SOLIDARITY AND (IM)MOBILITY ON THE 'BALKAN ROUTE'

DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE MIGRATION SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN BELGRADE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to scrutinize the question, how the material, social, political, educational, economic, and national backgrounds and privileges of international and local volunteers, activists and NGO workers supporting migrants on the 'Balkan route' differentially and unequally capacitates them in claiming, resisting or submitting to different stratified structures of power and inequality. Who is telling whom how and why to support people on the move? Who collaborates with whom, how and why, or why not?

Although one might be inclined to assume that shared motivations and intentions are what unifies people with different backgrounds in this movement which programmatically has been called 'horizontal solidarity' (e.g. Rajaram 2015), I will argue that within the field of migration support, however spontaneously enacted or deeply structured, long standing inequalities are being reproduced along similar lines as the European continent is stratified internally. These include not only North-South and East-West divides, but more complex and deeply rooted differences based on material, social, political, educational, economic, and national backgrounds.

Qualitative ethnographic analysis of volunteer's backgrounds and aspirations, as well as the success or lack of collaboration among individuals and groups will serve as the basis on which to differentiate what is often being understood as an all-too homogeneous group of people. Through interviews with volunteers, activists and NGO workers as well as not only participant observation but working along with different groups in the areas in which they are operating, I gained the necessary understanding that underlines my argument. To limit the scope of this thesis, my research area is restricted to the operations of volunteer, activist and NGO groups in Belgrade, Serbia over the time of three month in early 2016.

INTRODUCTION

"What is happening in Europe is not a refugee crisis. It is a reception crisis, a solidarity crisis." Dimitris Christopoulos, Professor at Panteion University and Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights

The recent increase of movement of people fleeing from war and political, economic and gendered violence as well as social and material deprivation through Eastern and South Eastern European regions, the so-called 'Balkan route', was met with a smaller movement of people in the other direction, namely the ones who gathered in support of those seeking survival and protection. The hundreds of supporters throughout Europe, who engage in humanitarian aid and political activism in an effort at strengthening the uprooted positions of migrants, often (but not always) self-identify as 'volunteers'. Since June 2015, when the influx of people crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece started to increase dramatically, hundreds of groups of supporters formed throughout Europe. Mapping European state's territories from Greece to Greenland, and from Bulgaria to Belgium, political and popular discourses on the dehumanizing, racializing and depoliticizing treatment and framing of migrants along all routes mobilized thousands of residents in Europe (and beyond), among them many (former) migrants, to scrutinize simplified notions of the arriving people's identities, characters, needs, motives and visions. Furthermore, long established critical debates on European values of democracy, equality and freedom and their relation to migration and border regimes were appropriated not only by those considering themselves political activists but also by many who understand themselves as humanitarian aid workers. Simplified narratives, such as migrants posing an economic burden to receiving states and the anxiety over heightened risks of terrorism, through which ever more restrictive legal and material, but also social, political and economic border regimes have been legitimized along and within nation-states, were made visible mostly by the

many supporters, who tirelessly continue to engage in reporting, public speaking, scrutinizing and debating, while at the same time handing out blankets, preparing food or raising funds. But who are these volunteers and activists? Where do they come from? How do they understand their roles? What are their motivations?

By looking more closely into the composition of support structures in one locality on the 'Balkan route', the aim of this thesis is not only to shed light on the diversity of personal histories and motivations of volunteers and activists. More importantly, the aim is to analyze how actors from different national, educational, economic, social and political backgrounds negotiate how to best support migrants on their journey and how they collaborate with each other and among different groups. This focus has become relevant more recently, as numerous social scientific studies embarked on analyzing and documenting what has largely been identified as a transnational solidarity movements (Cantat 2015, Kallius et al. 2016, Rajaram 2015, Herzfeld 2016, Papataxiarchis 2016, Rakopoulos 2016, Rozakou 2016, Cabot 2016, Theodossopoulos 2016). Departing from a similar vantage point, this contribution intends to take part in current debates on how the 'transnational' of 'transnational solidarity' is structured and asks how 'transnational solidarity' is being practiced in one locality. Therefore, this thesis explores ethnographically, how different modes of support, humanitarian and political as they may be, are revoking, challenging and (re-)producing stratified structures of power and inequality across borders. The questions guiding this thesis are: How do different migration support groups, volunteers, activists or NGOs relate to each other in Belgrade? Who collaborates with whom and why or why not and what are the effects thereof? And what are the everyday practices that migrant supporters are involved in?

This thesis seeks to approach the above mentioned questions from three different angles. The first chapter answers the question how 'solidarity' has been explored in recent social anthropological literature on the present migration support movement in Southern and Eastern

Europe. On this basis, it both engages with a more general theoretical analysis as well as approaching the topic through the lens of particular ethnographic examples how groups of local and international volunteers, activists, and employees of NGOs relate to each other and to migrants during the time of my research in Belgrade. The chapter concludes by noting that hierarchies do not necessarily only exist between those who give and those who receive support, but among the supporters, too. Furthermore, the kinds of hierarchies which emerged, might have more to do with intra-European stratifications of power and inequality than with questions relating to the division of humanitarian aid and political activism.

The second chapter bridges the (not only geographical) distance between Germany to Serbia, by questioning how the definition, production, and governance of mobility and immobility, of movement and stagnation, tie into the (re)production of the hierarchies mentioned above. Analytical studies on mobility and immobility build the conceptual backbone of and inspiration for the critical elaborations on not only who but what can or cannot move (e.g. Hannam et al. 2006). Excerpts of interviews about how migrations supporters think about the current situation in Belgrade in relation to Europe or the European Union, attempt to bridge the distance the other way around, from Serbia to Germany, while highlighting that even though the Serbian volunteers cannot physically move, their perception of and relation to the place where other volunteers come from certainly does. The third part of chapter two poses as a window into the everyday work of supporting migrants on their route towards Western Europe, from a perspective of my personal experience. It concludes with an elaboration on pain, which moves from body to body while it is being shared, and which builds one basis on which sociality (or solidarity) between migrants, activists, volunteers and NGO employees is being built.

The third chapter looks empirically and selectively into how specific groups working in migration support in Belgrade collaborate. It destabilizes the division between humanitarian aid and political activism and highlights that additional differences are productive of divisions

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between groups, who generally all share the same goals. Questions of giving and helping are dynamic and constantly being renegotiated in fast changing situations. The practical (re)formulation of who deserves what and on what basis is often contextually tied and temporally short-living. The chapter concludes by arguing that the way Western European political activist groups hold onto their own perceptions of what is morally 'good' and politically 'just' while they are somewhere else, is sometimes being employed to subordinate other local ways of reasoning. This in turn, resonates with patterns of colonizing the moral space of the 'other'.

There are multiple shortcomings to this study and many possible directions of research which could have been taken. First, it is not a study about refugees or migration, but about those who work in solidarity with people who migrate. Second, it is not an ethnography of Belgrade or Serbia. Third, for lack of space and time, it ignores historical and theoretical genealogies of solidarity as a contextualized practice of social exchange and care in Serbia as well as an analytical concept in social scientific literature. Fourth, there would be innumerable other questions who are equally interesting to explore, for example how left-leaning activist groups who usually call for uniting in resistance, now call to unite in solidarity, while solidarity is being understood as resistance. Or how Serbians who work in NGOs would like to work as activists, but cannot because they lack the financial means to sustain a life without a salary, unlike many of the predominantly Western European international activists. Or how supporters of people on the move relate to and work with and against those we call smugglers as well as with local authorities like the police or the agency responsible for managing refugee reception and detention camps. Or how different organizations, including UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Agency for Refugees) deal with the question of protecting unaccompanied minors in theory and practice. Or what questions could be raised in relation to spatiality and temporality when talking to an Afghan woman in Belgrade, negotiating about

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money with her uncle in Afghanistan, informing her brother in law in Germany about where and how she is, while her younger brother is in jail in Hungary, her parents are stuck in Bulgaria, her husband was killed in Pakistan, and her child drowned in the Aegean sea between Turkey and Greece.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

From July to September 2015 thousands of people on the move were forced to wait inside the Keleti train station and the surrounding parks in Budapest, Hungary, before continuing their journey onwards, as a result of ever increasing border restrictions imposed by EU and Hungarian policies. It was during this time that I became a volunteer at Keleti train station and a member of Migszol, the Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary. Additionally, I started to 'follow' more than forty groups of volunteers and activists online, who engaged in mobilizing support throughout the 'Balkan route'. Furthermore, I conducted ethnographic research in Belgrade, Serbia, over a period of three months in early 2016. Belgrade is a central spot on the 'Balkan route', where hundreds of migrants continue to arrive on a daily basis despite the official border closings along the entire 'Balkan route' in February 2016. As part of my research, I volunteered with various organizations, among them autonomous support structures, recently established migration aid associations, and official NGO's.

The backbone of this study is based on participant observation.

