian] officers were touching my small daughter and my wife. They were touching my wife everywhere. I said: ›Please, brother, don't touch my wife and daughter, please, don't touch them‹. But they told me to shut up and kicked into my legs.«

Violent Border Places

Push-backs occurred in a handful of secluded, semi-rural locations along the border in order to minimize the risk of witnesses. In Serbia, victims reported being pushed back mainly near the Tovarnik train station and in forests nearby Batrovci close to Šid. In BiH, victims described push-backs on off-roads and forests close to the border areas surrounding Velika Kladuša, Šturlić and Bihać. These push-back points were most often close to streams or downward sloping hills, which served as a utility for the participating authorities pushing people into the streams or down the hills. Violence was also committed against people on the move at the place of their arrest, in vans, and inside of police stations. Looking at the times in which the most violent cases occurred it is evident that push-back operations took place under the cover of night, with incidents frequently occurring between the hours of 10:00 pm and 4:00 am. In the dark, the officers conducting these violent border practices could not be seen, decreasing the chances that their identities might become compromised.

Push-backs and the Law

While EU states have the right to protect their borders, the targeted violence and collective expulsions described above are a significant violation of international and European, as well as national laws. According to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states are obliged to assess the case of asylum seekers regardless of whether they are granted the status of a refugee and thereby international protec-

The map indicating the push-back points along the key transit cities. Map by Jack Sapoch.

tion (see UNHCR 1967). Further, push-backs and border violence by state authorities go against the absolute prohibition of torture and inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and against the prohibition of collective expulsion, which applies to all displaced persons, both irregular migrants and asylum seekers (see Council of Europe 2018). No state may permit or tolerate such cruel treatments or torture (see United Nations 1975). Finally, according to the EU Directive on Asylum Procedures (2005/85/EC), all people on the move, including those recognized as ›irregular‹ migrants, are entitled to information about asylum, translation assistance, the ability to present their case to a competent authority, notification of the outcome, and the right to appeal a negative decision (see Vaughan-Williams 2015).

Cost in Lives

We have observed that the policy of closed borders does not discourage people from dangerous and unauthorized border crossings. Faced with a lack of safe, legal pathways onwards, the only way of escaping poor living conditions in transits and exercising the right to claim asylum in Europe is to engage in even more dangerous border crossing practices. At least 170 people died along the Balkan route since 2013 while trying to reach Europe of which the youngest was only six weeks old. These people were shot, suffocated, frozen, drowned, run over by trains, or died in tugboats (see ARD 2019). Due to the marginal and clandestine corners of society that people on the move inhabit, it is likely that many more deaths remain undetected or ignored. We received several reports from push-backed groups returning from ›games‹ that had witnessed the death of one of their group-members while crossing rivers or mountain terrains. This shows that violent border defense mechanisms only make refugee journeys more hazardous and their lives, already scored with countless episodes of violence, that much more painful: »I need to reach Europe to reach my future and dream. And if this is not finished, I finish my life. Maybe death, maybe walk« (Samir, 29, Egypt).

Conclusions

Throughout the narratives of push-backs, we have identified systematic use of abuse against people on the move consistent with the following acts: denial of access to asylum, indirect violence and threats, and direct physical violence and torture. Beyond these acts, participants reported that border authorities denied the age given by a minor, falsified his/her age in official documents, forced people to sign documents written in a language they did not understand, asked for bribes to accurately translate personal information, and forced individuals to pay fees for an unauthorised entry. Such mechanisms of (il)legal administration interface with the border attacks, intimidation and destruction of private belongings described in this paper. While the harm inherent in these legal administrative practices is more subtle than the direct infliction of violence through baton strikes, these mechanisms need to be understood holistically as they assist equally in the complex production of border violence. Hence, border violence against people on the move is embedded in the states' structures rather than mere aggression of a concrete police individual or group.

The injustice of border violence along the Balkan routes and beyond remains predominantly unrecognized or uncriticized by institutional actors within Croatia and

the EU. Such apathy indirectly encourages the continuation of these practices. The inaction of member states can only be understood as condoning the violence of the EU's external borders. This makes the EU states as well as the non-EU countries who are involved in border violence, such as Serbia, at large complicit. Although the data presented here concerns the interviews conducted until December 2018, No Name Kitchen continues monitoring the borders in the north of Serbia and BiH, and we observe no changes on the ground: push-backs and violence continue while legal and safe pathways to apply for asylum in EU states remain absent.

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Report on Illegal Practices of Collective Expulsion at the Slovenian-Croatian Border and Struggles Against It

Info Kolpa

Abstract: Since mid-2018 Slovenian border police systematically denies asylum seekers' rights and deports individuals who declare intention to apply for international protection. After first testimonies about push-backs published by deported individuals and solidarity volunteers based in Bosnian border towns, activist collective Info Kolpa established an info phone with an aim to monitor police procedures on the border. It allowed to communicate with people on the move that are trying to reach chosen destinations traveling through Croatia and Slovenia. The article discusses push-backs on the Slovenian-Croatian border and the attempt of the activist collective to make criminal police practices visible and to support people on the move.

Keywords: Slovenian-Croatian border, police violence, push-backs, info phone, monitoring

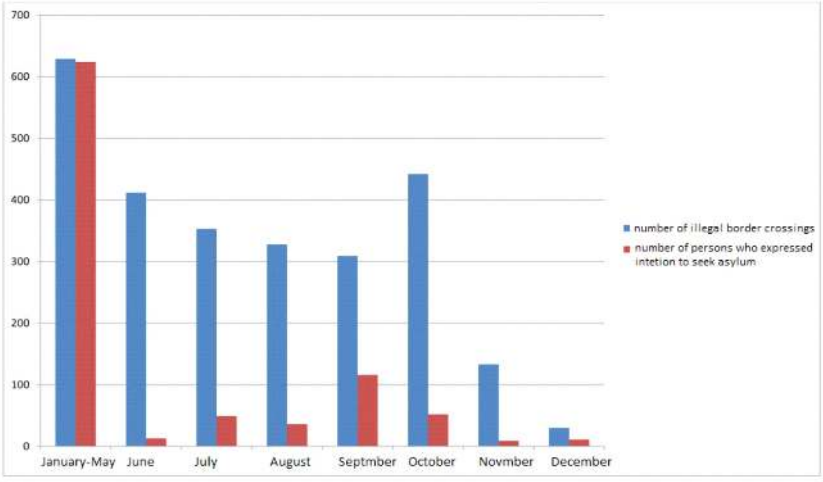
The border between Slovenia and Croatia is a Schengen border. Since late 2015 and the beginning of 2016, it has been militarized with hundreds of kilometers of fence that covers more than one third of the border's total length and with a significant presence of police and even the army, which is granted police authorization in case a two third majority of the national parliament declares an emergency at the border. There have been consistent attempts by successive governments, which, at least for now, have been blocked by the Constitutional Court, to pass legislation allowing to seal the border in case of a significant increase of asylum seekers, i.e. to completely suspend the right to seek international protection in Slovenia. Besides this, the patrolling of right wing paramilitary groups—so-called *vardas*—along the border is tolerated, if not even encouraged. The goal of such anti-migrant measures and policies lies in discouraging asylum seekers to apply for asylum in Slovenia as the first Schengen country (besides Hungary) on the Balkan route. This intention is widely supported by a vast majority of established political parties, regardless of their ideological affiliation, their oppositional status, or them being in government. This is the reason why the criminal and systematic rejection of the right to asylum by the Slovenian police,

Picture 1. Map of the region.

which we describe in this text, does not become a topic of highest public concern. To oppose the systemic violence of the police against people on the move and violent attempts to close the borders, we initiated Info Kolpa whose experience is another topic of this text.

PUSH-BACKS FROM SLOVENIA

Since the end of May 2018, the Slovenian border police practice a systematic and en masse denial of the right to asylum procedures and collective expulsions known as push-backs. In the same month, on the 25th of May, police stations received an order signed by the former Director General of the Slovenian Police, which instructed that when mixed patrols of Slovenian and Croatian police are present and a person is caught illegally crossing the border, he or she should be returned to Croatia. This order was a malversation of official procedures and a pretext for the systemic practice of illegal expulsions as well as for the use of a readmission agreement between Slovenia and Croatia. The consequences of the order are most evidently mirrored in the example of the Police Station Črnomelj, which operates at the southern border area with Croatia about 70 km away from the Bosnian city of Velika Kladuša from where the majority of migrants along the Balkan route departed towards EU countries



Picture 2: Number of illegal border crossings (blue), and number of persons who were able to express intention to seek asylum (red) at the police station Črnomelj in 2018.

in 2018 (see picture 1 for a map of the region). According to a report of the Slovenian Ombudsman of Human Rights in May 2018, the number of persons that were apprehended and processed for illegal border crossings amounted to 379, and 371 of them (98%) expressed the intention to seek asylum at this police station. In June, after police instructions were introduced, 412 persons were apprehended for illegal border crossings, but only 13 of them managed to express intention to seek asylum in Slovenia. This means that from May to June the percentage of people who crossed over to Slovenia and sought asylum with the police in the Črnomelj region dropped overnight from 98% to only 3%.[1] The percentage of people whose asylum procedure was accepted only slightly increased in the following months (see picture 2). Those who were denied their right to seek asylum in the official procedures of the police were categorized as economic migrants with no intention to seek asylum and with no right to cross the border to Slovenia, and, thus, were eligible to be processed in accor-

1 | Varuh človekovih pravic (2019): Končno poročilo o delu policije na meji s Hrvaško. URL: varuh-rs.si [01.02.2020].

Picture 3 & 4. Envelopes and wristbands used in readmission procedures from Slovenia to Croatia found near Bihać.

dance with the readmission agreement[2]. The same practice of systematically denying the right to asylum can also be detected in other police stations along the southern border and even in police stations inside the country. There have been reported cases of chain-push-backs from Italy via Slovenia to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2018, out of 9149 people who were apprehended for illegally crossing the border to Slovenia, 4653 persons were officially returned to Croatia by the Slovenian police under the readmission agreement. This happened with the full knowledge of the authorities that these people would very likely be then further expelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they faced high risks of being tortured and abused by the Croatian police. According to the official statistics of the Slovenian Police, this even worsened in 2019, which shows increased numbers: 11,026 cases of expulsions.[3]

2 | Državni zbor RS (2005): Zakon o ratifikaciji sporazuma med Vlado Republike Slovenije in Vlado Republike Hrvaške o izročitvi in prevzemu oseb, katerih vstop ali prebivanje je nezakonito (BHRIPO). URL: www2.gov.si. [01.02.2020].

3 | Policija (2019): Ilegalne migracije na območju Republike Slovenije. URL: policija.si [01.02.2020].

According to the testimonies of people who were expelled to Croatia and then to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the procedures at the Slovenian police stations are in many cases accompanied by violence, threats, forcing people to sign documents written in Slovene language without translations, and, in some cases, beatings. When people depart from Bihać or Velika Kladuša, they walk for five to ten days to reach Slovenia, depending on the group and the route they take. During the walk, they usually avoid any contact with the local population in fear of them informing the police, and people often try walking by night in order to remain hidden. Groups usually arrive in Slovenia completely exhausted, without food supplies or water and are, thus, easily caught by Slovenian police. After the arrest, people are brought to the police station, where their belongings (phone, money, etc.) are taken from them, the police officers take their fingerprints and photos of their faces. This is followed by a quick and superficial interview with the help of a translator, usually conducted with one member of the group representative for all who arrived. According to testimonies, some translators are aggressive and biased, and they often interrogate asylum seekers although they are not authorized to do this.[4] Subsequently, the police issue a monetary fine of 250-500 euros for the offence of illegal border crossing. Sometimes dry clothes, water, and some food are provided; sometimes people are forced to sleep at the police station or in containers in their wet clothes on the ground, without food or water. After several hours or a day, they are transferred to Croatian police and processed under the readmission agreement. In the process of a readmission, the belongings of migrants are usually handed over to the Croatian police in sealed envelopes rather than to the migrants. Large numbers of envelopes and wristbands that were used during readmissions from Slovenia to Croatia were found in the border area near Bihać, where Croatian police conducts illegal expulsions (Picture 3 and 4).

An especially frustrating matter is the silence and passivity displayed by institutions that are supposed to promote and defend human rights. The Human Rights Ombudsman in Slovenia refuses to confirm allegations of unlawful police conduct despite ever-growing evidence and is, to this day, unwilling to start a thorough investigation, condemn the systematic abuse of human rights, or press for criminal charges against those responsible. On 26th and 27th of September 2018, even a delegation of the UNCHR visited police stations at the Slovenian-Croatian border in Ilirska Bistrica, Črnomelj, and Metlika. The delegation commended the work of the police and did not detect any procedural violations. All of the visits were announced beforehand.

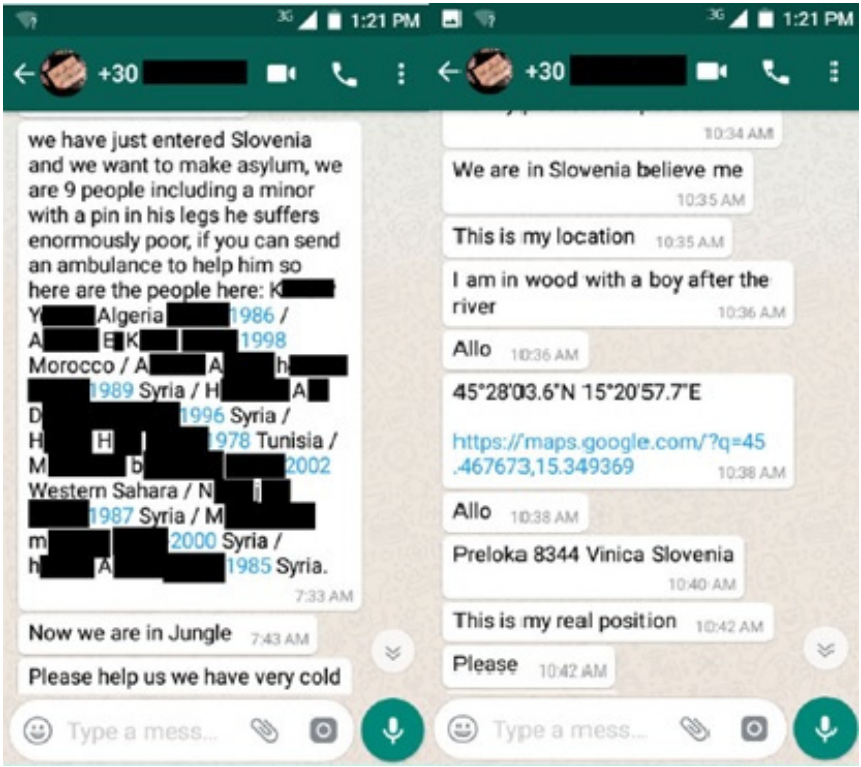
4 | Videmšek, Boštjan / Emrić, Nerminka / Povše Matej (2019): ›Go back to where you came from‹. URL: ostro.si [01.02.2020].

