Affective Migration:
Smartphones as Memory Repositories of the Balkan Route

In partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Social Science

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the various ways smartphones are shaping the phenomenon of exile in contemporary societies. Taking the phone as an object of material culture reveals its power and presence in personal narratives of exile. Sharing textual and visual data implies, according to my findings, a strive for what I call in this thesis the *normalization of life*, reinforced by a highly aestheticized engagement in photography and the construction of affective narratives that create an emotional bond with the material and immaterial aspect of camera-phones as visual memory repositories. This research is based on intensive fieldwork done in Belgrade, Serbia, taken as the ending point of the "Balkan route" and the final "gate" to the European Union. Interviews and empirical observations occurred in Miksalište, a civil society's welcome center for refugees, on two occasions - in June 2016 and April 2017. The thesis combines ethnographic data and theory on visual memory and affect.

[Affect, exilic imaginary, visual memory, object, material culture, smartphone, photography, migration, refugeehood, exile]

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INTRODUCTION

It has become a commonplace to state that the economic logic of late capitalism has created a big unbalance between the global flow of human beings and things. When people are prevented from moving freely in a neoliberal world it is because the new forms of capital depend more and more on controlling labor costs and, thus, its surplus value. Commodities and capital, on the other hand, cross borders more rapidly and massively than ever. One of these commodities that in the last decade has become the epitome of globalization is the smartphone, an extreme example of universal mobility of objects (Malkki 2002, 353–54). Curiously, mobile communication technologies are now being used by migrants as indispensable security-building tools for "illegal" border crossing, particularly in the last few years that the European Union states began using ICTs on a massive scale for border controlling (Harney 2013). In the age of technology, where security cameras and biometric passport readers were introduced to make the Union's external borders less "soft",[1] mobile phones are one of the most precious possessions migrants have on the uncertain route that is ahead of them.

In the pages that follow, I adopt Ahmed (2014, 80) view on the political and social dimensions of migration and asylum seeking. However, while her analysis on the *fear* of the asylum seeker, tightly correlated with the fear of the terrorist are of utmost relevance, I will focus on a bottom-up approach of everyday migrant experiences, that in many ways, as we will see, transcends the purely political and touches on the affective or emotional.

This thesis focuses on taking a deeper look at the ways migrants and refugees in Belgrade engage and relate with technology for affective purposes. The smartphone usage will be looked

[1] in Sara Ahmed's terms (2014) nations are supposed to "toughen" their "soft" sides in order to protect themselves from otherness.

upon from two different angles. The first, broached in Chapter I, is an attempt to reconstruct the uses, functions, and meanings of smartphones as complex photographic objects, which produce, store, and share images and are transforming traditional memory practices, particularly important to those living the difficulties of the exilic experience. In Chapter II, I will examine the emotions that people intend to express in their narratives of exile – such as fear and female empathy, and how are these in many ways linked to the use of smartphones.

Belgrade is the pivotal point of the Western Balkan route of migration since leaving it represents the last logistic effort for getting into the Schengen zone. As I was born in this city, doing research there meant the erasure of home/field oppositions and essentialized visions of the *field* (Hyndman 2001, 263). The Savamala district, where the field was set, is an area I have done research in about the gentrifying changes that my native city was enduring in the last years. It was then that I noticed the dynamics between this urban space and the populations of migrants that were spending time there. The district's public and private spaces were in constant negotiation with the migrant flows, rapidly altering their uses. The refugee's and migrant's daily movement in Belgrade are particularly interesting because their activities are not simple reflections of state or NGO regulations. On the contrary, they are far more complexly unregulated, leaving space for maneuver, for what I see as a constant attempt at *normalization of life* in living conditions that threaten this normalization from every possible dimension (legal, cultural, ethnic, linguistic). I will support this argument by a more detailed account of the special dynamics visualized in provided maps (contextual Chapter).

Malkki wrote, "displacement implies emplacement, a 'proper place' of belonging" (2002, 353). It is my purpose here to investigate the ways in which belonging is being (re)shaped and conveyed along the Western Balkan route. For this purpose, I am spotting into the notion of *exilic*

imaginary in relation to belonging or the absence of it. This is done through the analysis of emotions and one "palpable" representation of affect – visual memories. Malkki takes incoming migrant infrastructures as "devices of care and control" (2002, 353) that I believe fits well to the wide scope of social definitions of the smartphone. These two infrastructures – the smartphone as communicational and camp-like premises – exercise both internal and external types of population control (Kymlicka 1995c, 34–48). The control of migrants and refugees is highly regulated by citizenship rules, giving bureaucracy power over belonging (Malkki 2002, 352–54). I am aware, however, that the production of ordinary narratives does not come from a socio-historical vacuum, but from places and cultures of specific social constructions of belonging. I am also aware of my positionality within the existing hierarchies among races, ethnicities, and genders in the field. The context of the route and the people that make it will, therefore, be discussed in the contextual chapter that follows.