At the beginning of my stay in Belgrade, and to get a broad overview of different positions and motivations of migrant supporters, I carried out a survey among thirty two aid workers, migrant supporters and activists who work in the parks and on the streets of Belgrade on a daily basis. The survey questions were divided in three parts: first, personal information and employment or volunteering position and time of involvement in migration support; second, responsibilities, tasks and capacities of employment or volunteering position, and forms of collaboration and

information sharing within and between different groups; third, personal experience, motivation, difficulties, and frustrations in working in migrant support. To deepen my understanding of the different positions various migrant supporters maintained, as well as the motivations and frustrations that accompanied their work, I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews and engaged in numerous informal discussions with people who work at the basis of migration support. I did not focus on talking to those in leading positions in NGOs, instead my focus was to understand how migration support works on the street. The results from the survey helped me to gain an overview of the existing structures and positions. The answers I collected, would in themselves be enough material for a second thesis, therefore they are not included here. Collectively, all the above mentioned levels of engagement build the basis on which the arguments put forward in this thesis is founded.

CHAPTER ONE

DEBATES ON SOLIDARITY: POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND HUMANITARIAN AID

"Our action is to help people in situations of crisis. And ours is not a contented action. Bringing medical aid to people in distress is an attempt to defend them against what is aggressive to them as human beings. Humanitarian action is more than simple generosity, simple charity. It aims to build spaces of normalcy in the midst of what is profoundly abnormal. More than offering material assistance, we aim to enable individuals to regain their rights and dignity as human beings (...). Our action and our voice is an act of indignation, a refusal to accept an active or passive assault on the other."

The 1999 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Dr James Orbinski, President of the Médecins sans frontières International Council (cited in Redfield 2005: 328)

NORMALIZING THE 'OTHER'

It is evening on a day in late February, dusk is obscuring the small park with its few trees and grass patches, Gyros stands selling halal pork (sic!) Kebabs, and the two-floored car-parking hiding the main street. Blue illuminated displays announce the Hotel President, where patrol teams of a legal aid and protection NGO called Praxis usually meet. Large gray tarpaulins distributed to migrants by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Agency for Refugees) and thick checkered polyester blankets are covering parts of the ground. Migrants[1] are arranging their belongings for the night, moving closely together, hiding bags

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[1] I use the term migrant to refer to all the people on the move in search of protection, be this protection from war or from economic deprivation and austerity. I am aware of the fact that the terms refugee and migrant, as well as asylum seeker, are legitimate to describe specific positions in relation to state apparatuses and national

under the blankets, leaving shoes outside and smoking the last cigarettes before going to sleep. My colleagues from Praxis and me are crossing the 'Afghani park' in Belgrade, like many other times on our route through specific areas of the town, where migrants often arrive. A german fellow walks up to us, four big silver thermos jugs in his hands, and my colleague asks him who he is, "Silvan[2] from Germany", he replies. "So are you a volunteer?" my colleague asks, "no, not quite" Silvan answers squinching up his face, "I don't like the term volunteer, it does not represent what I do". "So what do you do?" my colleague asks, "I do more activism, my work is more political, you know? I don't like the paternalist and apolitical approaches of volunteers and NGO's, you know". "So what is it that you do?" Silvan answers: "We try to support refugees on their journey to Europe, helping them with information and other support, we make tea every morning and evening and bring it to the park". "Hm, so what is the difference between what you do and what we do?" I ask. "We are trying to act in solidarity with the people we are supporting, we are fighting a common struggle together". "Okay, and what common struggle do you fight?" "We try to show that this is a political crisis and not a humanitarian crisis. We try to include the underlying common struggle against capitalist exploitation and neoliberal forms of governance. We act against the increasing police repression and surveillance systems for example." "And how do you do that?" "For example, we would like to organise seminars or panel discussions to raise awareness against racism in Serbia. We have the impression that Serbians are not aware of the racist behavioral patterns influencing their actions and the way they relate to migrants." "Hm, ok, so… anyway, ahm… lets meet tomorrow and talk some more, ok?" I was puzzled and needed to reflect on what I

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legal frameworks. Hence, migrant is designated to refer to people currently migrating to Europe, independently of the reasons for doing so. I will therefore also refrain from using economic migrant and refugee as two distinct categories.

For an elaboration on the politico-economic distinction between refugee and economic migrant see: Apostolova, Raia. 2015. "Economic vs. political: Violent abstractions in Europe's refugee crisis." FocaalBlog, 10 December.

[2] All names have been changed, unless the person explicitly wished to be named. In this case it is stated otherwise.

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just heard. My Serbian colleagues were slightly annoyed: "These Germans, why do they always want to teach us something? Why do they think they know better?"

Like many others before him, Silvan, a tall man in his early twenties with blond rastas and glasses, faded blue jeans and worn out green sneakers hitchhiked to Serbia just a few days before this exchange took place. As a sociology and psychology student from Northern Germany, he was involved in anarchist self-organization and forms of protest and mobilization well established in the context where he comes from. Although, also in his home locale, radical left-wing political positions are not representing a majority and are often reserved for people close to art and academia. Still, a vibrant community of supporters of this kind of organizing exists. Since last summer, when migration became a pressing issue also in Western Europe, Silvan was part of a Western European, mostly German, group of people who started to travel to different places in South-Eastern Europe to support migrants on the move. Their support was always multi-layered and organized cross-country wide along parts of the 'Balkan route'. The kind of support and structure they established varied with the people who participated in projects. According to their self-description, they travel to places along the 'Balkan route' to "support the organization and networking of independent structures", to "allow people to show a glimpse of who they are and want to be in normal circumstances".

How do they assume that people on the move are other than themselves and how can the activists contribute to them being themselves? This echoes the public positioning of many left-leaning organizations and projects throughout Europe directed at alleviating the marginalizing practices of states against migrants. But, interestingly, the quote at the beginning of this chapter, which was issued by Dr James Orbinski, President of the Médecins sans frontières International Council in 1999, where he says that MSF wants to "build spaces of normalcy in the midst of what is profoundly abnormal" (cited in Redfield 2005: 328) echoes similar goals. Thus, to understand in what the two obviously incomparable organizations differ - one long standing

and formally professionalized, the other informal and based on short-term voluntary participation of interested activists - it is important to look at the everyday practices they employ. MSF as well as the legal aid NGO Praxis in Belgrade, which is funded by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and with both of whom I was collaborating, are hierarchically structured, rely on international donors, understand their practices mostly as services and have employed staff. The German group, as I will call them for reasons of simplicity, on the other hand understands its practices as acts of solidarity, friendship and exchange, insofar as both sides are claimed to gain from the social ties they are establishing with migrants and other fellow activists. But, they equally rely on international donors in order to be able to engage in migrant support activities, though, they claim that their money comes from private individuals and associations who position themselves ideologically and politically in similar terms.

Another point in which the two groups differ is that the moral positioning of the German group in relation to other support organizations makes them unable to closely collaborate with other actors in the same field. Their political position, which allows them to claim a moral ground superior and more humane than the one of NGO's and other volunteer groups, makes them become exclusionary in terms of collaboration. Only those who share their ethico-political stance are welcomed into their group. As a group of foreigners in Serbia, this has crucial consequences and leads me to ask the following questions. How are those moral positions, which are diverse and contested inside the group but appear as united to the outside, being normatively implemented to demarcate the 'good' activist from the 'bad' activist who is too much humanitarian? And how is this tied to questions of sociality, the reproduction of the nation and the state (or the European Union, for that matter) and structural inequalities based on power relations between those who give and those who receive? And, from another perspective, what is the wider context of support structures in which their aspirations take place?

Before engaging ethnographically more in depth into how diverse practices of support play out in a field of multiple actors in Belgrade, I will illustrate how questions of solidarity in the context of migration have been analyzed in recent anthropological literature. In order to understand the current local specificities of migration support in different contexts, it is vital to historicize processes and transformations of public sociality and patterns of social relatedness and look at their evolvement in relation to past and present localized transformations of the nation-state and its global embeddedness. This, unfortunately lies beyond the possibilities of this thesis, but poses a task for further investigation. Thus, I will limit the discursive engagement of this thesis with the broader anthropological debate to recently published analyses of solidarity movements related to activities who took place during the last few years in relation to migration support on the 'Balkan route'.