Info Kolpa and Monitoring Police Procedures at the Border

The civil initiative Info Kolpa started with a group of activists and volunteers visiting Velika Kladuša and Bihać in Bosnia and Herzegovina distributing leaflets among people on the move in spring 2018. The leaflets contained information on asylum procedures in Slovenia, including information on the responsible authorities, what their rights and obligations were in different stages of a procedure, what the Dublin regulation is, information on the police's illegal practice of denying asylum requests, and a list of useful contacts. The leaflet included a telephone number people could call if they wished to seek asylum after crossing the border to Slovenia. The telephone number operated like the principle of the *Alarmphone*, which has already proven to be somewhat effective in some other parts of Europe (Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy) in fighting the unlawful practices of police. The purpose of the info phone was to have a third party present during the first step of expressing intention to seek asylum and to independently monitor border crossings and police procedures.

In the beginning, the info phone number was established in cooperation with a legal NGO Pravno-informacijski center PIC (Legal-Informational Centre). The 24-hour telephone line was working with mobile phones and WhatsApp applications, with people taking shifts every two or three days. People mostly called or wrote to the number after crossing the Slovenian-Croatian border. When they themselves wanted to, they also reported their name, age, country of origin, location, and the number of persons in their group. Once they confirmed their wish to apply for international protection and deal with the police, a volunteer would inform the authorities of the location of the person and their intention to seek asylum (example can be seen in pictures 5a, b). Initially, members of PIC were informing police stations via telephone or e-mail about the intention of people to seek asylum in Slovenia. In July and August 2018, 16 interventions were carried out in cases of groups that had declared their intention to apply for asylum in Slovenia. In 13 cases, the police complied with legislation, and people were allowed to start asylum procedures, while in three cases the police claimed that the groups were never located in that area. Later, it turned out that they were pushed back across the border.

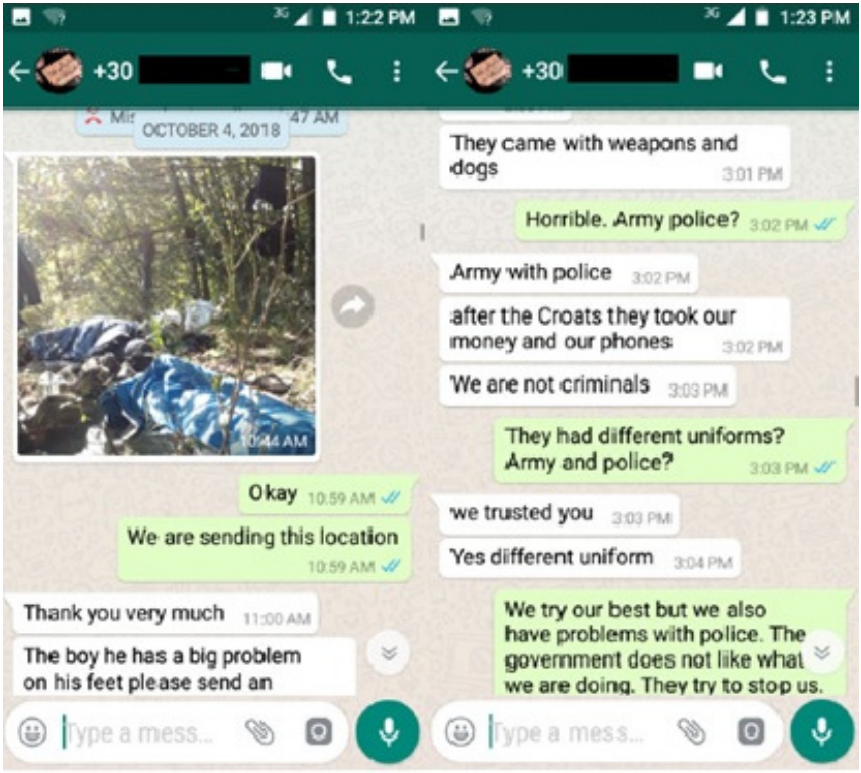
On 7th of September 2018, a joint press conference was held by the Ministry of the Interior and the Human Rights Ombudsman in Slovenia. During this press conference, now former interior minister Vesna Györkös Žnidar publicly condemned the activity of an unnamed non-governmental organization that informed police stations about persons wishing to seek help and demanded they be allowed to seek asylum. The minister deemed the demand of the members of the NGO, namely that police officers comply with legislation, was problematic and out of their jurisdiction. It did



Picture 5a. Example of communications of the Info Kolpa phone line.

not take the media long to discover that the unnamed non-governmental organization was PIC. This discovery was followed by a media lynch by the influential newspaper *Delo*, which even accused the NGO of human trafficking. Members of PIC withdrew from the practice of operating a telephone line because they feared that the existence of their organization was in danger, while a group of activists continued the practice with a different telephone number and under the name Info Kolpa.

Since then, the police was informed with an anonymous email address and messages that were signed with Info Kolpa. Also, a prepaid SIM card was used to operate the phone line. Despite having no institutional backing, the 24-hour phone line remained operational with volunteers taking shifts every few days. The number that was initially distributed via leaflets during visits to Velika Kladuša and Bihać in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was later shared between migrants themselves. Many people on the move stranded in BiH soon began to contact the number, asking how the



Picture 5b. Example of communications of the Info Kolpa phone line.

number works, what it is about, and requested information on options for seeking asylum in Croatia or Slovenia, or getting different forms of help. The people on the move also sent information and videos from the protest at the border crossing point Maljevac (BiH) to Croatia (EU) in October 2018. In our WhatsApp communication, we initially explained that we could only inform police of their wish to seek asylum in Slovenia once they had crossed the border, and that we could not guarantee they would be accepted to any asylum procedure. Some of the migrants decided to contact us again after they crossed the Slovenian border. Many people only established initial contact with us after they managed to reach Slovenia. We gave them the same explanation, and we shared the information we had on asylum procedures and illegal actions of the police. The procedure itself remained the same as during our cooperation with PIC: if a person wished to seek asylum in Slovenia, he or she could send us his or her name, nationality, age, and location when on Slovenian territory, and, if

the person agreed, we would contact the police station in that area. We specifically said that we could not guarantee a person to be accepted to an asylum procedure and taken to a camp in Ljubljana. The issue we faced many times was that migrants considered the number to be the official number of the asylum office in Slovenia and thought calling the number would guarantee them to be taken to an asylum camp. We tried to clearly explain that we were an informal group and could not guarantee that the person would be accepted to any asylum procedure and informed them that the police decide to deny the right to asylum procedures in the majority of cases in which we intervened, stressing that our initiative primarily aimed at putting pressure on the police to follow the law and respect the right to asylum. Language barriers were a major problem because many people who contacted the number did not have sufficient English skills, and we did not have translators present to be fully able to communicate what we could do and what to expect when facing the police.

Between the 11th of September and 7th of November 2018, Info Kolpa intervened 20 times with e-mails or phone calls at police stations. Apart from the police, the presence of people wishing to apply for asylum in Slovenia was also communicated via email to the Ombudsman, Mirovni institut (Peace Institute) in Ljubljana, Amnesty International Slovenia, and other organizations involved in protecting human rights. These 20 cases (106 persons) were recorded in a full report which was presented at a press conference in Ljubljana in May 2019[5]. In six cases, persons were admitted to the asylum procedure in Slovenia (27 persons); in seven cases they were readmitted to Croatia and then expelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina (39 persons); only one person was able to initiate a procedure for international protection after an extradition to Croatia and not being expelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In seven cases (39 people) there is no information on what happened to the people, as there has not been any contact since Slovenian police apprehended them. In the case of the latter, it is possible that the people did not want any further communication, the police officers seized their phones for the purpose of an investigation, or the phones were destroyed or stolen either by Slovenian or Croatian police.

Towards the end of 2018, the phone communication had died down. It became apparent that the police insistently practiced systematic rejections and expulsions of asylum seekers, despite being made aware of people's intentions to apply for asylum in Slovenia. The situation was not improving even though state institutions and NGOs dealing with human rights protection had been informed about the police's actions.

5 | push-forward.org.

Hence, the telephone number was no longer serving its original purpose of helping people in need and intervening against the illegal and unethical police practice.

CONCLUSION

Info Kolpa's attempt to change the police practice of massively denying people their right to asylum and performing collective expulsions by bringing these practices to public attention has rather failed. It has become clear that neither the government nor any other state institution is willing to condemn or even thoroughly investigate the actions of police at the border despite clear evidence of unlawful acts by the police against thousands of people traveling along the Balkan route. The initiative was more successful as a source of information on how push-backs are happening in Slovenia, and it offered insight into police procedures dealing with migrants at the border. When it comes to the intention of the initiative to provide support in concrete situations, one can conclude that the police predominantly ignored interventions coming from an anonymous and informal group such as Info Kolpa. The practice of offering direct support via an info phone was much more successful when interventions were made by a lawyer of an NGO (PIC) already involved in the official oversight of protecting human rights in state institutions. Such a status provided the organization some leverage when making calls to the police stations, but it was also a source of vulnerability. As legal NGO providing free legal assistance to asylum seekers in Slovenia on asylum procedures, PIC depended on public funding provided by the Ministry of Interior Affairs and could, therefore, easily be disciplined. The grass-roots initiative offered a possibility for a stronger and more radical condemnation of police violence by the Slovenian state, which was realized with a public press conference and an event in which we presented our findings in a form of a report that provided proof of illegal police actions to the public as well as with offering a space for migrants to share their experience of police abuse. The Slovenian police increased its presence and repression at the border in the last year. Directly challenging border violence is something that goes beyond the abilities of small groups of likeminded people who do not agree with systemic violence of the state against migrants. Although the Info Kolpa phone was extinguished, the group has continued its activities: It has regular meetings with refugees and asylum seekers in Ljubljana, monitors the situation in refugee camps or at the border with Croatia and in BiH, where migrants are stranded, organizing petitions, denouncing further militarizations of the border, and are looking for ways to effectively oppose police and state violence against people on the move.

Research Lab

From Corridor to Encampment

Mapping EU Strategies of Containment in Serbia

ANDREA CONTENTA

Abstract: This contribution explores the EU strategy of containment in Serbia trough critical mapping, analysing the construction of camp facilities after the closure of the Balkan corridor. It consists of a series of maps of camps built in Serbia in the last years, developed by the author. From 2015 to 2017, the state of Serbia has rehabilitated, refurbished, and built new camp facilities using European funds. Following a European strategy of containing and impeding migration movements from south to north, Serbia has kept thousands of people outside of the western EU territory. Whether under the label of transit, reception, or asylum centres, camps have pushed, held, and left thousands of people on the move hopeless, without clear future alternatives, living in legal and humanitarian limbos for years. These maps critically present how these infrastructures serve an EU strategy of containment and deterrence, redrawing the geography of migration in the region. Using official and available data, this work shows infrastructures, numbers of people, and funds. It focuses on a time frame beginning from the closure of the Balkan corridor to the present time. Within few years, the once open Balkan corridor across the former territory of Yugoslavia became a field to experiment the EU strategies of containment.

Keywords: Serbia, Balkan route, EU, containment, camps

MAP.1: Introduction

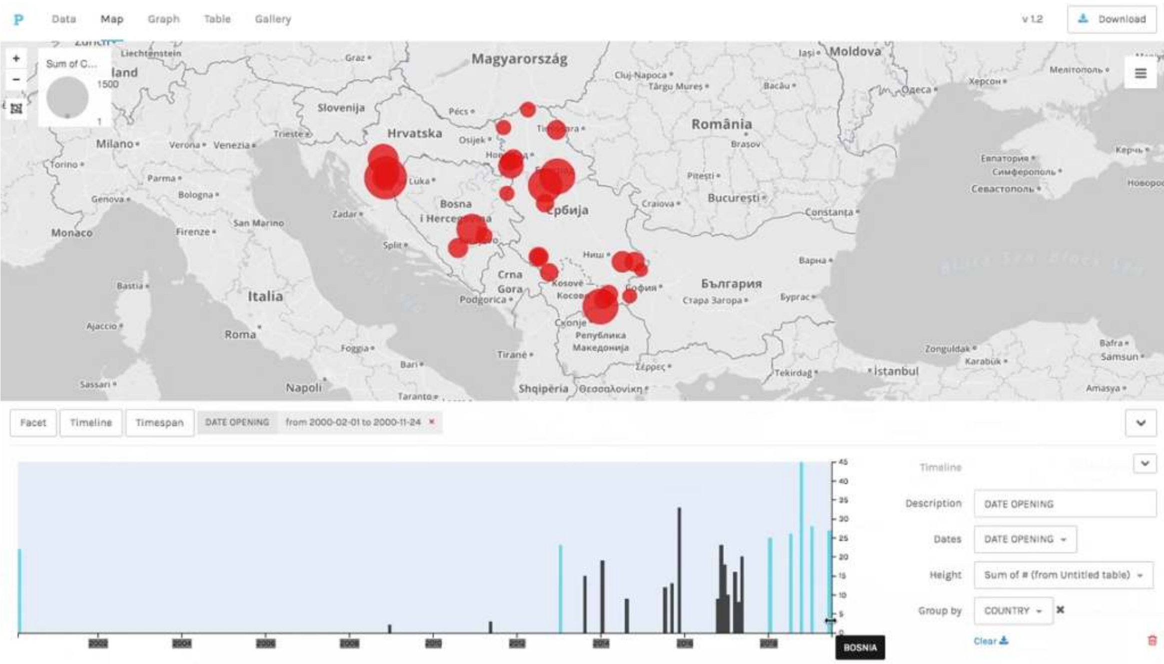
This series of maps covers the construction of asylum and reception facilities in Serbia from 2008 to 2019. The maps critically analyse the period between 2015 and 2017. During these two years, the government of Serbia rehabilitated, refurbished and built new camps to respond to the increasing south to north migration movements across the Balkans, thereby serving an EU strategy of containment and deterrence redrawing the geography of migration in the region.