Finally, it is important to note that I am theoretically stepping away from the body of literature developed in digital anthropology by focusing on everyday experiences of affect shown by the people I had the occasion to speak with. The power of ICT devices such as smartphones may be in their capacity of transforming the everyday lives of their users. However, the literature on ICT usage and processes of quotidian life transformations is mostly based on analysis of peaceful and privileged accounts, that is, on how this technology is affecting the lives of middle-class groups, with stable or non-existent migratory status. I found both interesting and necessary to address this theoretical gap by extending some of the theories to the peculiar circumstance of refugeehood.

Methodology

This research resulted from two bodies of data collected in Belgrade, Serbia. The first one was done in the scope of a research group established with Merve Burçak Ketene and Flora Boiron

–both M.A. students at ELTE's ethnic and minority studies program- in June 2016. We were based in Refugee Aid Miksalište (welcome center), located in the ever-changing Savamala district. To obtain a better understanding of the field context, our team worked the morning volunteer shifts after which our planned afternoon interviews were more naturally received. Moreover, Miksalište offered a specific local context I will touch upon in the Chapter on context

During the second research occasion in April 2017, I was accompanied by Hassan, our key informant, and interpreter from 2016. A 23-year-old Pakistani vet student that has found himself in a legal limbo, ineligible for Serbian asylum[2]. He has left his country 15 months ago due to a risky political career. In a span of one year, he tried to cross to Hungary 7 times from Serbia and twice from Croatia. When we met him, he had just come back from him the 5th attempt. The whole of Miksalište was speaking about his injuries, visibly discouraging others from going on[3]. His attempts of border-crossing to Hungary got him severely injured by the border police, with his nose and arms broken several times. However, every time I spoke to him since we met he never stopped considering options to cross. Hassan is very agile with personal communication, unsurprisingly he was the first person we met in 2016. He is also agile with technology, always mapping his way through space with different apps and a big power-bank. He quickly bonded with our group and started entering the role of our main informant. A year later, when I returned by myself, he was a versed (and popular) NGO volunteer, always up-to-date with information of all sorts. He was a valuable friend, guide and interpreter for Urdu, Pashto and basic Farsi.

Miksalište has undergone some major structural changes, but access to research was still pretty much unregulated and free. Unlike research in migration premises inside the EU, starting

[2] Serbia does not grant Pakistani's economic or political asylum
[3] Saba even mentioned in a conversation we had the look of his injuries as something she could not stand to see happening to her family

off in the field in Belgrade did not require administrative but communicative efforts.

The sensitive topic of affect in personal experiences of exile is correspondingly based on qualitative research. The narratives were recorded upon participants 'consent during dozens of conversations and semi-structured interviews with migrants.[4] Information regarding context was gathered through semi-structured interviews with a set of humanitarian workers based in Savamala district.[5] The gathered data was fulfilled with fieldwork observations and a theoretical analytical body that helped frame this analysis. All informants' names are pseudonyms. The respondent's ages range between 15 and 36, with an equal representation of genders in the sample. However, better integration occurred in the female circles which, therefore, represent a slightly deeper focus in the ethnography.

Mapping people's feelings and self-identification through the use of smartphones have its analytical and practical limits. This level of qualitative analysis did not permit me to cover a variety of dimensions mentioned in the participant's detailed narratives. Also, social and political layers of different stages of migration are beyond the scope of this thesis. English is the *lingua franca,* several issues appeared concerning the natural selection of respondents, as well as the quality of interpretation offered for free. On a more physical level, I was barely ever alone with people I spoke to, which has multiple positive and negative outcomes on the authenticity of bonds created during their narration.