NORMALIZING SOLIDARITY

In recently published anthropological literature on the so-called 'refugee-crisis', which I conceive as a crisis of politics revealing long standing global inequalities rather than a humanitarian crisis, the political force formed by individuals uniting in solidarity with migrants is often being understood in opposition to a "ready willingness of European citizens to subcontract their right to decide on moral and ethical behavior to the state" (Rajaram 2015, focaalblog). In contrast to legitimizing state-centered politics of intervention, "[t]hese acts - for example, helping people cross borders and, in Hungary, sheltering them in homes - stretch relations of solidarity and ethics beyond that desired by the state, actively question its protection racket character, and re-politicize the situation" (Rajaram 2015, focaalblog). Prem Kumar Rajaram conceptualizes these new bonds of solidarity as 'horizontal modes of politics', in opposition to and undermining vertical state norms, questioning the polarizing discourses on migrants being a threat to European society and identity, and thereby delegitimizing dominant

rhetorics of 'crisis', which allow for national emergency responses to be pronounced in a 'state of exception'. "Activists", he argues, "are now pointing at the relations between how states are managing all populations that it defines as troublesome, whether external or internal. (...) They seem to point to the possibility of cultivating new relations and solidarities and break through the obscurantism generated by narratives of crisis" (Rajaram 2015, focaalblog). He further distinguishes between humanitarian activism based on ethics of charity and political activism based on ethics of solidarity, whereby the former is understood to reproduce state-centered hierarchies of intervention, which rely on a depoliticization of the migrant as passive victim upon which the state has to act. The latter, in contrast, is understood to challenge these narratives by acknowledging and strengthening the agency of the migrant, which allows for social bonds between subjects as 'equally human' to become the basis for mutual action and acknowledgement. The difference between conceptualizations of subjects as political and agentive individuals rather than apolitical victims to be acted upon, changes not only the practices, which aim at alleviating disorder and suffering, but poses a basis on which alternative political visions may obtain a space. The shared spaces, in which migrants, activists, and volunteers move, turn into "spaces where horizontal political solidarities were forged, centering on contests over the significance of public space, mobility rights, humanitarian deservingness, and the meanings and scope of volunteer work and activism" (Kallius, Monterescu, Rajaram 2016; on humanitarianism see also Fassin 2001, 2011; Ticktin 2006; Redfield 2005; on volunteerism see also Mühlebach 2012).

In a similar attempt, a recently published special issue of the journal "Social Anthropology" takes practices of solidarity as its central focus and tests its political and ethical implications as an analytical concept as well as an emic idiom of particular socialities. Ethnographically rich and analytically cautious, anthropologists studied how different solidarity initiatives evolved in Greece as a response to the effects of the global financial crisis since 2008, which resulted

in harsh austerity measures taken against Greece since 2011 by the troika (European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)). As a result of the border closures throughout Europe in early 2016, which aimed to stem the movement of migrants, today Greece has to care for over fifty thousand migrants who are currently stuck on its territory, which led to a rise of solidarity practices not only towards impoverished Greeks but also to towards migrants.

Evthymios Papataxiarchis, a Greece based Social Anthropologist, argues that we have to be cautious in deconstructing solidarity as an ideological stance and a set of practices in a time where on the one hand direct support of people in need is undoubtedly indispensable and a critical voice from grassroots and other civil organizations scrutinizing the politico-economic structures which produce this need in the first place is absolutely essential (Papataxiarchis 2016: 209), thereby strengthening Rajaram's programmatic and maybe even hopeful understanding of civil solidarity vis-à-vis states. Nevertheless, it seems important to delineate at least empirically what people mean when they act in solidarity, how the term is used and abused in multiple contexts, ranging from philanthropist humanitarian aid and charity to political activism and anarchist self-organization and to the use of the term by political and commercial associations for the promotion of political or commercial propaganda. Thus, solidarity has to be looked at as an emic concept, an ideological attitude that informs multiple projects and practices, which can sometimes be contradictory. What unites projects and practices under the term solidarity, it seems, is that solidarity inspires everyday practices in a processual way and is temporally tied to life-changing experiences of 'crisis'. Thus, solidarity initiatives in Greece, and I would add the projects I have worked with in Belgrade, are both a response to as well as an effect of 'crisis' (Rakopolous 2016: 148).

Theodoros Rakopoulos, a Norway based social anthropologist, suggests to think of solidarity as a 'bridge-concept', an ideological trait that inspires the relation between sociality and the

self, or the self and the other (Rakopoulos 2016: 142). Despite the fact that in the Greek context solidarity is most often understood as a response to, or the other side of 'crisis' (Cabot 2016), everyday practices of solidarity are rooted in existing value systems and historically linked to localized patterns of segmentary and reciprocal sociality and exchange (see for example Loizos 1975, Herzfeld 1987, Papataxiarchis 2006). Vernacular idioms of relationality and responsibility are being reshuffled, renegotiated and reconfigured. The bridge metaphor holds not only for the relation between society and the self, but also between the society and the state as well as the self and the state. The accelerating atomization and segmentation of society in the context of crisis driven neoliberal austerity measurements, while services are breaking down and salaries and welfare are being cut, leads to a rise of new "modalities of sociality" (Rakopoulos 2016: 143), although perhaps more temporarily. In proposing an understanding of solidarity as a bridge concept, Papataxiarchis situates "people in relation and inter-dependence, and ties the contingencies of the political preset to existing (...) practices of survival and sociality" (Rakopoulos 2016: 143). Furthermore, solidarity practices often lead to reconfigurations of feelings of belonging that "unlike the nation are not grounded [on the idea] of blood relatedness and shared descent" (Rakopoulos 2016: 144). Instead, social practices framed as solidarity often include a political message directed against forms of social, political, economic, gendered, and classed exclusion and marginalization, thereby fostering a link to citizenship in an attempt at re-humanizing marginalized 'others', especially in the context of migration and homelessness. Through social and material exchange, the sharing of food, shelter or medicine, legal information or personal histories, relations of solidarity entail what Rakopoulos describes as a "triumph of identity over alterity" (Rakopoulos 2006: 7). Identification happens in relation to somebody or something, this in turns means that it does not happen in relation to somebody or something else. With whom do different solidarity movements 'identify' and on what grounds?

Formations of solidarity groups and associations create a shared spirit of sociality, within which questions of difference as well as social hierarchies are renegotiated precisely because the bases of their shared sociality are informality and voluntary work. Thus, the everyday relatedness through shared sociality based on voluntary action produces specific and dynamic relations to 'the political'. Some solidarity groups voice concrete political demands and understand themselves as an alternative political force, usually based on principles of consensus based horizontality, self-organization, and directed against structural processes of exclusion, disenfranchisement, exploitation, and de-humanization. The German group I was involved with self-identifies in similar terms. Others openly distance themselves from everything that is considered political, redirecting their attention to questions of the social and of social care, and self-identifying as humanitarian aid volunteers. This applies to three informal associations I was in contact with in Belgrade, all of whom are in a process of official formalization. Despite these crucial differences, all of the groups I worked with issued public statements and engaged in everyday discussions on how to advocate their cause in public discourses. Hence, rather than resorting to unitary frameworks of the 'political', dynamic personal understandings and reflections of people involved are driven by diverse political positions, active participation, and feelings of inclusiveness, which simultaneously foster the potential of empowerment of individual and collective aspirations towards amelioration and tend to also reproduce the status quo of structural inequalities (Rakopoulos 2016, Rozakou 2016).

As introduced above, associations and groups who base their common vision on principles of solidarity often disguise humanitarian aid NGO's and charity organizations. The strongest threads of critique highlight the complicit character of aid organizations with existing structural architectures of power, by minimizing the subjective positions of the people they serve as masses of victims in need, reducing their subjectivities to numbers devoid of agency, thereby reproducing the status quo of a hierarchy between those who give and those who receive

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support without scrutinizing structures of privileges and power. The anecdote presented at the beginning of this chapter ties into this argument in a contradictory but interesting way. Undoubtedly, Silvan and the group of autonomous activists he is a part of unite in solidarity with migrants, challenging de-humanizing practices of the state, which leave migrants devoid of agency or even subjectivity. Their main objectives are to advocate for freedom of movement and the right to self-determination. They raise awareness on state repression and make visible those practices who are aimed at managing and disciplining 'flows' of migrants through segmentation by detaining people in places invisible to the public eye. Simultaneously, the group of German activists in Belgrade positioned itself in relation to a different 'other', those who are local to the place they were working in. Those of whom they thought as not being political enough. Those who were mostly employed by NGO's. Those who did not yet learn, as Silvan stressed, how to recognize their own patterned racisms towards migrants. What kind of hierarchy is being reproduced here in the name of solidarity? What is the process by which a moral ground or a political ideology allows for selective inclusion and exclusion of potential 'others'? An ethnographic description of a few events, which took place in Belgrade during the time of my research, will serve as a basis on which to think about these questions in the third chapter. To understand this context from yet another perspective, the second chapter will introduce debates on questions of mobility and immobility, which are crucial to understand the far-reaching consequences of the possibilities of movement, which are granted to some, while others are prohibited from physically moving by restrictive national and international border and visa policies.

CHAPTER TWO

DEBATES ON IM/MOBILITY: PAIN AND THE 'OTHER'

MOVING CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, mobility and immobility are being conceptualized in a broader way than physical movement of people, things, information and capital. It includes also the movement and stagnation of moral and political attitudes and ideological positions resulting from individual and collective socializations of people within stratified power structures. This thesis attempts to illustrate that legalized, institutionalized and culturally socialized forms of mobility and immobility, produce certain political, economic, social, moral and ideological positions to be more visible than others in the context of migration support networks along the 'Balkan route'. While volunteers and activists from across Europe, including me, move to the Balkans, crossing borders without experiencing them in their capacity to prevent others from moving, their culturally socialized moral and political ideologies do not necessarily move or transform. Instead, they might even become stronger, in a sense that they get immobilized.