Since 2015, under the supervision of EU authorities, UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations, the Serbian government has received more than 130 million euros by the EU to »secure its borders« by managing and establishing new and existing camps. These facilities aim at hosting people on the move crossing the country. However, under the label of asylum, transit or reception centres, camps keep and leave thousands of people in inhumane and degrading conditions. Such infrastructures serve a regional strategy of containment (see Beznec/Speer/Stojić Mitrović 2016; Hameršak/Bužinkić 2018), oriented towards controlling movement, sustaining a politics of fear (see Wodak 2015), keeping the ›unwanted‹ outside of the EU borders. The maps highlight the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, when thousands of people were confined and left without any choice than accepting inhumane and degrading living conditions in Serbia. From 2018 onwards, migration routes started to shift towards Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (see UN 2018, 2019). A video included in the online version of this series of maps reveals how from 2018 to 2019, following the migration movements, new camps were erected in BiH.

The mapping project—both maps and graphs—has been realised using Palladio, a software developed by Stanford University for the visualisation of complex historical data. Based on official and unofficial data,[1] such as interviews with different actors, fieldwork, and relevant literature, the maps present mainly the number of people and infrastructural capacities from 2017, 2018 and the first six months of 2019 (see UNHCR 2017; 2018; 2019), including snapshot analyses of south to north movement limitations, main donors, and organisations involved. This work does not want to give an objective account of what has happened in the Balkans in the last years. On the contrary, it aims at reporting a subjective analysis of three years of observations, discussions, and struggles shared and spent in the region. A more comprehensive study including informal settlements and a better visual analysis of movements in Serbia and other neighbouring eastern European countries is yet to be done. The dataset used to create the maps is attached to this work and can positively encourage a wider network of collaborations on the subject of containment in the region and, hopefully, beyond.

This mapping attempt is limited to displaying the constantly shifting geographies of migration of the last decade in which the Balkans became the field of experimenting new and old strategies of containment and deterrence. Nonetheless people are still moving, and their presence at border areas reminds all of us of their struggles (see Mezzadra/Neilson 2013).

1 | Official data are often inconsistent. The number of camps as well as their official dates of opening do not always match between the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (CRMRS) official page and the UNHCR Centres Profiles.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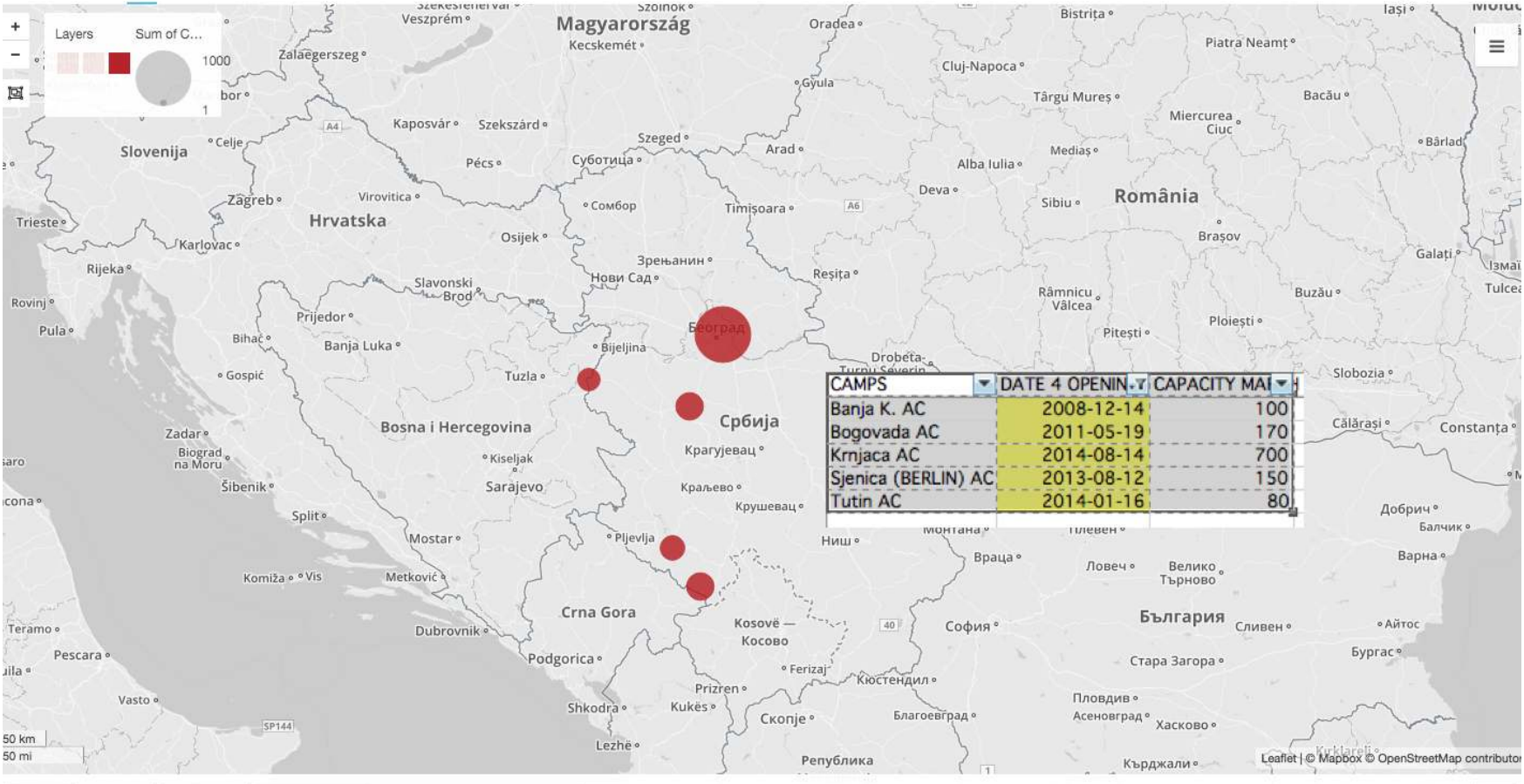
From 2008 to 2019—Building Containments

From 2008 to 2019, both Serbia and BiH have served as extra-EU territories to contain most of the south to north movements reaching the western EU. The video (screenshot left, video in online version) shows the timeline of the construction of camps whereby the size of the dots represents their maximum capacity up to date.



CAMPS	DATE 4 OPENIN	CAPACITY MAI
Banja K. AC	2008-12-14	100
Bogovada AC	2011-05-19	170
Krnjaca AC	2014-08-14	700
Sjenica (BERLIN) AC	2013-08-12	150
Tutin AC	2014-01-16	80

Facet | Timeline | Timespan | DATE 4 OPENING from 2008-12-01 to 2014-12-29 ×

MAP.2: Camps 2008–2014

From 2008 to 2014, Serbia opened five camps under the official name asylum centre (AC). New and old patterns of forced displacements match and overlap in the same locations. Serbia has a long-standing experience with refugees and the protection of displaced populations. In 1996, at the peak of the post-Yugoslav war, Serbia accommodated more than 530,000 refugees from Croatia and BIH as well as 700,000 displaced people from Kosovo while the number of camps was around 700 (Komesarijat 2008: 2). When the *new* refugees reached Krnjača AC in Belgrade, the old families from the Yugoslav wars were still there. Similarly, Salakovac camp in BiH used to be for people displaced during the war, and it was recently rehabilitated for people crossing the Balkans (see Boitiaux 2018).

Data | Map | Graph | Table | Gallery

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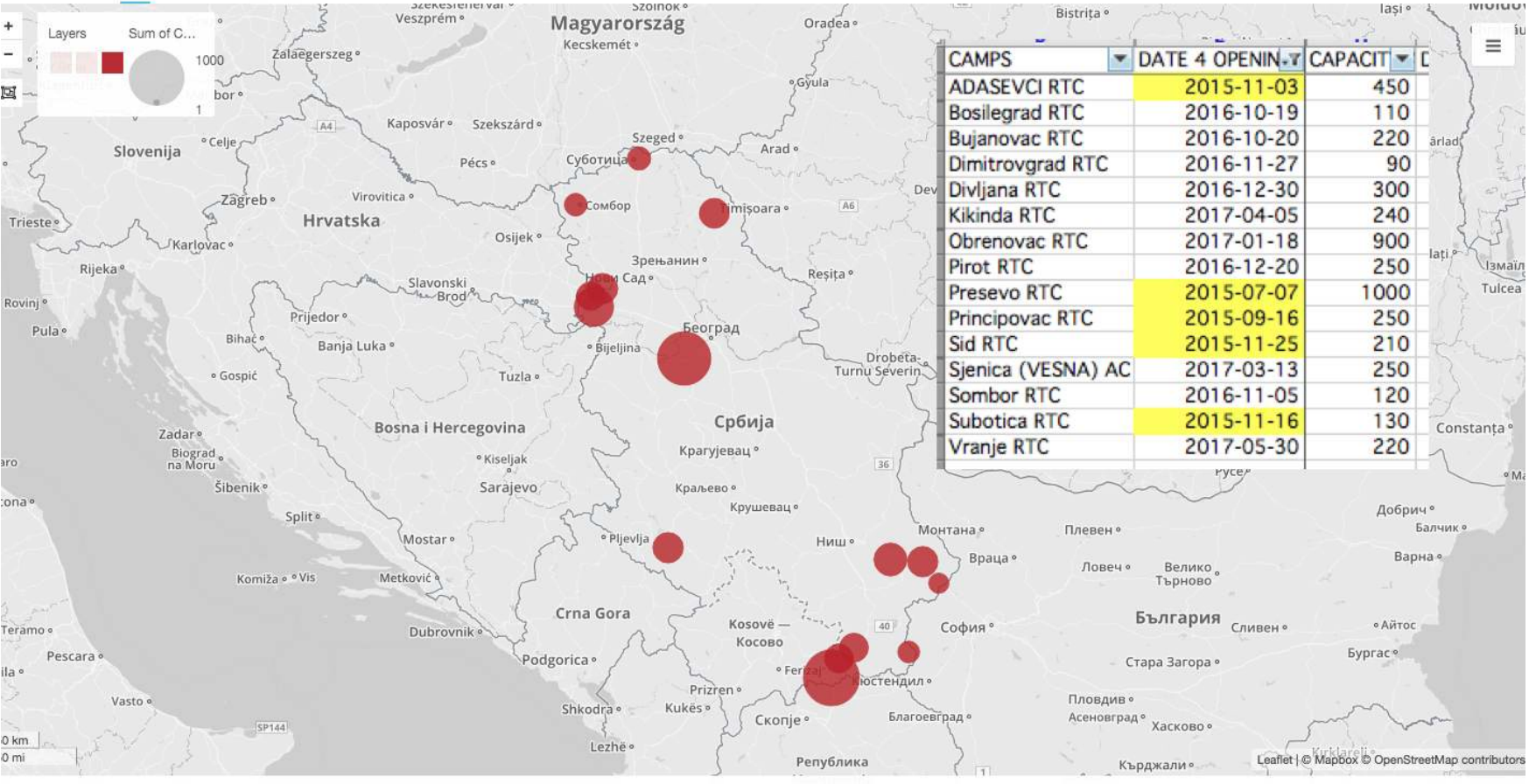


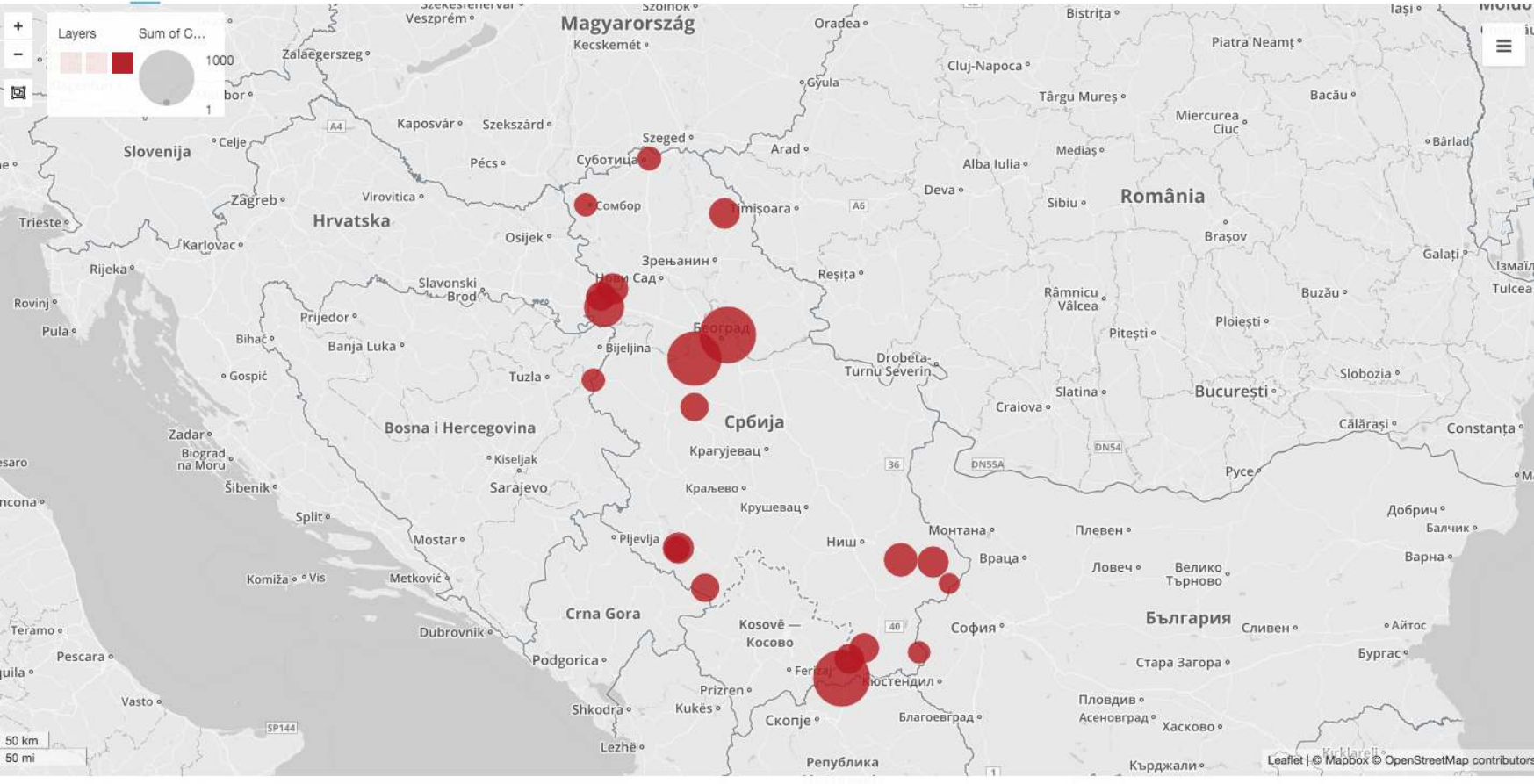
CAMPS	DATE 4 OPENIN...	CAPACIT...	D
ADASEVCI RTC	2015-11-03	450	
Bosilegrad RTC	2016-10-19	110	
Bujanovac RTC	2016-10-20	220	
Dimitrovgrad RTC	2016-11-27	90	
Divljana RTC	2016-12-30	300	
Kikinda RTC	2017-04-05	240	
Obrenovac RTC	2017-01-18	900	
Pirot RTC	2016-12-20	250	
Presevo RTC	2015-07-07	1000	
Principovac RTC	2015-09-16	250	
Sid RTC	2015-11-25	210	
Sjenica (VESNA) AC	2017-03-13	250	
Sombor RTC	2016-11-05	120	
Subotica RTC	2015-11-16	130	
Vranje RTC	2017-05-30	220	