Being in a place foreign to one's habits and customs always has manifold effects on a person, one of them might be that having to adjust to multiple external changes in the social and material environment is discomfort enough, so that notions of belonging and attachment, moral orientation and ideological direction are being protected from change. This can be compared to what has been noted in relation to diaspora communities (as well as tourists), for example, which at times develop stronger moral and ideological attachments to their places of origin than the people who live where they were born and raised. If people have learned to relate to their own way of thinking, reflecting, understanding and criticizing as more valuable, more modern, more liberal, more equal, more free, more righteous, and more advanced than 'others', moving to another place can have crucial consequences. To illustrate this link most bluntly, let's be

reminded of the still ongoing histories of colonialism. How this plays out in the context of collaborations (or a lack thereof) between certain groups of migration supporters in Belgrade is the focus of the third chapter.

A growing number of social scientific studies has focused on questions of im/mobility, movement and flow on the one hand, and stagnation, stillness, and waiting on the other, deriving from a wide array of theoretical perspectives and on a plethora of empirical issues (Baerenholdt 2013, Cresswell 2006, 2010, Friedman & Randeria (eds.) 2004, Hage 2009, Hannam et al. 2006, Jensen 2003, Manderscheid et al. 2014, Salter 2013, Sodestrom et al. 2013, Urry 2007). In the launching article of a recently established journal dedicated to im/mobilities, Hannam et al. argue what has by now become bluntly visible and uncontestable, that "[f]ears of illicit movement (…) increasingly determine logics of governance" (2006, 1). Moreover, Frello argues that "[c]ertain conventions govern the conditions of possibility for speaking about mobility but neither materiality nor convention determine exactly what, whether and how an activity is given meaning in terms of 'mobility'" (2008, 31). Then, how are im/mobilities discursively and practically being produced? How, relative to what, and to what end are divisions of movement and stagnation being constructed and contested (Adey 2006)? What are the material circumstances within which movement and stagnation are differentially being identified? And how is mobility not only being governed, but used as a political technology to govern (Baerenholdt 2013, Manderscheid et al. 2014)?

A lack of mobility, stagnation, and dead ends in post-war, pre-European Balkan countries are empirical phenomena as well as conceptual lenses widely brought forward by social scientists (Gilbert 2012, Graan 2013, Greenberg 2010, Helms 2010, Jansen 2006, 2009, 2014, Schwander-Sievers 2013). However, mobility and the lack thereof – spatial and temporal, material and virtual; of people, things, and ideas – are understood to be fundamental to the conditions of possibility of change (Urry 2007). Hence, mobility, flexibility and high rates of

movement are dominantly understood as remedies to overcome stagnation. But, perhaps paradoxically, ever increasing scales and scopes of mobility, have emerged in parallel with new practices and technologies of surveillance, regulation, and control, which more often than not have effects of unequally immobilizing some for the freedom and mobility of others (eg Turner 2007, Salter 2013). Jorgen Baerenholdt, argues, that "much of contemporary politics (…) in the European Union, is about mobility arrangements which often perforate the borders of nation-states, [however,] (...) this takes place precisely within forms of arrangements in which borders are used to define who is participating" (2013, 25). What this means in practice is the quite unfortunate situation we find ourselves in, in Europe, today.

In their analysis of the relation between volunteers and migrants, Kallius, Monterescu and Rajaram deploy convincingly that when migrants protested and decided to leave the Hungarian train station on foot after being prevented from boarding trains to Western Europe in Summer 2015, "[m]igrants and refugees horizontally aligned with activist groups, effectively [questioning and disrupting] the state's immobilizing strategies through acts of radical mobility that rendered the marginal central and the invisible visible" (Kallius, Monterescu, Rajaram 2016). Agreeing with the interpretation of this relation, I aim to bring forth not the differences between migrants and their supporters, but the differences among those who are working in support of people on the move.

MOVING EUROPE

During numerous interviews and informal conversations I asked members of different support groups, who were working on the streets of Belgrade since summer 2015, what they think about the current situation and atmosphere not only in Serbia but in relation to Europe: "It smells like war", two young men answered independently from each other, one of them a twenty-four years old Syrian translator working in a medical NGO, who lived in Serbia since five years,

and the other man a forty-five years old Serbian engineer working for the information distribution spot InfoPark. "Europe? It is over, don't ask me, it is definitely over, there is no more 'Europe'. Fuck Europe! What we see is the beginning of a war. We lost faith in politics long time ago and had some hope regarding Europe for some time, but this changed. Now there is a new anti-European national movement [getting stronger in Serbia], while corruption and crime stay high. Today I understand those who become anti-European, especially now that I see how Europe is treating refugees", a thirty-three years old Serbian trader who worked for Miksalište lamented. A Croatian volunteer living in Serbia since four years, who was promoted to be the project manager at Miksalište argued "that Europe closed its borders towards not only migrants from Syria and elsewhere but also to all the people living in dire economic situations in the Balkans, will just make the journeys more expensive and dangerous, it will not stop people from moving. (...) Europe has lost everything it promised the rest of the world to be. What we experience here daily is pure insanity, Europe still doesn't know what this means. It reminds me of war, despite the innumerable wonderful and often heart breaking encounters [we experience] with strangers from all over the world every day".

While tears dropped from her eyes, a thirty-four years old hostel receptionist who helped out as a volunteer when she had time, said: "You know, the people in the Balkans know what war means, and this reminds all of us of what we already experienced. Not only because we have been refugees ourselves, but because we see racism and nationalism, hatred, growing across Europe". Albert, a British citizen who lived in Serbia since Summer 2015 and who wanted to be named with his real name, reflected on his work as a volunteer at Miksalište: "At the beginning [Summer 2015] I felt like I am working as a European citizen towards something we try together. I was proud to be part of a Europe that tries to take care of the refugees arriving here. But later I realized that what I am doing is actually directly in opposition to Europe [European Union], I felt as if I had become the direct enemy of what I have been fighting for.

(...) When I did border work [in Preševo, Southern Serbia] I came home and cried for several days each single time, I am not ashamed to say that, it would be crazy not to. (...) As a British citizen, in June I have to vote about whether my country leaves the EU or not. Honestly, I don't know anymore how to vote. If you would have asked me six months ago, it wouldn't have been a question at all, of course I would have wanted to stay in the EU. Today, I don't know. (...) When all the borders closed and people were stuck for longer time and left in the cold streets in the winter, also the needs of the people changed and their hopes faded. That's when the whole system [of solidarity] lost its innocence. That's what I meant when I said that we [people who work in migration support] have been besieged [by the European Union]". Goran, a Serbian fifty-six years old man responsible for the logistics of a medical NGO said: "You know, I am burnt out. That's it. I have nothing new to say anymore. People do not matter, they have been left to die and they are still being left to die. I do this kind of work since 20 years and it feels as if the situation would never change. Where is the progress that Europe has been talking about for two-hundred years? I only see a Europe in decline". And Mona, previously a legal advisor to a Human Rights NGO and now a legal adviser working for Praxis on the streets of Belgrade, who is patrolling the city day and night, often directly rescuing migrants from exploitative smugglers, asked back: "Why should we trust Europe? Europe has fooled us permanently. You know, most of us Serbians would want to escape to Western Europe. But after years of experience in being deported from Western Europe and exploited from [the Serbian] corrupted government who is supported by the European Union we do not even try anymore".

As introduced above, the game of unequally governing and managing the possibilities of mobilities and immobilities of people (and in this case of course also of labor and capital), the raising of material, political, economic and bureaucratic borders, takes its toll. What has moved (not only) as a result of immobilizing the physical movement of people in the Balkans, locals

and migrants alike, was their understanding of Europe as a collective social, political and economic project of which they are (or could be) a part of. It is clear from the quotes above that the way the perception of (Western) Europe changed for people working as migration supporters since summer 2015 in Belgrade, whether employed by NGO's or working as volunteers, is closely connected to how mobilities have been not only been managed but defined as counting as movement in the first place. During an informal conversation my friend Mona said: "You know, the Germans and other Western European volunteers and activists don't know yet, what it means not to be allowed to move. This is why their perception of themselves in relation to the world they live in does not change even when they come here. They still believe that Germany is better off because they are morally and politically more advanced than others. Probably they believe that they live in a democracy. (...) Compared to Western Europeans, at least we are prepared for what might be coming. We are used to adjusting and improvising. (...) Our brains learned to move, while we were stuck". Even if not generalizable and not representative of Serbia, or the Balkans as a whole, this statement revealed a strong position oppositional to the perception of the Balkan countries as not moving forward. While turning the conventional tables around, she was embedding her understanding in international dependencies between Southern Europe and Western Europe. Thus in what she was saying, Mona decentralized the dominant understanding of what movement and stagnation on different levels entail and do. Not in order to explain, but to give an extensive impression of the work Mona and others who are supporting people on the move are still doing, the following personal encounters from Belgrade and Budapest shed light on the everyday work that builds the background to all the conversations which led to the statements presented above.