Facet | Timeline | Timespan | DATE 4 OPENING | from 2014-12-29 to 2017-06-01 ×

MAP.3: Camps 2015–2017

From 2015 to 2017, Serbia set up 15 camps with only one in Sjenica labelled as asylum centre. Under the name of transit and reception centres, those facilities where mainly built with funds coming from the EU. The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) has disbursed millions of euros to international organisations, including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and Oxfam to boost the national response to the so-called migration crisis. As part of the countries outside the EU, since 2016, Serbia has benefitted from the EU Trust Fund for Syria known as MADAD. From 2015 to the end of 2017, the EU has funded migration related activities in Serbia for a total of 130 million euros (see EC 2015; ECHO 2018). In the time span of two years, the government of Serbia tripled the number of camps in its territory. In many cases, these infrastructures did not comply with the minimum standards stated in the asylum and reception regulations (see Pravilnik 2008). Despite being part of the accommodation system, those infrastructures remained out of the legal framework up to the introduction of the new Asylum law in 2018 (see ECRE 2018) when the reception and transit centres were included as formal accommodations. However, such changes did not necessarily translate into improving living conditions, which, especially in the northern camps, remained below common standards giving the officials in charge of these centres the opportunity to act arbitrarily at the expense of thousands of people living inside. In the southern camps, standards were aligned to EASO guidelines (2016) offering better living conditions. In addition, the proximity to Bulgaria and the North Macedonian borders fostered a number of expulsions. Under the supervision of the EU, Serbian authorities and NGOs prioritised to improve the living conditions in the camps in the south rather than those in the north in order to dissuade south to north movements within the country, thereby facilitating geographical containment.[2]

2 | The expulsions and limitations of movement are analysed in MAP.9/GRAPH.3, 4.



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MAP.4: The new map of Serbian Camps in April 2019

In 2019, besides the six asylum centres, there are 14 so-called *prihvatni* and *tranzitni* reception and transit centres. With the approval of the new Asylum Law in 2018, »hotels, resorts, other suitable facilities« (Article 50) were finally included in the legal framework. This should have given access to asylum to thousands of people on the move that for years were left without fundamental rights; however, many are still waiting for recognition of their status. The new asylum law is based on the Action Plan of Chapter 24 of the EU Acquis *Justice, Freedom and Security* that Serbia has agreed on in order to enter the EU (see EC 2019).

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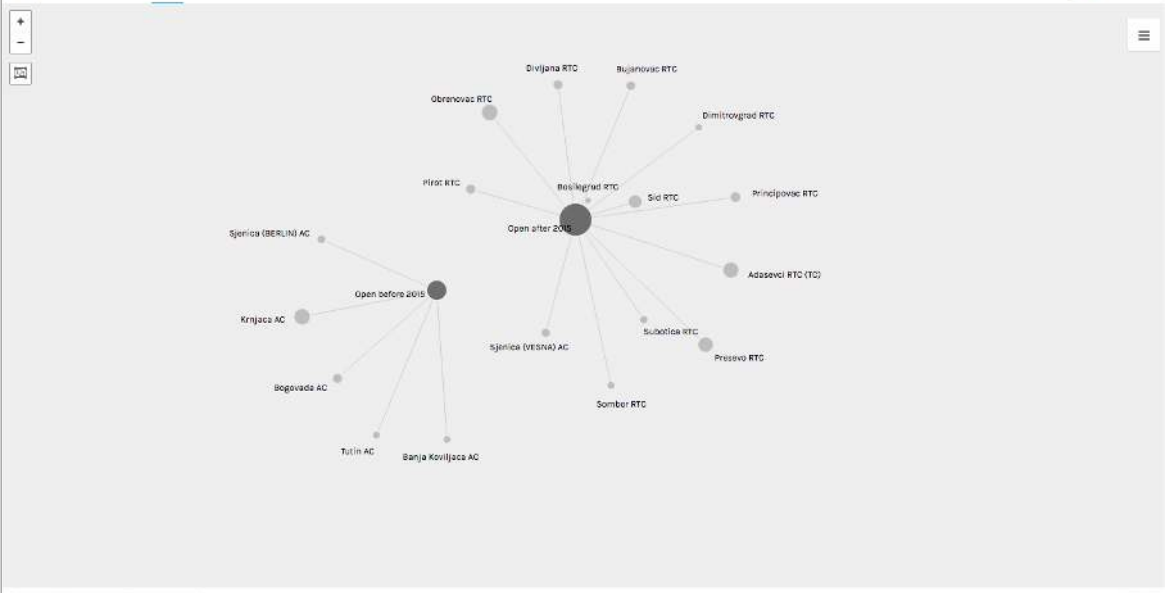

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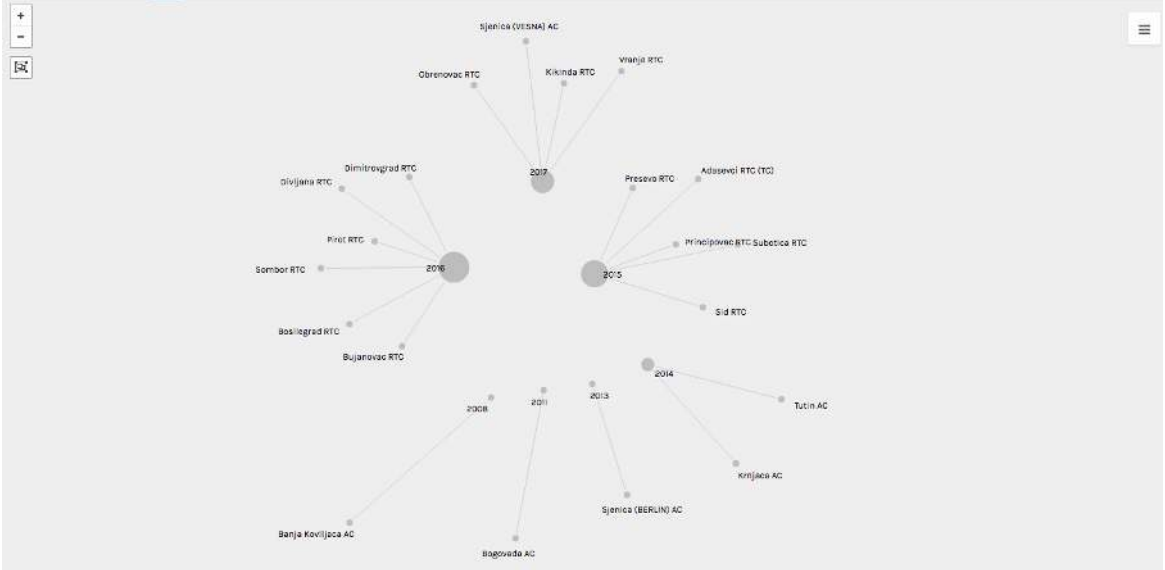

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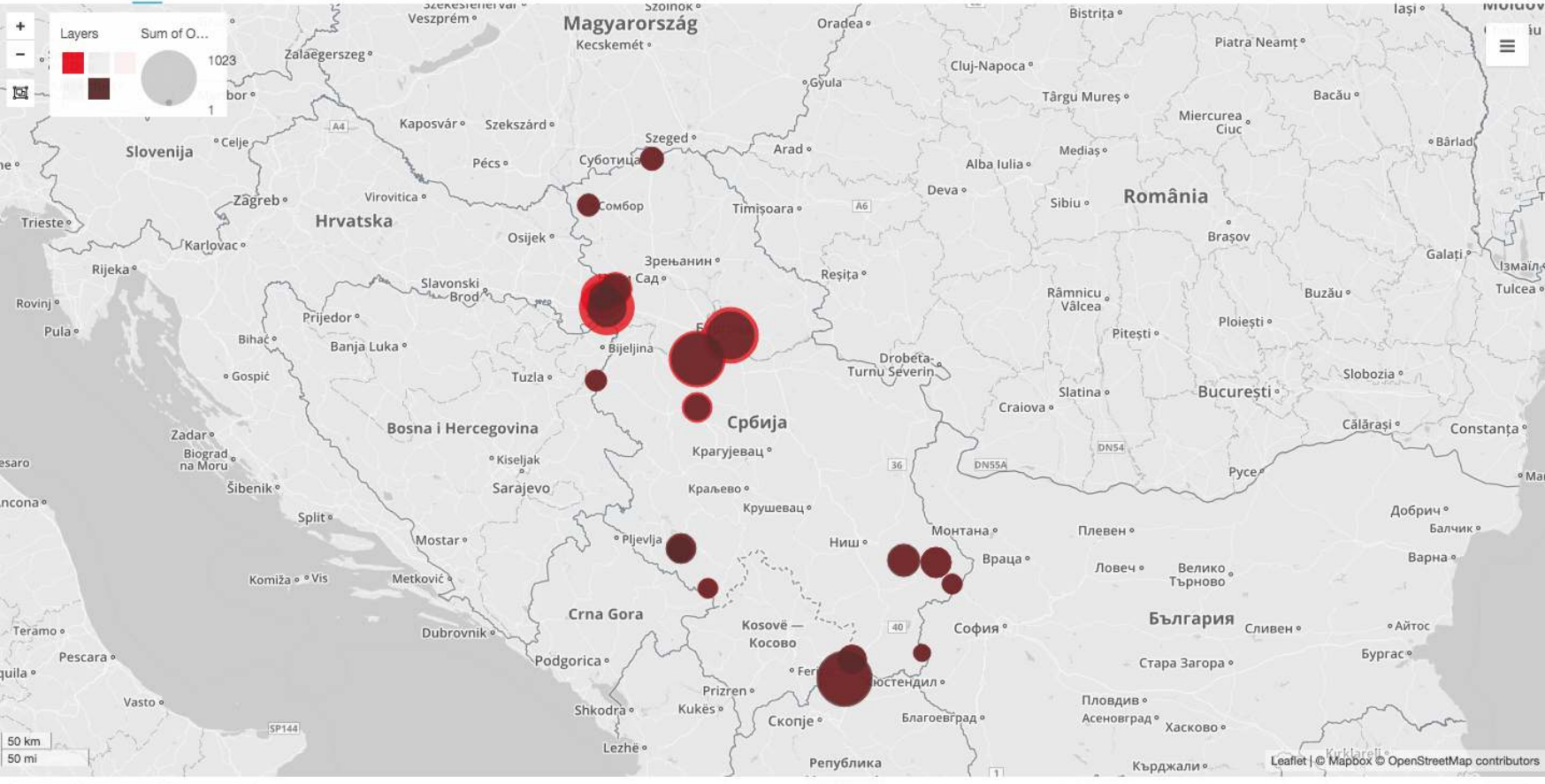
GRAPH.1: Camps Before and After 2015 / GRAPH.2: Camps per Year

In 2018, the EU allocated a total of 54 million euros to Serbia:[3] 28 million for border management (see EEAS 2018) and 16 million for responding to the needs of migrants and refugees (see Ministarstvo s.a.) with additional 3.5 million euros spent for food inside the camps.[4] Such funds were allocated to Serbia, as it was often stressed at meetings with EU officials, as a reward for what has been labelled as ›good management‹ of migration movements. The sizes of the nodes in the map represent the camp's capacity.

3 | The mentioned figures neither include the Serbian component of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) I and II regional programmes, nor other initiatives targeting municipalities or other institutions (EC s.a.).

4 | In 2019 (from October 2018 to December 2019), the EU has allocated additional 8.5 million euros for the provision of food in the Serbian camps.



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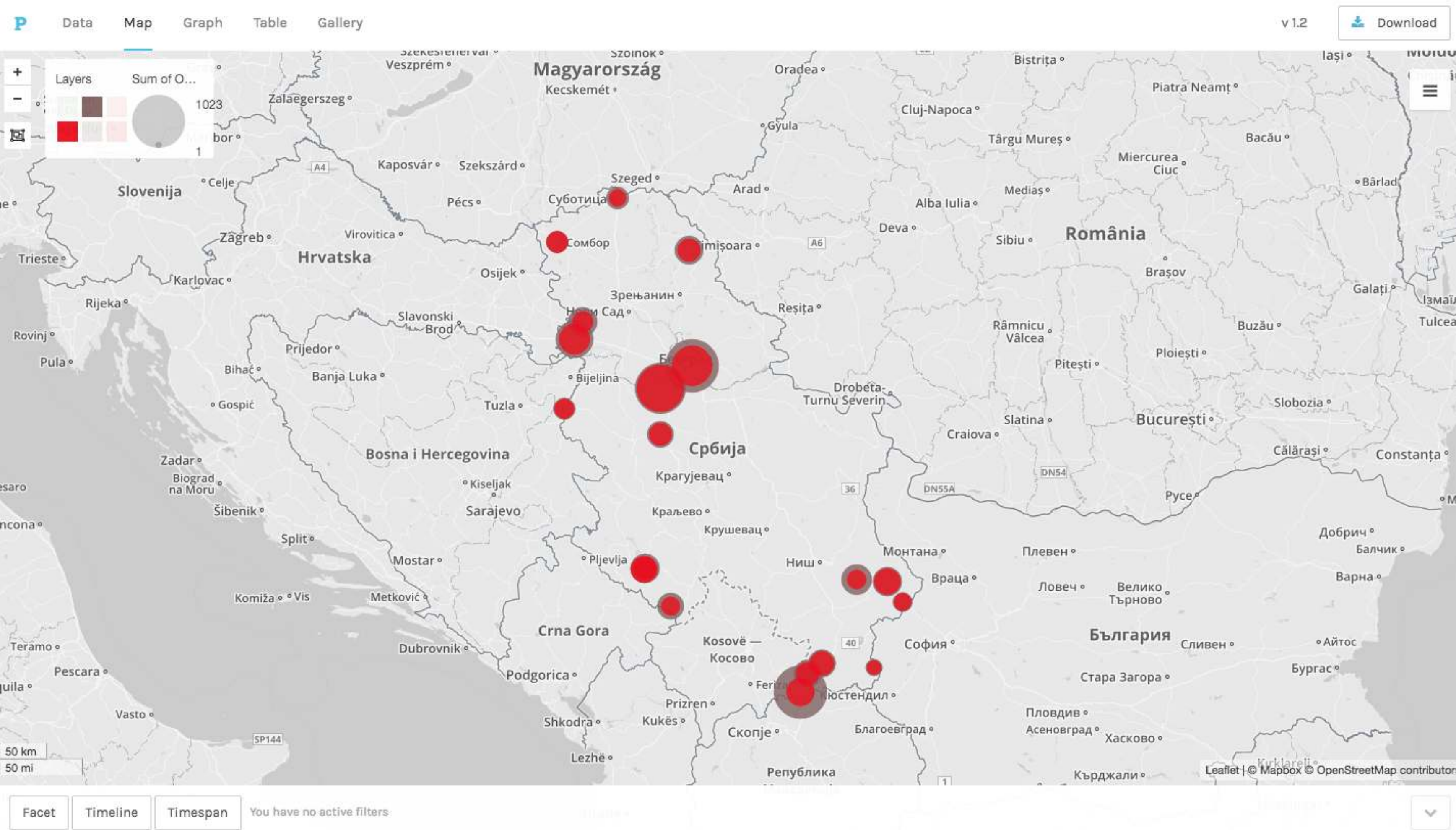
OCCUPANCY VS. CAPACITY 2017/2018/2019

The following four maps show the ratio between the capacity of camps (grey) and their actual occupancy (red) within the years of 2017, 2018 and 2019 (see EEAS 2018). The sizes of the dots represent the number of people. It is clear that all the camps present in Serbia were overcrowded in 2017.