MOVING PAIN

During one night in late March, like during many other nights, I was working with the Praxis team on the streets and in the parks. We attended to more than one-hundred-and-eighty migrants who arrived during the evening and night, asking them about how they are, where they are from, what had happened to them, sharing with them water and food, hygiene kits, shoes and jackets, informing them about the situation in Serbia, their rights and possibilities, warning them to be careful when setting up deals with smugglers, and just chatting about us and them, explaining who we are, where we are from, why we do what we do, trying to create a fragile bond of trust within short time. Around us most of the migrants who were present on this day were already sleeping on blankets they got from MSF (Médecins sans frontières). They moved close together at night behind the Gyros stands, under the two-floored car parking, and on grass patches around trees, often two or three people under one blanket. One group of very young men from Afghanistan, most of them unaccompanied minors, were still awake. Two doctors attended to wounds on their feet and legs which resulted from walking long distances of walking. Another team of supporters brought new shoes and jackets. I started to talk to them like to many before and stayed with them while the Praxis team continued their rounds. "What are you doing here at night?" one of the doctors asked me, "the usual stuff, explaining asylum procedures in Serbia and in Hungary", I answered, knowing how far from everything we call normal it was that I was sitting on the asphalt late at night to explain how to get to the next border and what to take care of when crossing.

Two of the young men spoke perfect English. How are you? Where are you from? From where did you enter Serbia? Were you fingerprinted in Bulgaria or not? "Come sit down on our blanket, it is cold" one man suggested. We sat down on dirty blankets, who were left behind by others who already continued their journey. We introduced each other and step by step we went through all the legal and material possibilities available in Serbia and Hungary. One of them translated sentence by sentence to the rest of the group. They had many questions about

what happens at borders, what happens inside official camps, which kind of information is true and, which is notn't. One man recognized that I was shivering from cold and immediately covered me with a blanket to stay warm and offered me a bottle of juice they got from one of the aid organizations earlier. "Lately", I explained to them, "some Pakistani people have started to sell false Serbian registration papers for 10 Euros in the parks. The sellers, who are mostly Pakistani smugglers, frighten migrants who just arrived by saying that if they register with the police they would be put in prisons and then deported to Macedonia". Wide open eyes were looking at me, revealing without words that some of the young man had already bought the false papers. I asked them to show me the papers, they got them out of their pockets and were left disappointed when realizing that they were not worth anything when facing Serbian officials.

We shared cigarettes, laughed about what would otherwise make us cry. "Why do families get into Hungary legally and we don't?" I was asked. "Just make a baby fast and you'll be fine" (laughter). "Why do they not let us in?" "Because you are so dangerous" (laughter). After we covered the whole journey from Belgrade to Vienna step by step, they started telling me more about their experiences in Bulgaria, from where they came to Serbia on the same day. Luckily, most of them had not been fingerprinted, which meant that Hungary could not deport them back. One sixteen years old boy, Rahman, with scars of cigarette burnings all over his arms caused by Bulgarian detention center guards, explained that he was originally travelling with another group of friends from Turkey to Bulgaria. Once they were spotted by the police, trained dogs were unleashed and attacked most of them. Five of the friends were bitten severely, flesh has been cut out of their arms and legs. They went back to Turkey, they couldn't travel further with such big open wounds. Weeks later, this man crossed the border to Bulgaria again and was detained for four weeks while his friends stayed in Turkey.

Another young man, seventeen years old Naheed, said that due to exhaustion and fear one of his friends went crazy when they were caught by Bulgarian police. And because he didn't stop whining the Bulgarian police officer hit him until he no longer moved. He was silenced forever and his body disappeared. The fourteen years old Zabiullah, whose parents and siblings have been killed in Afghanistan, recounted that in the Bulgarian mountains, when he and a group of Afghan people travelling together had to walk for several days, one of the older women was so tired that she could not continue. She could not make one more step. The smuggler who led the group through the mountains told her that she has two possibilities: either she would continue walking or she would be left behind. She started crying and the smuggler, who was also from Afghanistan, pushed her down a steep cliff with his foot. She fell, and was left to die.

"What is happening in Europe?" Rehman asked. "I thought that if I reach Europe, violence would end, but if you [addressing me as European] hit and kill us like animals, you create anger and hate, it is going to be dangerous later because our people will hate, nobody will forget what has happened to them". I just look at him, nodding in an attempt at acknowledging what I just heard, knowing that no reaction will be appropriate. I fail to grasp what these experiences do to a person. And I struggle to find words to even describe how it felt to be trusted personally and socially. At five in the morning we say good night, with smiles on our faces in appreciation of the time we spent talking to each other. "Good luck!" "To you too!".

Weeks later in Budapest, after my so called research period had passed, I stayed in contact with many of the people I met, migrants, volunteers and activists alike. Volunteers from Belgrade kept giving my contact to people travelling to Hungary, so that they could ask for support when being detained in Hungary. Unfortunately, in Hungary hundreds of migrants spend some time in detention centers. The experience of being in detention causes deep distress, especially during the first few weeks. Young men from various countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq or Nigeria repeatedly wrote to me that they are depressed, that they lose hope,

that they want to die, that they are afraid, that they are crying every day, that the food is terrible, that they get no access to legal aid and that medical aid is extremely scarce and that they have very limited access to internet. The young men lose weight, their eye-sockets turn dark and the eyes fall inward. Deep sadness and disappointment is written onto their skin.

"You don't want to know what I went through", Mehryar from Afghanistan said when I met him for the first time at a train station in Budapest after he came back from a court hearing where he got a negative decision on his asylum request. And he is right, I don't want to know because I cannot understand. He sat down on the stairs in front of the station, and put his head onto his lap and cried. "I am not normal, I am not normal", he whispered "I don't understand what I did wrong, I am not normal". "It is not you who is not normal", I tell him, "it is the world you are forced to live in which makes you feel this way. How you are being treated is not normal!"

Mehryar studied french literature at the University of Kabul. When his father grew old and was too weak to continue working and make a salary for the whole family, Mehryar quit his studies and searched for work. Unable to find a job with a salary that would provide for his family, and desperate about being responsible for his relatives, he left the country to find underpaid work as an undocumented migrant in Iran. After one year of being exploited and mistreated by Iranian employees, he continued to Turkey, and took the perilous journey on a rubber dinghy to Greece. From there he managed to travel north until the Czech Republic, where he got detained for three months and was then deported back to Hungary. He was in Hungary for one year, half of which he spent in detention. The other half he spent at two open reception camps, one of them being the new tent camp in Körmend, which was recently built near the Austrian border. The tents in Körmend do not even protect from rain. The beds the young men should be sleeping on are getting wet once it rains and there is no place to store personal belongings. Food is being served once a day. And even though it is supposed to be an open camp, men are

only allowed to go outside the camp alone and not in groups, because the local population in the nearby village might be scared.

After a ten minute walk from the train station we arrived at my flat. Mehryar nestled down on the couch and closed his eyes. I covered him with a blanket, prepared hot tea, sat down next to him, and held his hand for a while. What was I going to say? What was I supposed to do? Advise him on how to write an appeal against the negative court decision, refer him to a psychologist, and explain to him what migrant support organizations can offer? How should I empower him while sharing his cynicism in a world who does not want to let him live a life equal to our own? The atmosphere is grotesque, almost unbearable. But nobody will ever ask if it is bearable for him. The next morning he left my home, convinced that he wants to go to a place where he can speak french. A few hours later he wrote a short message: "Je vais partir" (I will leave). Good luck, Mehryar, good luck, be careful, be safe, and write to me when you arrive! That's all I can say. Today Mehryar is safe in another country.

The same day two other young men arrived at my home. They spent several weeks at the open camp in Bicske already. On first sight I realized that both of them were sick, fever was weakening their bodies. I boiled water for tea, gave them fresh towels to take a warm shower, prepared some rice with vegetables, and listened to their stories. Bashar, who is from Afghanistan, was stuck in Greece after the Balkan route was officially closed. Sneaking through the borders to Macedonia and Serbia with the help of Afghan, Pakistani and Macedonian smugglers, he arrived to Hungary with the help of Serbian smugglers. From Macedonia to Serbia he was traveling with a group of twenty-five people, among them women and children. At one point, they were brought to an open cave in the rocks of a faraway forest. There, the smuggler who accompanied them asked all of them to call their families to confirm that they will pay more money for the trip. They were held ransom. Those people who did not immediately surrender to the order were beaten severely. Women, men, children, no matter

who they were, they were beaten up again and again in front of all the others until everybody managed to confirm that additional money has been sent from somewhere and was received by a fellow smuggler in a town in a different country. They didn't have any food. A piece of bread could be bought from the smuggler for ten Euros. Most of the people did not have money on them. So those who had money bought a few pieces of bread and shared it with everybody. For four days they were held in the cave without blankets, sleeping on the blank rocks. On the route they changed cars and drivers several times, nobody knew where they were and where they were going, just north; trusting strangers in a dangerous mission; a mission that was made dangerous by the many contradictory European border regimes; a mission that put those most marginalized into even more vulnerable positions. Blackmailing through violence is a common strategy for smugglers to extract more money from migrants who rely on them. They are being squeezed like lemons. And if somebody can't take it anymore, is getting sick, or has been hurt too much, he is simply being left behind somewhere in a forest, a distant valley, a cave or pushed down a rocky mountain.