MAP.5: Occupancy – Capacity 2017

At the end of 2016, an unexpectedly rigid winter trapped thousands of people living in temperatures reaching minus 17° Celsius. In March 2017, the official total number of people stranded in the country reached 6,714 in a space made for 5,380. It is difficult to give an answer to the reliability of these figures. However, adding the almost 2,000 people living in informal settlements, such as the barracks of central Belgrade, the abandoned factory in Sid and several spots between Subotica, Sombor and Kikinda, approximately 10,000 people were present in Serbia at the end of winter 2016/17. The images of the barracks in central Belgrade reached international media round the world, as they showed Second World War-like queues with hundreds of people waiting for a meal under a heavy snow (see Dinham 2017). The camps around Belgrade and towards the Croatian border became worryingly overcrowded, leaving families, children, and many young people in unhealthy and degrading living environments for months. Despite the international pressure, only few international organisations were able to respond, and many solidarity initiatives were conducted by individuals and self-organised actors (Cantat 2020).



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Kiseljak
Sarajevo
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Komiža
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Drobeta-Turnu Severin
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Brașov
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Piatra Neamț
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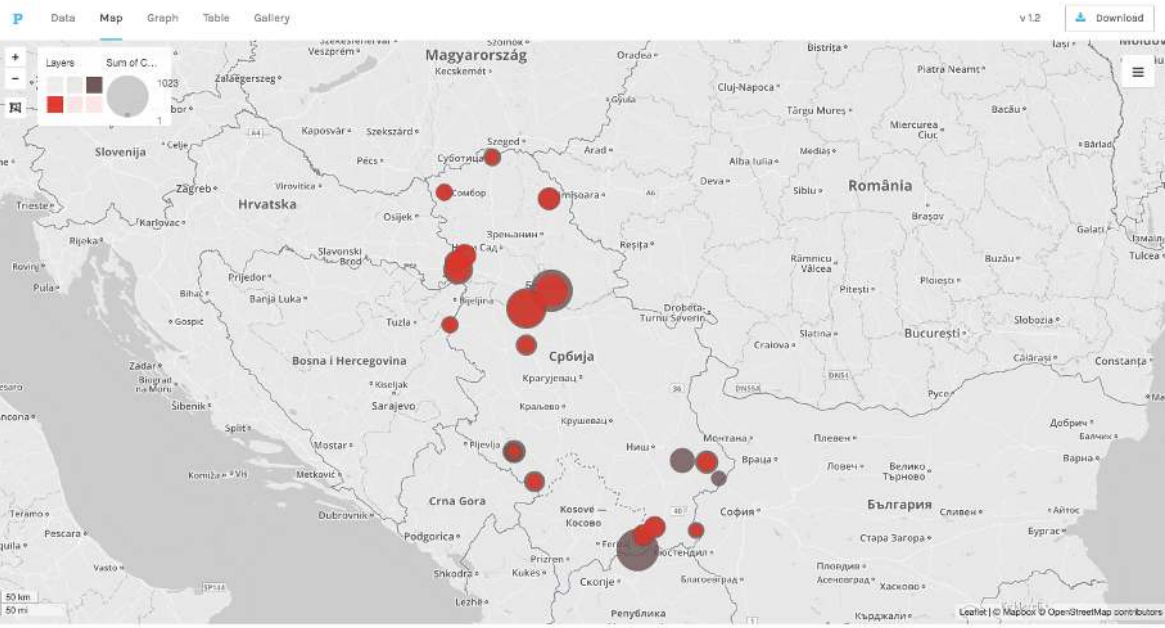
MAP.6: Occupancy – Capacity 2018

At the beginning of 2018, the numbers of people in camps sunk back to the figures of the pre-2015-period: officially, 3,566 people were present in the camps in March (see UNHCR 2017). This has been the result of shifts in the paths of migration towards BiH. From the end of 2017 onwards, people mostly stuck in the North of Greece and Serbia started to cross into BiH in order to reach the Croatian EU borders. After years of brutal systematic violence conducted by the Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, Croatian, and Serbian border police, movements from Greece also diverted towards the route from Albania over Montenegro and BiH to Croatia, or alternatively via North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and BiH to Croatia, or a combinations of the two. These old renewed paths show how, despite years of physical, psychological, and infrastructural deterrence methods, new geographies are still possible in order to confront and challenge restrictive border regimes. However, this remains at the expenses of many people and lives lost that do not even appear in any official statistics. The six-year-old Madina Hussiny who died at the end of 2017 at the border between Croatia and Serbia is a terrible example of the hundreds lives lost crossing the Balkans (see Graham-Harrison 2017). It is unclear how many people died. Taken together, other colleagues and the author counted at least 622 persons between 2016 and April 2018 who lost their lives on their paths from the Turkish shore to the Serbian, Croatian and Hungarian borders.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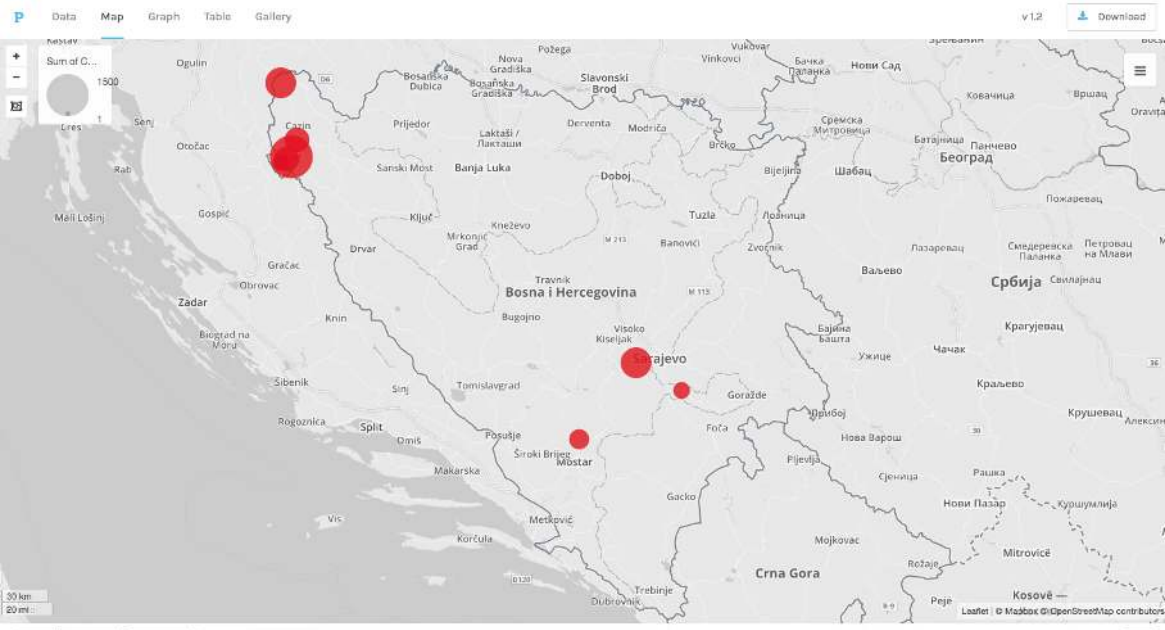
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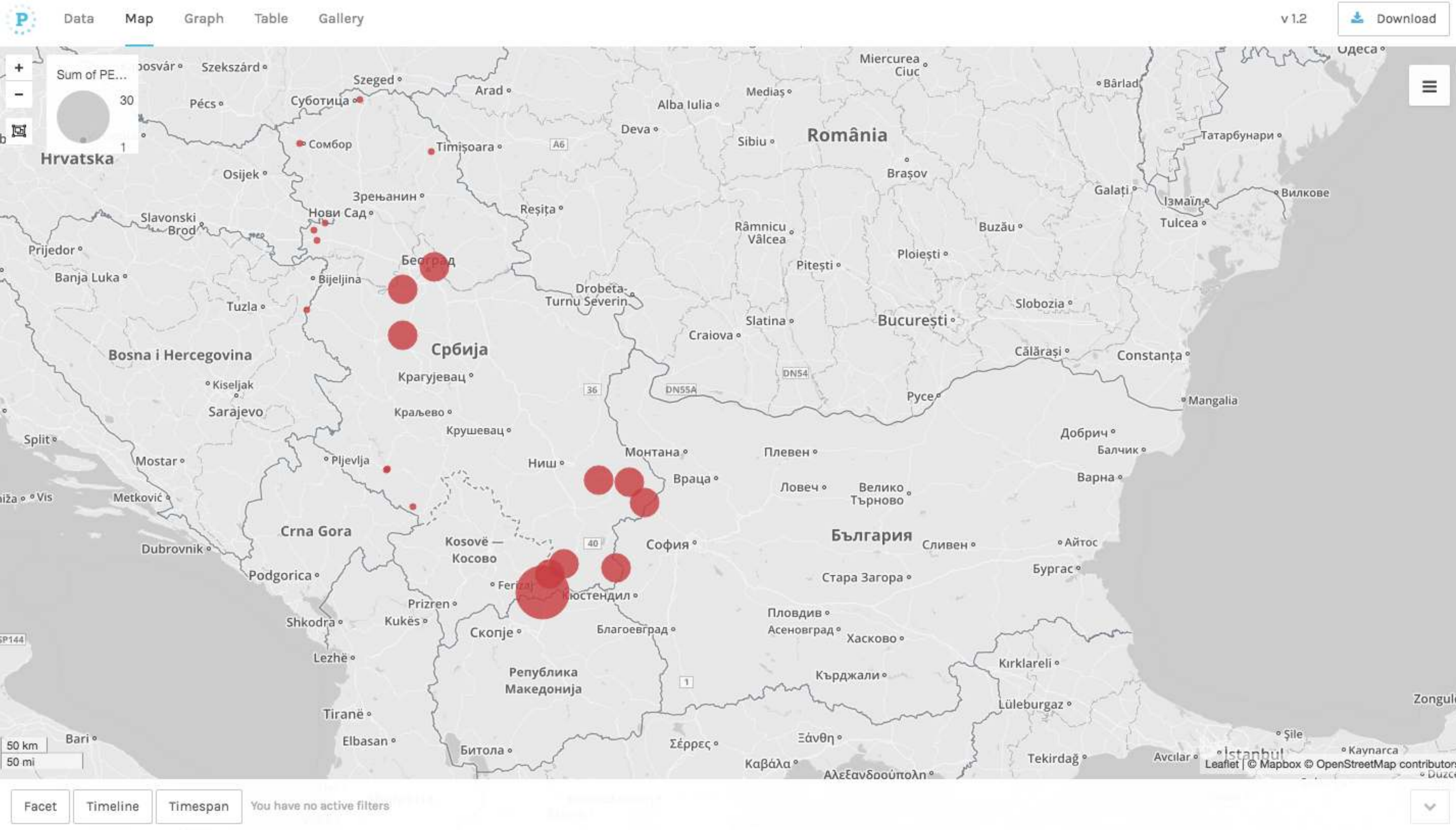
MAP.7: Occupancy – Capacity 2019 Serbia / MAP.8: Capacity 2019 BiH

In May 2019, the presence of people on the move in Serbia decreased to 3,060 (see UNHCR 2019) while reaching from 6,000 to 6,500 people in BiH (see UNDP 2019). In 2018, facility structures started to mushroom all over the country, particularly in its north-western part at the border to Croatia (see Ahmetašević/Mlinarević 2019). Some of these structures could be described as mostly informal, makeshift camps and some (shown on the map) are official camps managed by international organisations. The former territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia became a »dumping zone« (see MacDowal 2017) with new spaces of exception of the western rules of law in which EU standards did not apply but whose effects are still visible with the scabies scars, bruises, fractures and cuts on the bodies of thousands of people moving south to north. This has not only revealed the decadence of EU institutions, but also the acceptance and legitimacy of a system of exclusion. In some of the newly revised European asylum and border management laws push-backs are legalised and people who migrate and those helping them are often criminalised.