Arriving to Serbia is just one more step on the route. Not the last one. One of the hardest parts of the journey to Western Europe still lies ahead. From Serbia to Hungary Bashar relies on smugglers once again. They bring groups of people close to the border and let them walk towards the fence, where somebody has to cut through the barbed razor wire. But since the fence is located several meters inside Hungarian territory, the Hungarian border guards can cross to the other side of the fence. There, they are looking for migrants who are approaching the fence. Most easily they are spotted at nights, when night-vision devices expose the warm bodies inside forests and protecting bushes. Once the group Bashar was traveling with was spotted by Hungarian border guards, they were approached fastly and violently. The guards were shouting and attacking the people with pepper spray, the migrants ran. Those who were caught were severely beaten up with sticks and guns, and kicked with hard military shoes.

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Additionally, the guards use electric teasers to hurt and terrify those on the run. After the first such attack, the group withdrew further back into Serbian territory and approached the border later the same night again. The whole procedure got repeated. After resting during the next day, lacking food and water, the group mobilized a third time in the following night. A small fire which kept them warm revealed their location this time. Running for the third time, they left all their bags near the fire and the Hungarian border guards took the chance to burn everything that was left behind by the group. Everything they had - which was clothes, documents and proofs of their places of origin, baby food, and hygienic pads for women - was burnt to ashes. In one last attempt a few hours later, when everybody recovered from yet another loss and the baby's weeping got unbearable, they finally managed to cross the border by walking through a swamp where the police had difficulties accessing the territory.

The other young man who arrived together with Bashar, Bilal, is from Pakistan. He worked as a volunteer at the distribution center Miksalište for three month in Serbia, where I got to know him. He wanted to reciprocate the help he was receiving by contributing to supporting other migrants in Belgrade. After he talked to a legal advisor, he was told that as Pakistani citizen his chances for receiving asylum or being granted a refugee status in Serbia, as well as in European countries, would be low. He never talked a lot. He served tea and coffee to everybody who arrived at the distribution center. At some point he revealed to us that some of the other migrant volunteers are involved in smuggling people for a lot of money, mostly operating from within the official state-run refugee camp in Belgrade, where some women were forced to have sex with smugglers to pay for their journey. As a result he was threatened with death, which made him disappear immediately. He organized a smuggler himself and departed towards Hungary. When he and the two families who were traveling with him were approaching the border area at night, they were surprised by a group of eight masked men in civil, armed with sticks and guns. After being beaten, they ordered everyone to undress entirely. Once everybody,

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including women and children, were naked, they continued beating the naked bodies with their feet. The group was later left alone in the middle of fields, close to a small road, where only few cars passed. Bilal decided to walk to the nearby town to ask for clothes. He met other migrants on the way who helped him to organize some clothes. Totally in shock the entire group stayed in a village near the border, where migrants who lived in Serbia for a few years and run a local restaurant hosted them. A few days later they crossed the border to Hungary, also through the water of the swamp near a river. They walked for hours in heavy wet clothes, before they were arrested by Hungarian police and eventually brought to an open reception center after being fingerprinted and registered. When I asked Bilal why he left his home, he kept saying that I would not want to know. "I don't want you to be sad, sister that is the reason I will not tell you my history". Today, Bilal is safe in another country.

These and similar encounters and stories are what everybody currently working in migration support on the 'Balkan route' is dealing with. We are not only moving ourselves, things or information from one place to another. We are collectively moving pain from one body to another, trying to contain it by sharing it. Pain resides in bodies, not only individual bodies but also the social body. Pain cannot be abstracted, neither compartmentalized nor classified for the purpose of analytical scrutiny. Pain can be experienced, and it can be acknowledged or denied (Das 1996). Denial of pain has the effect of denying alterity, denying difference, and therefore denying the 'other'. Moreover, acknowledging alterity and acknowledging pain, letting oneself be touched by the pain of the 'other' presupposes the recognition of not knowing the other.

CHAPTER THREE

DEBATES ON COLLABORATION: POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY

> *"We act in solidarity with people, we are not humanitarians. We are creating encounters on equal footing, horizontally; creating social ties rather than delivering services. We are not an NGO, we are against the bureaucratization and professionalization that NGO's are engaging in. We are not developing crowd management tools for example. We are speaking to people in an attempt at creating shared political awareness and show our solidarity with their struggle. Their struggle is our struggle. We act across class, gender, ethnic or national identities. We act on the basis of an identification with a shared struggle. In solidarity. For an alternative future."*
>
> *Maria from the German activist group (fieldnote March 16th 2016)*

COLLABORATING

The fields of engagement initiated by individuals, loose associations, and NGO's - the spaces they are moving in, the materials they mobilize, the languages they employ, the distances they travel, the borders they cross, the money they raise, the reports and petitions they write, the interviews they give or take, the technologies they use, the territories and buildings they occupy, the diplomatic talks they lead, the registrations of organizations they make, the bank accounts they open, the programs they initiate, the social hierarchies they challenge and reproduce, the alliances and compliances they engender, the friends they make and lose and the intimate self-reflections they publish - can be understood as junctures in the relations between political, civil, social, economic and material responsibilities. As junctures, all these practices bring to the fore certain possibilities and potentialities of sociality, which is, in this context, most often being

called solidarity. Thence, not only the figure of the volunteer or the activist, the one who works for free and by her own will, but the social, political and economic dimensions of the collaborative practices the volunteers are engaged in, render visible the dynamic relations between the state and the nation, between the state and the management of populations, and between the state and citizenship.

Along the entire 'Balkan route' volunteers are engaged in providing for basic needs of migrants on their way towards Western and Northern Europe, alongside official organizations like UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), MSF (Médecins sans Frontières) and others. They set up a complex logistics for the movement of material goods, and passageways for transferring financial support to wherever they are needed. They are providing migrants with updates of fast changing information about the journey through the Balkans via social media, by writing documents, spreading flyers, printing maps and translating everything into various languages such as Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Pashto and Urdu but also Albanian, English, German, Serbo-Croatian or Swedish. Furthermore, volunteers in groups and networks, which vary with the people engaged, organize and divide tasks and responsibilities among each other. Over time, many groups have become more effective, entering collaborations not only with each other but also with migrants as well as with official authorities like the police, the army, and the local political administrations in various cities and countries. As of today, volunteers organize many of the activities even within official immigration camps, where they distribute information, clothing, food, healthcare, money and develop 'population management' strategies or school curricula. Representative thereof was the official refugee camp in Slavonski Brod, Croatia, until the 'Balkan route' was closed and recently the newly opened camps throughout Greece, where tens of thousands of migrants are forced to stay.

Another role of volunteers and their networks is that they have grown to be an important source for journalists from all kinds of local and international media as well as for influential 'watch-

dogs' like Amnesty International (AI), Peace Watch or Human Rights Watch. They report arrivals and departures; generous or inhuman treatment by authorities, local residents or smugglers; family separations and reunifications; minors travelling alone; health conditions, weather conditions, deaths and births; and they report on where the state is failing completely and where it is worth to collaborate. Moreover, and as previously introduced, volunteers started to act not only as messengers and providers of humanitarian aid, but many engage in building and sustaining a political voice through directly addressing local and national governments with concrete requests for change, such as opening borders and freedom of movement, an end to detention and deportations, or the suspension of the Dublin Convention, by writing petitions or organizing protests and international solidarity actions. Third, volunteers as individuals and groups encountered innumerable conflict situations among themselves, with official NGO's or state authorities. The invaluable work being done, was always accompanied by disagreements, denunciations, and break ups between and among groups on the one hand, and on the other, through technicalizing, and securitizing interventions by state authorities. Struggles within and among migration support networks, which most often surmount simple differences in opinion, are often (de-, re-)generative of power relations based on educational, social, historical, national, (geo-)political, classed and gendered differences between individual as well as collective actors.

To make what I have described in more general terms more graspable in its particularities, I will ethnographically illustrate how collaboration among certain groups was practiced in Belgrade by recounting a few events. The choice of events is not random, rather, it intends to make a point. The selected events will position one group in a more negative or questionable manner than others. I do so not to delegitimize the work they do. I select events which make a specific relationality among local and international migration supporters visible, which is often stained by subtle forms of hierarchizing. I call it stained, because it is not a random

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hierarchization I witness, it is adjacent to and reproductive of intra-European as well as global hierarchies we are well aware of. This, I will argue, is especially the case in Western European politically left-leaning anarchist groups who act in ways that suggest a certain moral superiority over Eastern and South-Eastern fellow activists and volunteers. This, in turn, I want to argue, seems to be reproducing a pattern we are well acquainted with. Subtly but unmistakably, it creates a colonization of the moral space of the 'other'. The 'other' in this case are not migrants, but local Serbians. Thus, through everyday practices of collaboration or the lack thereof, intra-European hierarchical structures are being reproduced by those actors, who self-identify as the enemies of structural inequalities.

COLLABORATING DIFFERENTLY

The cold months of January and February 2016 have left most of the active volunteer members, who became coordinators in migration support structures in Belgrade without any daily volunteers. Also due to the cold weather, but mostly as a result of border closures along the 'Balkan route' only few migrants arrived in Belgrade daily. But many were stuck, forced to wait in a city that was not their choice. High numbers of migrants did not want to register with the police and refrained from living in an official refugee camp at the outskirts of the city provided by the Serbian state. Most of them did not have any resources to sustain their lives. Hence, the volunteer-run distribution center Refugee Aid Miksalište became an ideal place where one could obtain goods and then sell it on the black market. To ameliorate the suffering from cold at nights, some migrants started to drink alcohol, consume antidepressants, sniff glue or drink car screen wash. Some of those people kept coming back sick, drunk and high, which led to conflicts between migrants as well as volunteers. Chairs were thrown, knives held at people, things were stolen, smugglers threatened migrants as well as volunteers, people cursed and screamed at each other daily. The volunteers experienced symptoms of burn out, and were

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over-challenged. In this situation, collaboration was most needed. Miksalište volunteers divided tasks and kept the space running with only three to six people per day instead of twenty, members of the legal aid NGO Praxis helped with bringing people to hospitals, the police, or the Asylum Info Center services. Members of Save the Children provided their container for other uses than caring for the youngest, namely for meetings and emergency separations between people in conflictual situations. Doctors of the World attended not only to wounds and illnesses, but also listened to stories from both migrants and volunteers, trying to soften the hardened relations. Members of the Protestant Church Refugee Aid Project and Food for Life kept bringing warm meals, as the distribution space did not receive a license to cook food in the place. Donations of blankets, clothes, shoes, and food were shifted from one place to another, depending on who needed them most. It was in this time that the German group of activists, whose members changed on a weekly basis, arrived to the city and entered the scene of migration support in Belgrade.

The Germans started to squat an empty building near the distribution center Miksalište, where migrants could spend the night instead of sleeping in the parks. Their idea was to create a self-organized space, where migrants could unite in solidarity and protect each other from exposure to weather, strangers, violent smugglers, the police and create collective political awareness through protesting and reporting, which would lead to them having a voice otherwise muted by structural invisibilization. Between thirty and fifty migrants, almost exclusively men, were usually brought to the new shelter for one night. The activists spent their evenings together with the migrants, providing beer, snacks and music and engaging in friendly discussions until late at night. But soon tensions among migrants with different national backgrounds rose and conflicts broke out. Smugglers, who were themselves migrants on their journey to the West threatened people if they would not agree to travel on with them. At other times one or another man broke down in anger or sadness, revealing the traumatic situations he had to go through.

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Desperation, fear and anger were high at all times, people were tired of needing help, tired of being forced to share their private lives with strangers, tired of having to like everybody, tired of being advised and having to listen. People hated each other openly, threatened to kill each other and volunteers' or activists' calming words were drops of oil into a fire. Soon it became clear to the disillusioned activist newcomers that they could not leave the squat alone at nights, they had to sleep there as well. But who would do this daily? And what would happen to the 'self-organization' of migrants that was actually "self-"organized by German activists?

They planned to hand their project over to local activists, interpreting their role as only kicking off projects and teaching local activists how to be activists. A group of local anti-capitalist anarchist no-border activists got involved and was advised to take responsibility for the equipment that was brought to the squat, which included a generator payed for by the Germans. Furthermore they should have taken over the coordination of the daily supervision to prevent conflicts from escalating, which would have included to organize night-shifts and uphold a new ban on alcohol inside the squat. After only a few days the generator was gone, sold on the black market. And since nobody committed to always being present, the police was in the house almost on a daily basis to arrest whoever was closest to the door and looked drunk or angry. Several migrants who stayed in the squat for more than a week joined the activists in maintenance tasks such as cleaning and bringing water, but those relations were usually of a short nature as migrants left the place after a couple of days.

Hence, the squatted house was a project run by activist newcomers who were not acquainted with the local structures and context. They did not take into account that in a place where migrants are transiting and not interested in staying, it is hard to establish 'self-organized' structures. Additionally, they were not informed about the context of support structures already existing, which led to them misinforming people about their options in Serbia as well as making the job of other helpers harder by creating chaos. Only two of the activists stayed for a period

of three month, through which they got to know other actors involved more closely, but it took a very long time until they became interested in collaborating with others and sharing information with others. The attitude they adopted when arriving to Serbia was tainted with disapproval of NGO's and the idea that local Serbians lack political awareness. This made them act self-righteously and in isolation.

My impression was that me, being Swiss, enabled a different relationship to their group than most other involved actors (besides migrants, with whom they interacted closely). This in itself is an observation worth scrutinizing further. I kept telling members of their group what the other groups actually do, NGOs and volunteer groups alike, explaining in depth why they are doing the things the way they do.t seemed that me speaking German enabled me to gain some kind of authority, which the Serbian people who were working in migration support for much longer time were not granted equally. The following example is illustrative of this dialogue, in which I saw myself as a mediator, trying to involve them better, so that their actions could be embedded in the bigger structures of migration support.

There is a small hostel in the city, where migrants can spend the night for free and without being registered. The entire hostel with thirty nine beds, has been booked and payed for for nine month by a Canadian citizen who has close relations to a member of the Serbian government. This connection was used to make sure that this hostel would not be touched by the police. Hence, the police refrained from checking this specific hostel for potential undocumented migrants, which is something that was done regularly in hostels in the area of the train station. If a hostel owner was found to host undocumented migrants, she would be fined and in the worst case the license for running a hostel would be withdrawn. When the German activists got to know about the free hostel, they decided to bring migrants there in the evenings, if they didn't have a place to stay. This, in turn, interfered with the established way of how responsibilities have been shared among other organizations.

It was the legal aid organization Praxis, who was the only NGO which had teams patrolling the city day and night. Thus, they grew to be most suitable to be the ones to bring people to the free hostel. All the other involved actors knew that Praxis knows how many people are in the hostel and would contact them if somebody needed a place to spend the night. Since the places available were so few, they decided to keep them mostly for families with small children, single mothers, and sick or elderly people. The German activists, though, decided that it was unethical and ungrounded to discriminate against the men who also wished to sleep in a real bed. They were not shy to ask Praxis teams to accompany groups of men to the hostel, since they were paid to do this. Members of Praxis tried to explain to them that they should not promise beds to whoever they meet, which were hundreds of young men per day. The reason for this was that families mostly arrived late at night completely exhausted, hungry and often abused by smugglers. "Now you promised these twelve men a bed in the hostel" said the colleague from Praxis to a member of the German group one late evening, "but in a few hours I will be sitting in the park with families with small children who are freezing and without shelter and food, while you are sleeping in your own warm bed. What should I do then?" The German activist, who in this case arrived just two days earlier, answered: "I do not agree with how humanitarian organizations prioritize women and children over men. Men should be treated equally and since there are free beds in the hostel, they should have the chance to use them". But why them and not those other twelve men over there? Or those? Or those? Just because the German activist spoke to *them* at that particular moment. Without further listening to what my colleague tried to explain, he asked how to get to the hostel and departed with the group of men. Two hours later, two families with seven small children arrived in the park, shivering in cold. Praxis organized blankets for the night and could not provide them with anything more.

Over the course of the next few days I repeatedly talked to members of the German group about this incident and tried to explain, in German, that Praxis members do think about what they are

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doing. They do not just follow a protocol designed at an office desk, although such protocols exist. They gained experience over many months about how, when, and where new people arrive and what their constitution usually is when they arrive. Praxis' decision was that the men who have been there a bit longer, who received blankets and food before most of the organizations closed their distribution centers for the night, were already a bit better off than those arriving late at night with small children. Only after I explained to different people again and again why and how these decisions are being made, the German activists started to develop a more friendly attitude towards the NGO teams from Praxis and began to approach them when they felt that somebody needed a place to stay, in order to evaluate the situation together rather than informing them of their own decision.

What was puzzling to me deeply was how paternalistic and self-righteous certain people, who were foreigners, acted towards the local supporters, while pretending to adhere to some sort of horizontal solidarity with migrants and only other supporters who shared their political views. In practice, they did not do anything that local organizations were not already doing as well, besides squatting a house, thereby creating chaos, as nobody wanted to take responsibility for managing it. To acknowledge that management was needed to run the squat, meant also to give up the idea of 'self-organization' through collaboration between migrants and activists and hence motivation was fading and frustration abound. The frustration felt by the activists was then redirected at the local no-border activist group who was also not willed to take full responsibility for managing the space. Instead of acknowledging that it might not have been the wisest idea to put fifty traumatized men from five different nationalities, among them smugglers and drug dealers who tried to dominate the order, into a room without proper equipment, without beds, no shower or toilet and no water, with nothing but blankets on the floor, the locals were identified as the losers, who were not responsible enough, who needed to be taught how to be 'good' or 'real' political activists. To relate this situation back to the

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questions of mobility and immobility, this means that the German group expected the Serbian 'other' to adjust, while they persisted in upholding their moral and political understanding as self-evidently 'right' or 'good'.