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Краљево
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Ниш
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Mostar
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Craiova
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Reșița
Râmnicu Vâlcea
Sibiu
Alba Iulia
Deva
Mediaș
Miercurea Ciuc
Bârlad
Galați
Tulcea
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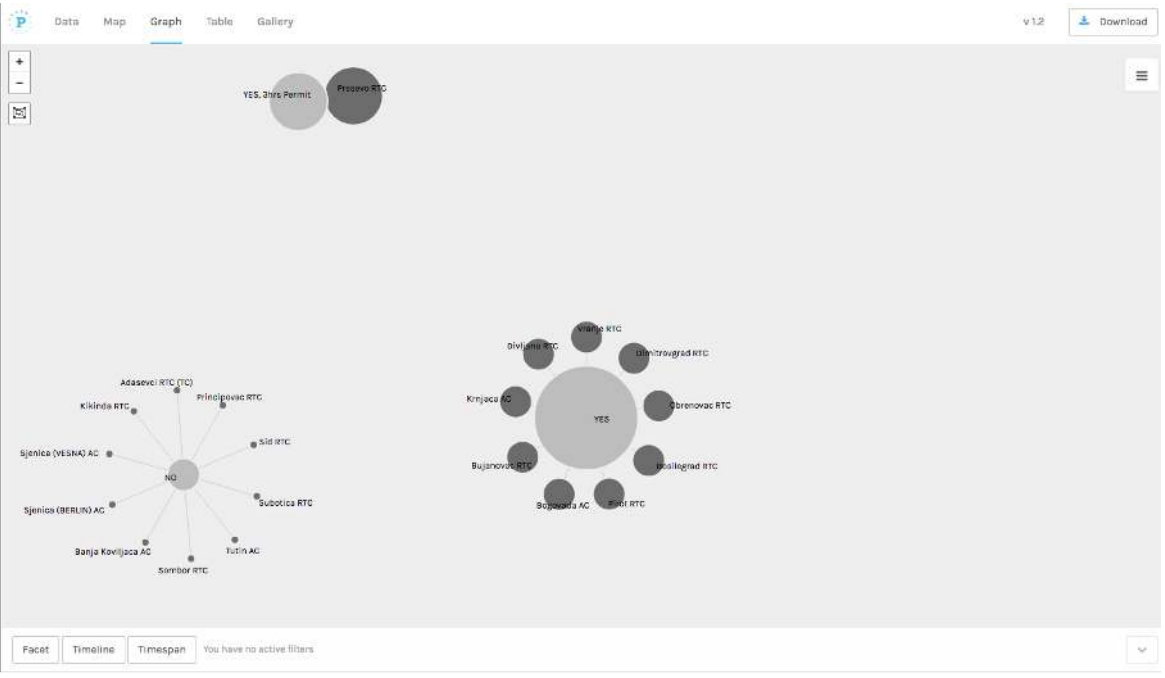
FREEDOM VS. RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

MAP.9: Permits Required to Go Out of the Camp / GRAPH.3: Permits Required to Go Out of the Camp / GRAPH.4: South/North

Following a strategy of deterrence and of discouraging any movements heading northwards, the southern camps showed a stricter form of regulation concerning in- and outward movement. In the north, the so-called transit centres towards Romania, Hungary and Croatia were mostly left without regular maintenance leaving thousands of people in unhealthy living conditions, often without proper care, in which simple parasite, such as scabies and body lice, became chronic. In addition, until 2018, migration movements south to north were controlled by unofficial practices, which consisted in regular arrests at the northern borders, forced relocation to the southern camps, mainly Preševo, and unlawful expulsions to Bulgaria and North Macedonia (see Belgrade Centre for Human Rights/Macedonian Young Lawyers Association/Oxfam 2017; Medecins Sans Frontiers s.a.). In the town of Preševo, unofficial agreements with local officers at the bus station prevented people to board busses going back towards north. Despite many international organisations that were aware of these accounts, it was difficult to prove. As a consequence, several people in Preševo started to ask to be »voluntarily deported« to North Macedonia. It has been mentioned that the only way to move north was to go back to North Macedonia and re-pay smugglers in order to cross back into Serbia, thereby overcoming Preševo area, to reach Belgrade. It is important to underline that such unlawful expulsions were conducted without respecting any readmission agreement leaving several people completely unattended at the border.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Sjenica (BERLIN) AC
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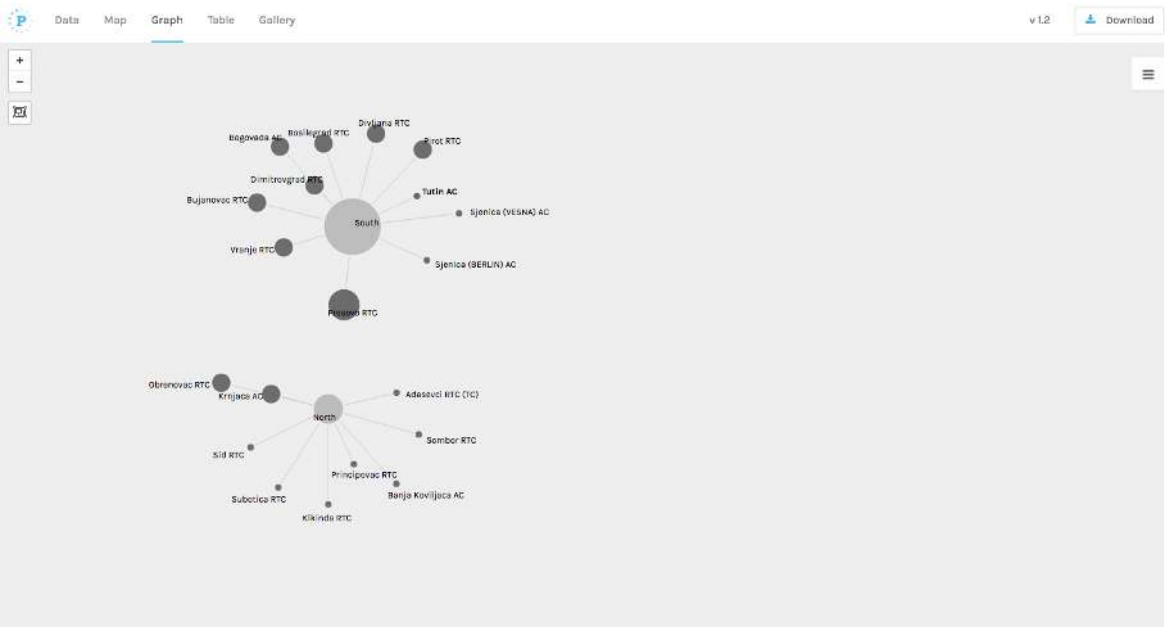
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Vranje RTC
Sjenica (BERLIN) AC
Prosevo RTC
Obrenovac RTC
Krnjaca AC
Adasevci RTC (TC)
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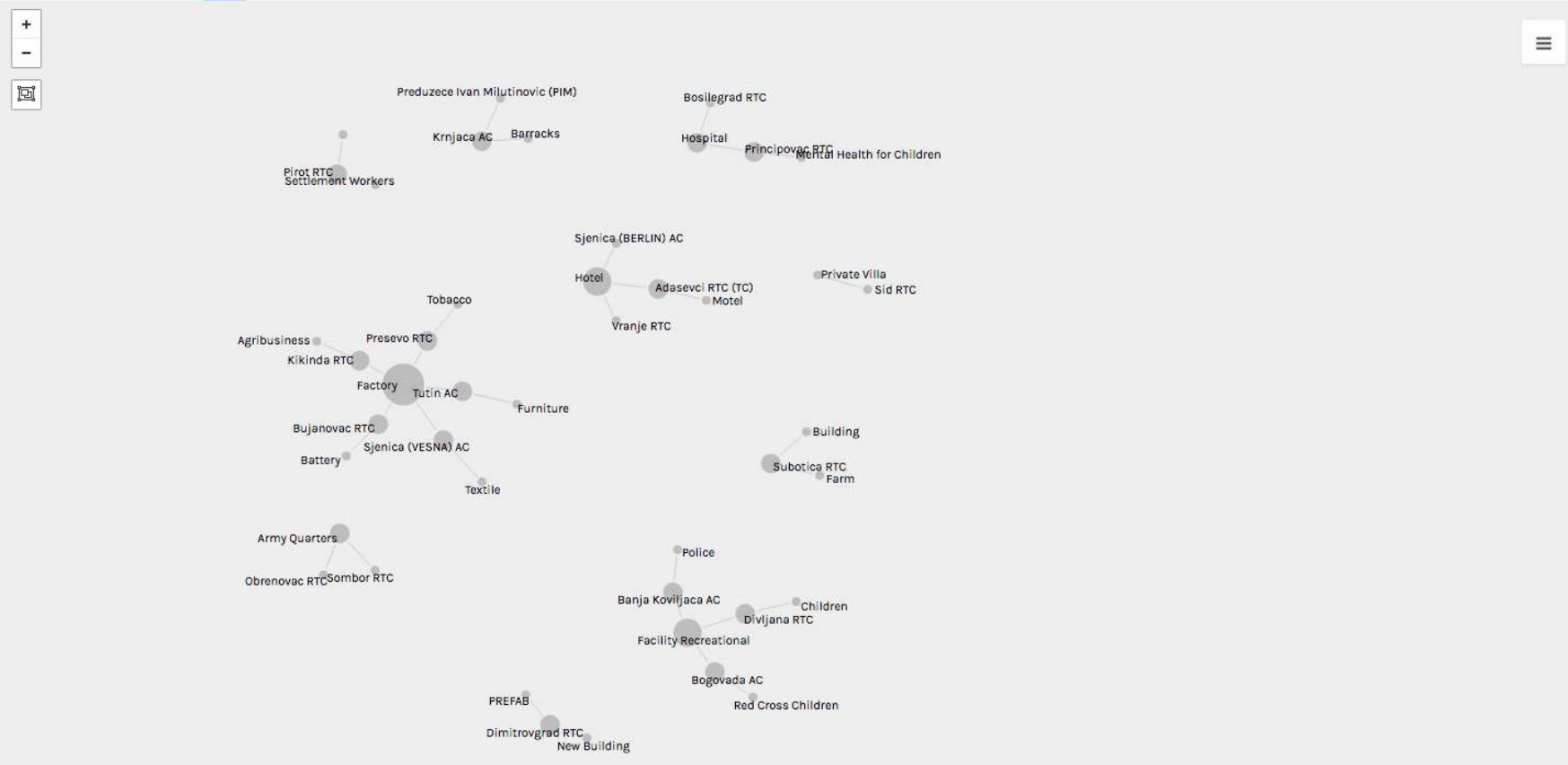
In MAP.9 the size of the node represents whether one was allowed to move out of the camp. It is clear that all southern camps introduced a restriction of movements. Similarly, in GRAPH.3, the size of each node determines whether a permit to leave is needed or not. In 2017, at the peak of the migrant presence in the country, the only exception was Preševo, which enforced a very strict rule giving only a three-hour-permit to go out of the centre (see UNHCR 2017; Komesarijat 2018), basically displaying a semi-detention system. During the years, those permits have changed several times based on the pressure put by different municipalities and the national migration management. For example, Banja Koviljača, Tutin, and Sjenica situated at the BiH and Montenegro borders did not require any permit. Limiting the movements outside of the centres has also been used as punishment, especially in the case of collective protests or small individual acts of resistance that many people reported, such as trying to cook for oneself inside the camp or hiding in the proximity of the centres.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Pirot RTC
Settlement Workers
Bosilegrad RTC
Hospital
Principovac RTC
Mental Health for Children
Sjenica (BERLIN) AC
Hotel
Adasevci RTC (TC)
Motel
Vranje RTC
Private Villa
Sid RTC
Tobacco
Agribusiness
Presevo RTC
Kikinda RTC
Factory
Tutin AC
Furniture
Bujanovac RTC
Sjenica (VESNA) AC
Battery
Textile
Building
Subotica RTC
Farm
Army Quarters
Obrenovac RTC
Sombor RTC
Police
Banja Koviljaca AC
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Facility Recreational
Bogovada AC
Red Cross Children
PREFAB
Dimitrovgrad RTC
New Building

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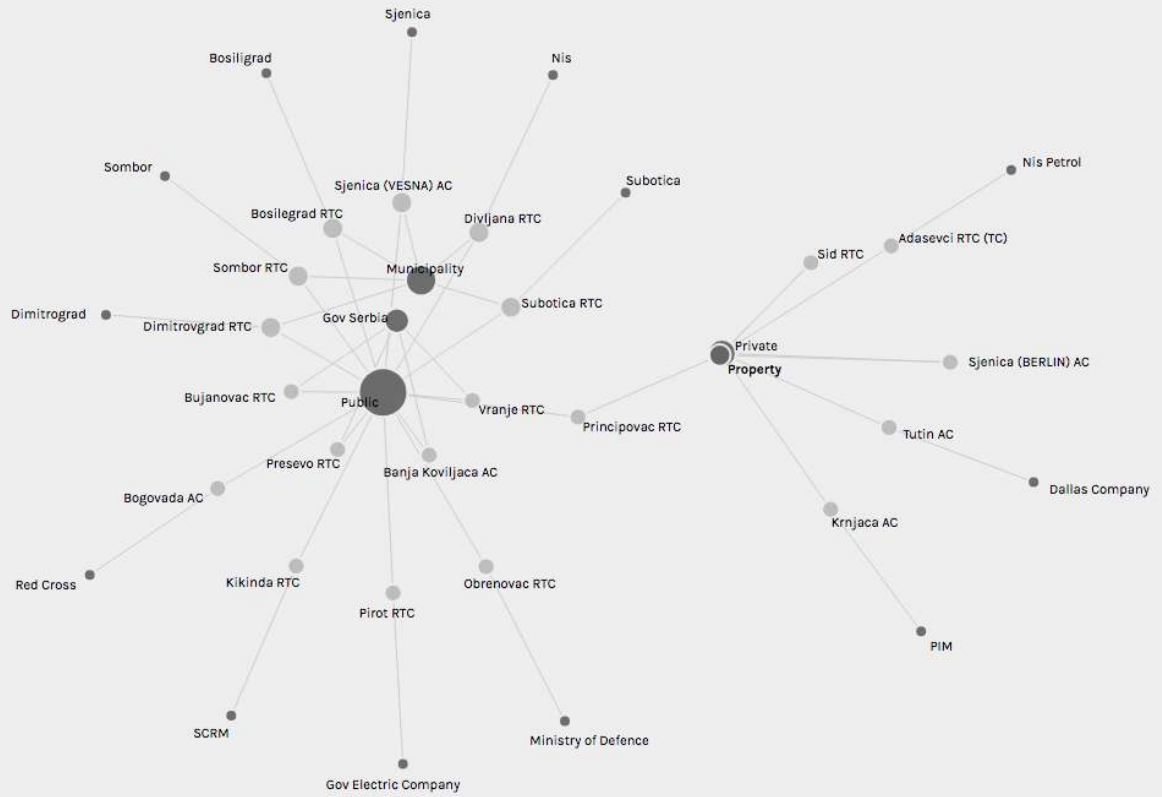