COLLABORATING PARTIALLY

Similar assemblages, in which solidarity is structured not only in exclusionary terms, but along the lines of existing structures of inequality, have been noted by anthropologists studying forms of sociality not only in relation to migrant 'others' but also to classed, gendered, ethnical, religious or national 'others'. In the context of migrant support during the last year, another interesting context is how groups of Western European activists started to promote solidarity with arrested smugglers, in an attempt at de-criminalizing human smuggling and establishing it instead as a form of assistance or service, which challenges the existing exclusionary government of borders and movement of people. On a recent conference on Critical Migration Studies (KritNet May 26-27 2016, Vienna), one such group, whose prior object it is to monitor smuggling trials in Germany, presented cases of smugglers they followed and analyzed. Their prior goal is to uncover racist practices in the management and evaluation of foreign criminals' acts, as well as highlighting the humanitarian motives, which often drive smugglers to cross legal boundaries. In their cases they show, that smugglers apprehended recently by German border police often act on motives of close relatedness and humanitarian need. They are brothers and cousins of those they are driving over borders, trying to help their relatives and friends reach their final goals in Western Europe. The nationalities of the smugglers whose cases they followed were Syrian, Pakistani and Kurdish.

What they failed to mention in their presentation is that the majority of smugglers apprehended in Hungary, Austria and Germany are Hungarian, Rumanian, Czech, Slovak, Bosnian, Serbian, Albanian, and Croatian. And these smugglers are mostly drivers, executing the deals of those

higher up in the hierarchies of human smuggling. When looking at their backgrounds, it becomes immediately clear, that most of them act out of economic need. A local newspaper[3] in Szeged, Hungary, publishes continuous updates on the smuggling cases being dealt with at the local court and highlights repeatedly that the apprehended smugglers come from poor economic backgrounds, are unemployed, and struggle to feed their families. Like in the case of Serbian activists, the Eastern and South-Eastern European smugglers are, it seems, not worthy of the same solidarity as the Syrian refugees arriving in Germany, even if they arrive as smugglers. What they furthermore failed to represent is that most of the migrants arriving in Western Europe have put their lives into the hands of more and more dangerous human smuggling networks, who operate across the globe and raise unbelievable amounts of financial capital by holding people ransom and torturing them until their families manage to pay more money. This is not happening only in Sudan, Libya and Afghanistan, but all along the route to Western Europe. One example among hundreds is an incident in summer 2015 in Budapest, where over eighty migrants were held in a hotel against their will[4]. Other examples are how migrants are held in closed apartments in Macedonia as well as Serbia against their will. Young people are being stripped naked and beaten with belts, while the scene is being filmed to blackmail the young people's relatives back home. These are stories that every migrant supporter working in the parks of Belgrade is hearing every day.

In preliminary conclusion, the events described above are not representative in ways that would allow me to draw general conclusions about solidarity networks, local or international. Rather, they are indicative of structured ideological bases of relating in solidarity, which are tied to the national, social and political backgrounds of those who are engaged, as well as to the socio-

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[3] http://szegedma.hu/

[4] See the Budapest Beacon, September 8th, 2015: Migration Aid volunteers rescue refugees from human smugglers. Available under:
http://budapestbeacon.com/featured-articles/migration-aid-rescues-refugees-from-human-traffickers/26935

political and economic circumstances of the places, in which solidarity practices unfold. Thus, I would argue that the encounters described are indicative of structural moral and ideological hierarchies, not only stratified along political divisions demarcating humanitarians from political activists, and thereby marking a division between horizontal and vertical forms of intervention, but also between Germans and Serbians, or Western Europeans and Southern and Eastern Europeans in ways that are reproductive of unequal intra-European power relations.

CONCLUSION

Walking through the park, I pass migrants from many countries sitting on small plastic chairs at old metal tables, chatting with friends or strangers in different languages. Smugglers sit among them, setting up the next deals. Most of the smugglers working in the parks are migrants themselves, working to finance their next steps of their journey. Others are involved in criminal networks of drug and human trafficking, which are well known to feed the markets in Western Europe. Smartphones change hands as well as papers and money. True and false, useful and useless information is being shared, always in an atmosphere of urgency, where power over public space is silently (re-)negotiated through balancing the visible and the invisible, veiled interchangeably as surveillance, solidarity or crime. Who controls whom? Everybody is watching out for who is around, thinking carefully about whom to talk to and who might be listening. The local police is positioned at the other side of the park, always in a team of three or four, equipped with a van and the usual arms.

We are looking out for people who just arrived, who might need support. We are trying to talk to the newcomers, asking them about where they are from, which route they took, how long they travelled, how much they paid, whether they were exposed to violence by the police, smugglers or other actors, asking about potential needs, and offering them what we have. Often, though, the people who just arrived are not talking to NGO staff because their smugglers told them not to do so. NGO staff is often ruining their business, as they inform people about the possibility of spending the night at an official reception camp and the local bus lines for further travel. In the meantime, the smugglers tell them that if they talk to us they might be registered by the police and then deported back to Macedonia. Or worse, they threaten them with prison, if they talk to us. Only after we wait for an hour or two, and repeatedly show them that the police does not arrest them, are we able to talk. It takes time to build up a fragile thread of trust in such a short amount of time, considering what most of the people already had to go through.

How are we, anthropologists, supposed to translate these events into abstract language and theoretical generalizations without losing what makes up the 'social fabric' of the world we are studying? I still do not know. In conclusion of a series of beginnings of elaborations presented so far, and instead of a substantive summary, the following paragraphs present beginnings of critique based on the preceding chapters.

I understand this contribution foremost as a search for and an intervention into the understanding of the current academic, public and popular discourses and practices of solidarity. Furthermore, I have tried to shed light on the ways of reasoning of the many actors involved on a local and international level, but a broader contextualization of the everyday practices in local social, political, economic and historical terms would strengthen and possibly change the arguments presented. Hence, to underline the arguments presented, further research and analytical development is necessary. The main argument presented was that the impressive and invaluable solidarity movement on the 'Balkan route' is in itself a heterogeneous group of people, within which hierarchies between European (and neighboring) states are reproduced and hence also reinforce the unequally distributed powers within and beyond the European Union. If my analysis proves correct, this would mean that as social scientists we have to continue paying attention to stratifications of existing power structures, who's wished disappearance is too easily projected onto an imagined political alternative. As clear at it appears on first sight, this bold argument asks for further theorization and analytical scrutiny in relation to the empirical processes unfolding in everyday life in migration support in Belgrade.

As Prem Kumar Rajaram (2015) argued, solidarity projects are, at times, undermining the dominant political rhetoric of 'crisis', but at the same time they are, as we have seen, also a response as well as an effect of the 'crisis'. What does this mean politically and ethically and

how can we deal with this double-bind analytically and programmatically? In a similar vein, the way 'solidarity' has been explored by anthropologists in support networks in Greece, has usually taken 'crisis' for granted not only as an empirical fact, which dominates the everyday lives of people, but also as a dominant political rhetoric, which allows for multiple measurements to be legitimized. On a theoretical level, the presumption of 'crisis' has not been put into question. But imagine what we would do, we as the researchers, the supporters of migrants and other marginalized groups and we as the activists that seek to challenge and criticize different forms of power relations, what would we do if there were no 'crises', which legitimate the extraordinary and urgent actions taken? How would we research what is happening, how would we support those in need and how would we 'fight' for equality if the dominant rhetoric would be different?

At the end of my stay in Belgrade, I organized a Cooperation and Migration Support Workshop, to which I invited thirty-four members of the support community working on the streets, of which twenty-two attended the meeting. The goals of the meeting were to get to know each other, to share experiences, to analyze existing support structures and identify lacking and overlapping 'services' as well as collaboration and information sharing tools. Traditional NGO workers as well as radical political activists were sitting together at one table for a whole day, which was the first time such a meeting took place in Belgrade. During this meeting, people started to listen to each other in new ways, connections were forged and plans for further collaboration developed. I later wrote a twenty pages report to summarize the relevant issues, questions, disagreements, and decisions and negotiations, which was then distributed widely among all migration support organizations and groups. As a result, monthly meetings and workshops do now take place among different groups, which include people who are themselves on the move. The close interaction on different levels, as mentioned throughout this thesis, and the deep and active involvement as a volunteer puts me into a position of being

engaged in the production of the field I studied. Not only did it support the production of insights into how other people understood their work, but it had the effect of altering practices of collaboration in order to increase the production and circulation of knowledge pertaining not only to the support of people on the move. Additionally, it stimulated a collective thinking process, through which different positions were shared, negotiated, and transformed.

By the time of writing this thesis, my intense involvement in the field I studied continued on various levels. This has the effect of making it difficult to abstract empirical experiences into theoretical analyses. The two worlds, writing a thesis and working in migration support, seem incommensurable in my present perception. But, with some more time passing, the connections between one and the other world, would possibly turn them into one.

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