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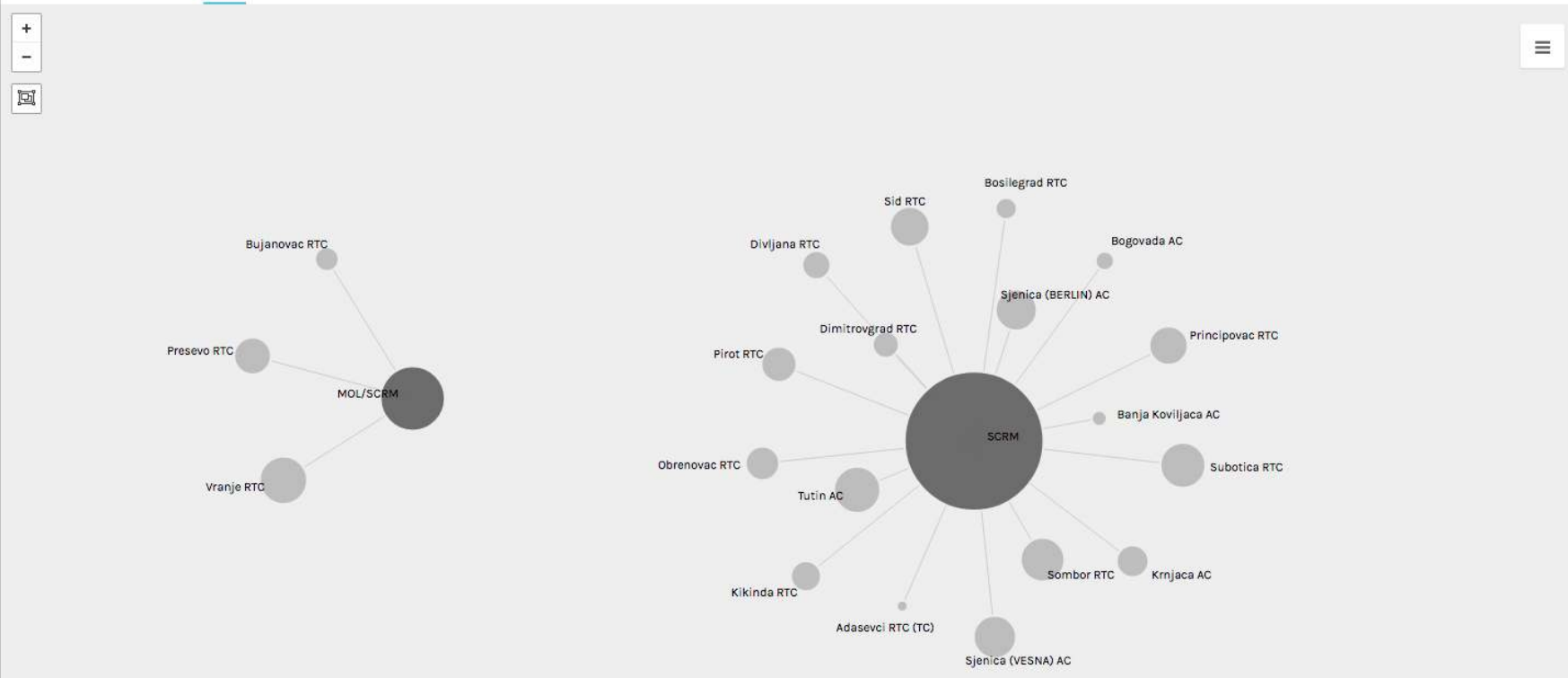
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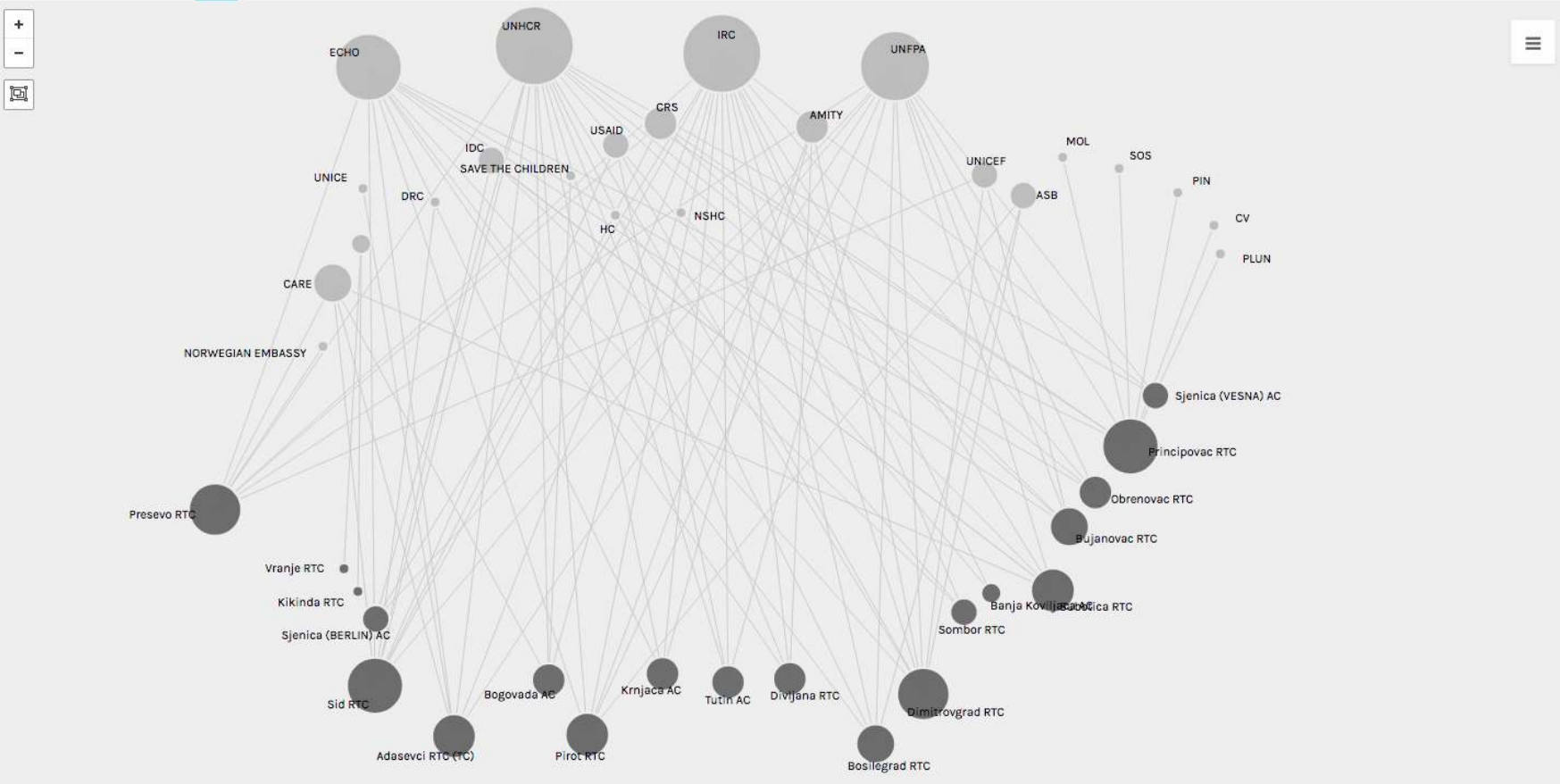
Tutin AC
Sombor RTC
Krnjaca AC
Kikinda RTC
Adasevci RTC (TC)
Sjenica (VESNA) AC

PREVIOUS USAGE / MANAGEMENT / DONORS

GRAPH.5: Previous Usage / GRAPH.6: Public/Private / GRAPH.7: Management

Asylum, transit and reception centres were opened using existing infrastructures. Several former factories were used to accommodate people on the move. In Sjenica, the so-called »Berlin« AC was, and still remains, a hotel in which asylum seekers were accommodated in common spaces at the ground floor and in the hall upstairs without any respect towards privacy and national standards for the accommodation of asylum seekers. This has been also the first form of public-private cooperation in the country. The owner of the hotel, through an agreement with the municipality, received up to eight euros per person per day from the municipality of Sjenica,[5] which had a further agreement with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (see Ahmetasevic 2017).

5 | The same daily budget was also given to Tutin (2014), Bogovadja (2013), Krnjaca (2014). This data was acquired in an interview and shared by a colleague.



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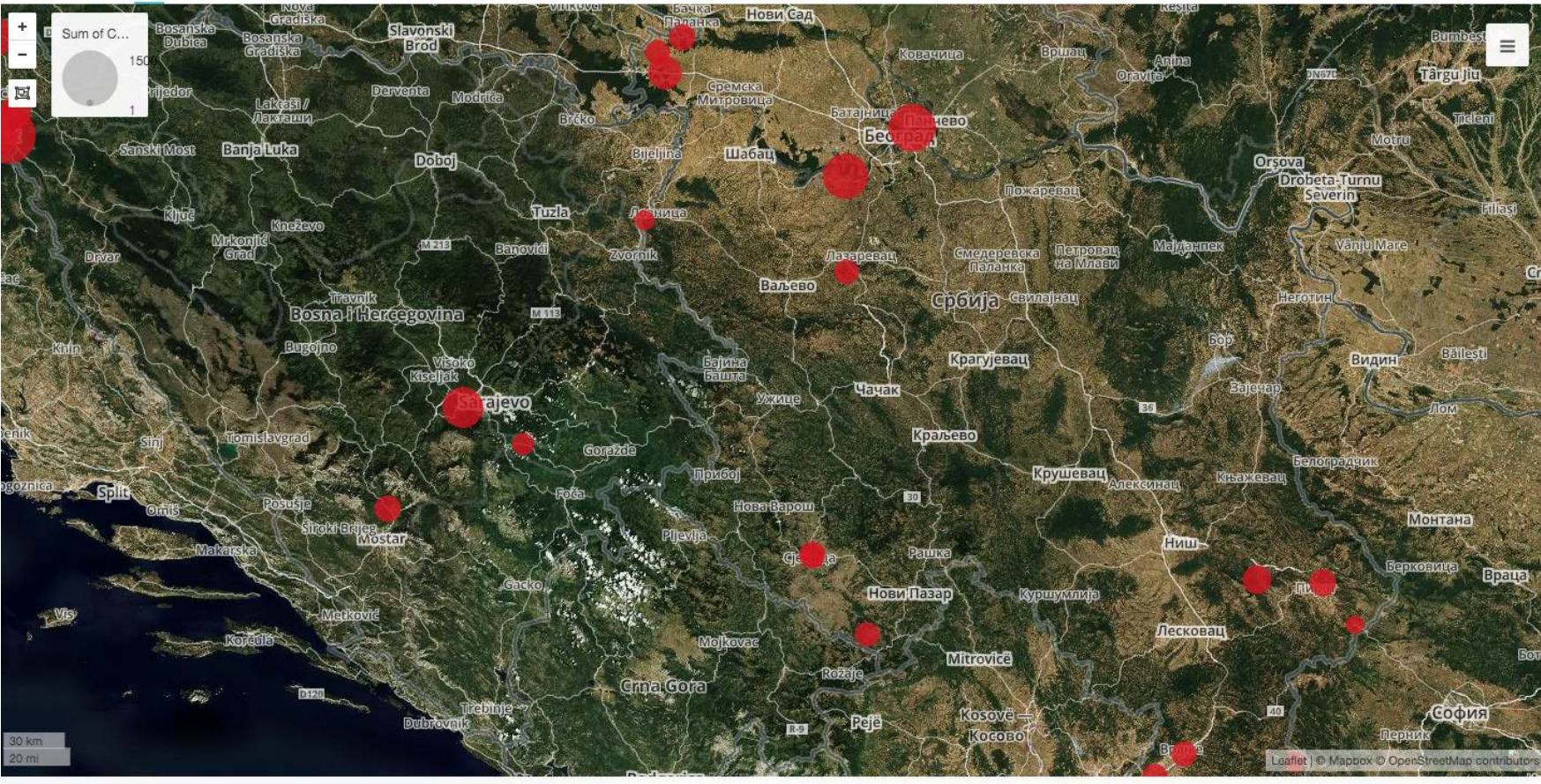
GRAPH.8: Donors and Organisations in 2017

It is difficult to reconstruct the meandering network of funding linking the EU institutions with UN agencies and international and local NGOs. In the graph the main donors are displayed in light grey and the camps in dark grey. The graph has been realised with data made available by UNHCR camp profiles. The main donors are ECHO, UNHCR, UN Funds for Population and Activities (UNFPA), and International Rescue Committee (IRC) and those actors are all linked to major EU funding. Such data is only available for 2017. Since 2018, Oxfam has also played an important role as leader of the food consortium financed by the EU with an approximate budget of initially 3.5 million euros in 2018 and additional 8.5 million in 2019.



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MAP.10: CONCLUDING LINES

From 2015 to 2017, the EU has allocated more than 130 million euros to Serbia to deal with the so-called migration crisis.

From 2018, Serbia has received a total of 58 million euros, 28 million for border management and 16 million for camps, with the addition of 14 million for food inside the camps, despite the significantly decreasing numbers of people in the country.

From 2018 to the beginning of 2019, the EU has allocated two million euros in emergency assistance, plus 7.2 million euros assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina through UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations.

In both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, these funds have been used to erect and rehabilitate new and old factories, motels, recreational centres, mental hospitals, private villas, and army barracks.

These funds have been used to contain and hold thousand of people in legal and humanitarian limbos outside of the EU-territory without any clear alternative or a future solution to their struggles.

The EU continues to invest millions of euros making sure the rights to mobility, residency and dignity are rights made for just a few and struggle for most!

The aim remains clear: these places must close! It is not only a theoretical issue anymore; containment camps are all around us, and we cannot just continue to write about it.

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Deported Man, Secured State

A Long Trajectory of a Deportation

EMINA BUŽINKIĆ

Abstract: This paper represents a documentation of the arrest, detention, and deportation of Abdeljalil Daraibou, a non-EU national whose four years in, and recent removal from, Croatia mirror the workings of the current European migration regime. The banality of violence embedded in current securitization practices has strong implications for the lives of migrants and refugees, as demonstrated in this ethnographic narrative. This text should be regarded as a contribution to better understand the current European migration regime and its constitutive elements, such as deportations and the detriments they left behind. This intervention comes with the hope for an increasing critical interrogation of our crude realities that necessitate a stronger presence of solidarity and direct political action.

Keywords: Deportation, criminalization, police violence

> The word banish rhymes with vanish. Through banishment or deportation there is the literal threat of invisibility. Not only when the event is concretized, but in the anguish and uncertainty leading to that.
> —Margaret Randall, »Threatened with Deportation« (1987)

In the early summer of 2018, Abdeljalil Daraibou was deported to Morocco by the Croatian authorities. He stepped onto Moroccan soil in his pajamas and in flip-flops. It has been four years since he left on one of those long and perilous journeys across the Mediterranean and the Balkans. With a cramp in his stomach and over-flooding fear, Abdeljalil was put in the police car that took him from the airport to the authorities of the region that he had left. It had been less than a day before he was moved from one prison to another. His deportation was unexpected because the Croatian deportation policies are murky waters. It had not come to public attention that there were accounts of deportations, most notably because the Croatian police were shrinking their deportation budget while expanding their securitization projects in corroboration with the European Union and the Schengen security policies. The deportation of Abdeljalil came as a surprise due to a lack of transparency regarding the circumstances under which such a procedure could be executed; but also not surprising whatsoever regarding the widespread grammar of securitization that intertwines

profiling, policing, surveillance and banishment—all the experiences which Abdeljalil had gone through. This intervention discusses a single case of deportation in its last steps as a sequence of events representing the political technology of deportation, which operates with a legal and regulatory logic of the current securitization regime despite apparent and canny violations of rights. In this paper, I argue that deportation operates as an extended arm of detention and surveillance and, even more so, as a deliberate act of dehumanization.

Writing this narrative has been an integrative part of my fieldwork that took place throughout January and February of 2019 in Morocco—the country where Abdeljalil originates from. The ethnographic research consisted of conversations with Abdeljalil as well as an analysis of the official documentations issued in his case by the Croatian political institutions. The fieldwork has been a continuation of my involvement in previous legal aid and psycho-social support provided in Croatia with the Centre for Peace Studies and the Welcome! Initiative between April 2015 and May 2018, when he was deported. I took part in almost all the instances of support provided to Abdeljalil, who was coping with the complexity and rigidity of the Croatian migration and asylum policies. Documenting this experience represented emotional distress, both for Abdeljalil and myself, as we found ourselves not knowing what exactly we could do for him to receive justice.

The Long Trajectory of Deportation

Last June, I received a tearful phone call from Abdeljalil. He called from the police station in the southern region of his country of origin to tell me that the Croatian authorities had deported him. It was two weeks since we last saw each other in the detention center *Prihvatni centar za strance* in Ježevo, just kilometers away from the Croatian capital Zagreb. After more than three years of fighting the system in Croatia, seeking for justice and for his voice to be heard, his passport was stamped with a denial of entry to Croatia and the European Union for the duration of five years. Weighing twenty kilograms less than when he arrived in Croatia, Abdeljalil was desperate and angry at the Croatian institutions. Until today, his only hope remains with the damage compensation proceeding he and his lawyer started last year at the European Court for Human Rights based on the violation of Article 2 of the European Convention for Human Rights (right to life).

Abdeljalil's trajectory in Croatia started in March 2015, when the police stopped him and three co-travelers while crossing the Serbian-Croatian border. Months of travels across Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia engraved in his memory the

accounts of repeated detention, police brutality and sexual violence, crude smuggling across the borders, criminal offenses and imprisonment coupled with grueling cold nights and days out in the open. Unlike the first time, when he and his companions were taken off a train just before the Serbian-Croatian border, they acted more strategically in their decision on when and how to cross it the second time. Crossing the border and hopping on one of the trucks at the large parking lot of the gas station were slightly easier this time. An hour later, the police opened the truck and found the four men because the truck drivers noticed them and informed the police. The long journey with yet another layer of unexpected and unpleasant events was about to start.

The police took Abdeljalil and his three companions into custody at the border police station of the border crossing *Bajakovo*. They sought asylum, but the police officer kept telling them that there was no asylum for them in Croatia for they would be expelled and often added the curse *jebiga* (engl. fuck it). Four desperate men behind the locked doors loudly expressed their will to seek asylum, but their plea fell to deaf ears. As they demanded release, they lit a little fire and threatened to self-immolate, hoping this act would be the key for unlocking the door. The fire spread unexpectedly to the matrices in the room and, all of a sudden, the whole space was on fire critically harming all four men. One of them burned to death in the cell before the police unlocked the door, and two were severely injured and died on the way to the hospital. Abdeljalil was the only survivor as he was able to cover his body with a blanket and break a hole in the ceiling by hitting his head against it, which made it possible for him to escape the worst of the tragedies. With entirely burned hands and lower legs, Abdeljalil passed out and woke up in a hospital where he spent months in recovery. The tragic event that included the death of his three friends and massive injuries to his own person affected his ability to talk, memorize, and socialize. This condition was also enhanced by police presence: the officers did not take their eyes off of him all the while he was in the hospital. Abdeljalil talks about those days without hiding his disappointment of, and surprise by, the police inaction:

> »I stayed in a hospital for more than three months. Police was with me all the time. They were telling me that I killed my friends. They didn't give me to talk to my family. Everyone who comes to visit their family looked at me as a criminal being surrounded with the police. Also the TV channels were full of explosions and the terrorist attacks. They were showing me this all the time. They wouldn't give me the remote control, so I was hiding under the blanket.« (Abdeljalil, personal interview, 07.02.2019)

As soon as he showed some signs of recovery, the police wanted to take him to the detention center. However, Abdeljalil begged the police not to return him to the detention center and requested access to a reception center for asylum seekers. He was able to file his application and was transferred to *Prihvatilište za tražitelje azila*, the so-called *Porin* in Zagreb—to a room on the third floor with no electricity and no other asylum seekers present. There was no medical assistance to replace his bandages, and he would rarely eat because he was too weak to walk to the kitchen where they served food. Only sometimes the other asylum seekers would bring him food. His asylum application was rapidly rejected, and, accordingly, he had to leave the country. Abdeljalil remembers that liquid oozed out of his wounds and that he was in severe pain when he decided to get better treatment elsewhere. He lost his patience, and the circumstances brought him to Slovenia, where he spent seven months in the asylum reception center and in hospitals being treated for tuberculosis, respiratory issues, and overall body pain. While being in Slovenia, the Croatian police visited him a few times. »Quite oddly«, Abdeljalil remembers, »they said I needed to come back to Croatia. They also said they would help me. It was a person dressed as a civilian that came with a translator« (ibid.). One day, special Slovenian police officers clothed in uniforms that only revealed their eyes entered his room and returned him to Croatia under the Dublin regulation. Croatian authorities detained Abdeljalil for six months and one day, before the police issued documentation ordering his removal from the European Economic Area (EEA) and giving him 30 days to leave the country. While in detention, his health deteriorated even more, particularly his mental health, as he was under constant surveillance and pressure. He had no access to communication with his family and rarely had an opportunity to communicate with the external world unless visitors would access the detention center, such as the legal aid experts or psychologists engaged in supporting Abdeljalil. While in *Ježevo* detention, he filed another two applications for asylum, none of which brought him to the reception center for asylum seekers *Porin* as it is designated by the Asylum Act (The Law on Temporary and International Protection, 2018, article 53). At the end of 2016, Abdeljalil had his appeal rejected by the Administrative Court, the second instance decision body. Finally, in March 2017, almost two full years after he stepped on Croatian ground, he was released from *Ježevo* with the document stating his scheduled administrative removal from the EEA within 30 days. Abdeljalil allegedly signed the document, claiming that he would voluntarily leave Croatia. However, Abdeljalil convincingly speaks of never signing such a document, hence the Centre for Peace Studies, authorized by Abdeljalil, requested all the allegedly signed documents in April 2017. Up until today, the Centre for Peace Studies has never received any official documentation from the authorities.

After leaving *Ježevo*, the bitter taste of freedom became even more bitter only a few days later when he got beaten by three club security guards in Zagreb, who threw him out of a club for no other apparent reasons than his skin color. The ambulance found him in the street and transferred him to the emergency room where he was diagnosed with a fractured nose, broken spinal bones, and an epileptic seizure. Less than seven hours after the incident, the medical staff officially stated that the patient's overall condition was normal and released him into the company of the police. For no particular reason, he was taken to *Porin* from which he was evicted a few days later. After a few days of sleeping in the streets, the self-organized volunteers of the Welcome Initiative and friends gathered financial means to cover Abdeljalil's future stays in hostels and apartments.

Facilitated by the Centre for Peace Studies, Abdeljalil authorized a lawyer to support his application submission in order to receive a temporary permission of stay based on humanitarian reasons and including a significant time delay due to his inability to register with a local address as legally requested. Some of the apartment owners were unwilling to provide Abdeljalil an address and felt insecure because he had an irregular status. Eventually, there was one person that was wholeheartedly willing to register Abdeljalil with her address.

The request for a humanitarian appeal was however denied in August 2017 on the basis of a previously issued opinion of the intelligence *Sigurnosno-obavještajna agencija (SOA)* that had declared Abdeljalil Daraibou a threat to national security. »I told them during the interview that I was aware that the intelligence said I represented a threat, but I told them that I was no threat whatsoever«, Abdeljalil states. The Ministry of the Interior issued a *Return Document* banishing Abdeljalil from staying in Croatia after 22 November of the same year.

Soon after, the apartment where he was living at the time was sold, and Abdeljalil had to find another solution. He slept everywhere, from street benches to friends' floors, until another apartment owner was willing to let him live in her property. In the months to follow, the police kept their eye on Abdeljalil: they visited Abdeljalil's neighbors and convinced them he was a criminal, which led to neighbors pressuring the owner to expel him from the building. When the designated date of Abdeljalil's departure had passed, the police arrested him and again took him to the detention center *Ježevo* where he was addressed with vulgar language, was pressured in different ways and had to endure physical violence. The Ministry of the Interior rejected the fourth asylum application Abdeljalil submitted while being detained. Moreover, the Ministry of the Interior issued another document declaring a five-year banishment from entering Croatia and the European Union, and the regional state's attorney's office *Općinsko državno odvjetništvo Vukovar* officially filed a criminal charge against

Abdeljalil for a severe crime against the public security (based on the articles 224(4) and 215(1&3) of the Croatian Criminal Act) apparently accusing him for the death of his friends and the fire incident back in September 2015. The trial against Abdeljalil started years later in his absence, soon after his deportation. He is often called to hearings or police interrogations although it is an indisputable fact that he was expelled from the country by the very same authorities.

About a year before he was deported, another lawyer recognized the violation of Article 2 of the European Convention for Human Rights (right to life), which led to Abdeljalil starting a legal proceeding against the Republic of Croatia at the European Court for Human Rights with her support. As the Centre for Peace Studies and the lawyer corroborated in preparing documentation for his application, the police did not release any requested information or documentation on the criminal charges raised against Abdeljalil, claiming the investigation was still open and information was to be kept secret. Moreover, access to camera recordings or visits to the border police station and the cell where the incident happened were denied. Apart from that, the hospital where Abdeljalil was treated after the fire was not willing to release his medical record. While none of the Croatian institutions that could and should be held responsible for Abdeljalil's trajectory were cooperative, his case went through the admission procedure of the European Court for Human Rights and is currently pending before the court.

Criminalized and Banished

Ever since Abdeljalil irregularly entered Croatia, due to a lack of legal and safe pathways *nota bene*, he was labeled a criminal. The label stuck with him ever since he left his country of origin and was inscribed into him on every step of the way. Particularly the fire incident reified an ›enemizing‹ logic by accusing him of committing the serious criminal offense of killing three travel companions and harming police officers. On multiple occasions, a convergence of criminal and immigration law was displayed in his case, reaching from the presence of police officers in his hospital recovery room aligned with the screening of terrorist violence on television, over the explicit mentioning of his alleged ›terrorist blood‹, up to the physical abuse he was subjected to by the police in the detention. These labels, created under the choreography of ›enemizing‹, were strongly present in all of his asylum-seeking procedures that were mostly rejected in a fast-track manner and completely disregarded international humanitarian law and domestic asylum law regarding individual cases that oppose hasty conclusions based on racial profiling or discriminating people accord-

ing to their country of origin. Furthermore, his request for a temporary stay based on humanitarian reasons was rejected on the grounds of intelligence authorities that represented Abdeljalil a threat to national security, despite him not having performed any action that would display evidence of such intention, let alone action. The state has as well undertaken steps to label Abdeljalil a convicted criminal in his absence, reminding him of his ›unwantedness‹ as a racialized other.

Besides the police violence and the structural barriers imposed by political institutions, Abdeljalil was more than once the target of criminalizing actions; these include the truck drivers informing the police about migrants hiding among the goods that have a higher probability to cross borders than actual people, the medical staff denying to share information on the patient's treatment with Abdeljalil's lawyers, legal experts and psychologists, the neighbors being under police pressure and evicting Abdeljalil from the apartment building, the club security guards who beat him to the point of severe damage of his brain and bones, the medical doctors who released him from the hospital with a diagnosis claiming a regular health condition after the unpleasing incident and the police escort accompanying him out of the hospital. Abdeljalil has been cast out from society, both by state actors and ordinary people, and even by asylum seekers who often neglected his basic human needs and the fact that they could have been likely treated similarly. The recurrent violence and marginalization of Abdeljalil has undoubtedly been the core of the racism he was subjected to ever since he was turned into a deportable subject at the beginning of his journey. The criminalization of Abdeljalil was only interrupted by self-organizing individuals and groups, who provided support to his endeavors and were willing to reach justice, whether through legal and judicial proceedings, through the collection of financial means, by ensuring accommodation, or standing with him in solidarity.

The individual example I decided to focus on is not an isolated case, but rather a representation of a detrimental policy. The relentless practices of deportation can hardly be investigated as a separate phenomenon for they are heavily enmeshed in the overall ideological design of the European securitization regime and its' gradually unfolding, unpredictable ramifications. Deportations should not be reduced to singular events that expel people from territories, but must be considered as complex mechanisms with many chronological steps that each display an exhausting exertion of power onto the lives of migrants over the course of many years, as explicated with the case of Abdeljalil.

Authors

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Civil initiative **Info Kolpa** started in the spring of 2018 as a response to illegal actions of Slovene police, which started systematically denying people the right to seek asylum in Slovenia and pushing people back to Croatia. In the autumn of 2018, we established an informal telephone number for assistance to people wishing to seek asylum in Slovenia. The help we provided proved unsuccessful but with operating the number, we gained a lot of information on practice of push-backs on Slovene-Croatian border, which we presented to Slovene and international public.

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The **Push-Back Map Collective** is a transnational group of people that come from different fields of radical politics like feminism, anti-capitalism, and anti-racist struggles. Its members are active in documenting and counteracting push-backs and violence at the internal and external(ised) borders of the EU. One main goal of the mapping project is to provide a platform for transnational, non-hierarchical, radical grassroots interventions and exchange.

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