[4] The data poll counts 16 conversations
[5] Counts 6 interviews

THE CONTEXT

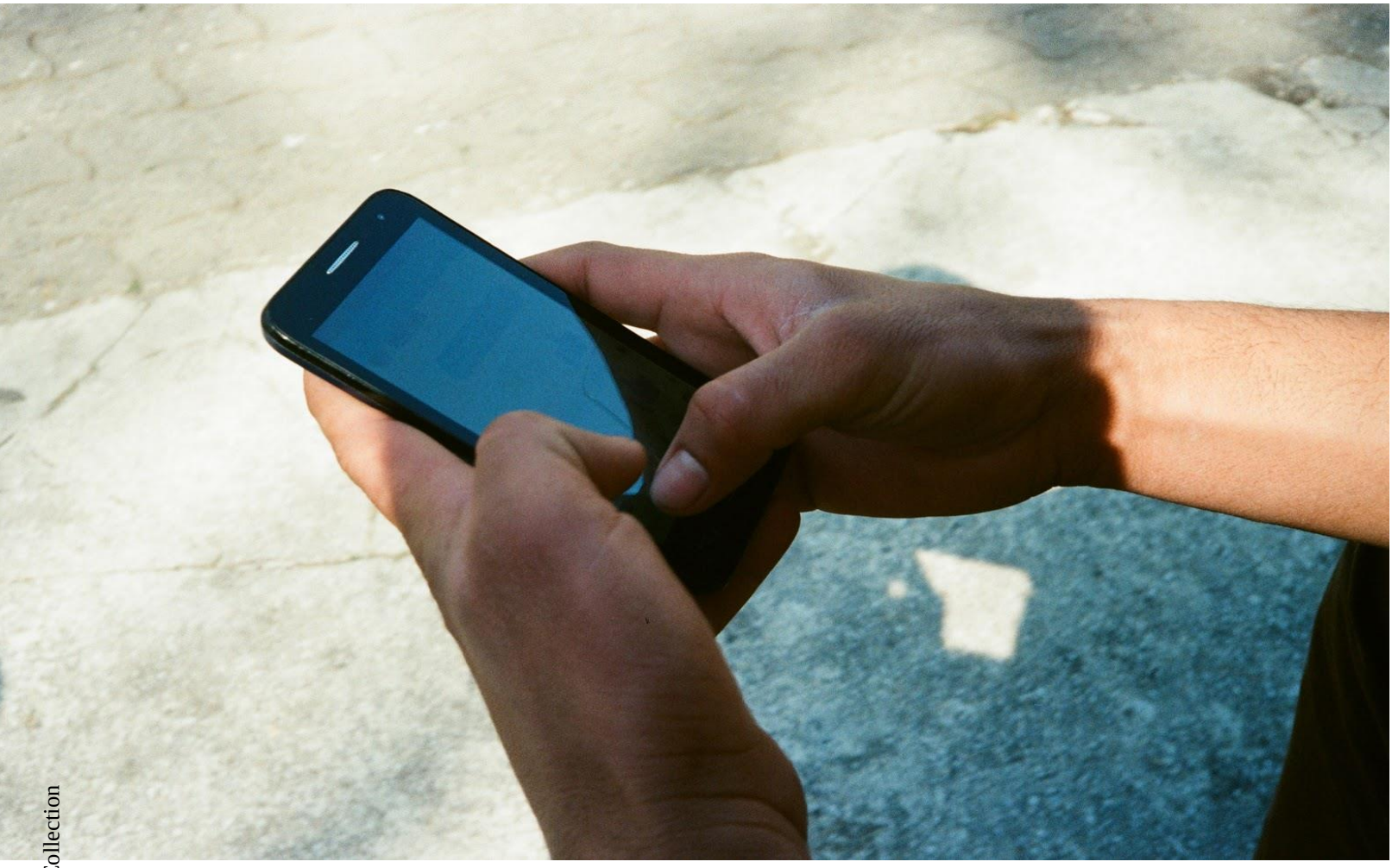


Image 1- Photograph taken by the author, Savamala, 2017

Mapping Belgrade

Starting in the Middle-East and taking the Balkan route, Belgrade is accessible by two travel means – crossing the Turkish-Greek sea or the Bulgarian *jungle*[6]. While the Bulgarian road implies more walking, the one b*y boat*, as it is commonly referred to among migrants, implies taking illegal boats typically operating between Izmir and the closest islands in Greece. Once in Bulgaria or Greece, people head to Belgrade, prior to their final crossing into the Schengen Area.

In the global migration context, Serbia is located *at the gates* of the European Union and is regarded mainly as a transit country. The state's officials follow the general directions of the EU authorities be it for migration or not. Serbia has seen a massive influx of refugees and migrants as the transit zone joining Southern parts of the Balkan route (Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, and Macedonia) to the Northern ones (Croatia and Hungary). In the first quarter of 2016, about 920,000 refugees and migrants from the Middle-East[7] have arrived in Serbia. Nonetheless, ensuring the neighboring countries' constricted border controls beside the agreement between the EU and Turkey[8], this situation changed: people in transit have been stuck in Serbia. Accordingly, the number of people stranded in Serbia increased in a year from 1500 to 7750 (UNHCR 2017).

Since it is a very centralized state, Belgrade is logistically inevitable for most migrants. Serbia is economically and politically more problematic than the member countries, its informal economy does not offer migrants space for in income-making. Also, there is no comprehensive asylum law (*Asylum Law of the Republic of Serbia - Zakon O Azilu* 2017; Petrović 2017). Therefore, most of asylum applications get suspended because the people who had filed them leave the country before

[6] Migrants refer to the crossing between Turkey and Bulgaria as *jungle;* an unofficial accommodation area in the mountains in Bulgaria, where smugglers typically take their "clients" to hide from the authorities during the border-crossing process in poor conditions (according my understanding of different people's experiences)
[7] Mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan
[8] on 18 March 2016

the decision arrives. Nevertheless, the asylum application procedure starts by a foreigner expressing the desire seek asylum[9]; after the police records the request the waiting time begins. According to Serbian law asylum seekers can choose to stay in asylum centers or in private accommodation during this waiting period. Succeeding their hearing, the Asylum Office decided on the outcome of the procedure (Grupković, Jelačić Kojić, and Petronijević 2016).

This considered, the socio-political setting of Belgrade can be better understood, as a *fortress* entrance point to the EU for the migrants. The political climate of Serbia stayed land-locked in post-Yugoslav *in-betweenness,* implying its politics are both Brussels and Moscow-oriented (Kulić 2009). Simply put, the political situation reflected on migrants of the Balkan route is populist to a rather dysfunctional extent.

[9] either within Serbia or at the border

Image 2- a view of the BGWF construction site from the barracks, Igor Čoko, 2017, courtesy of the author

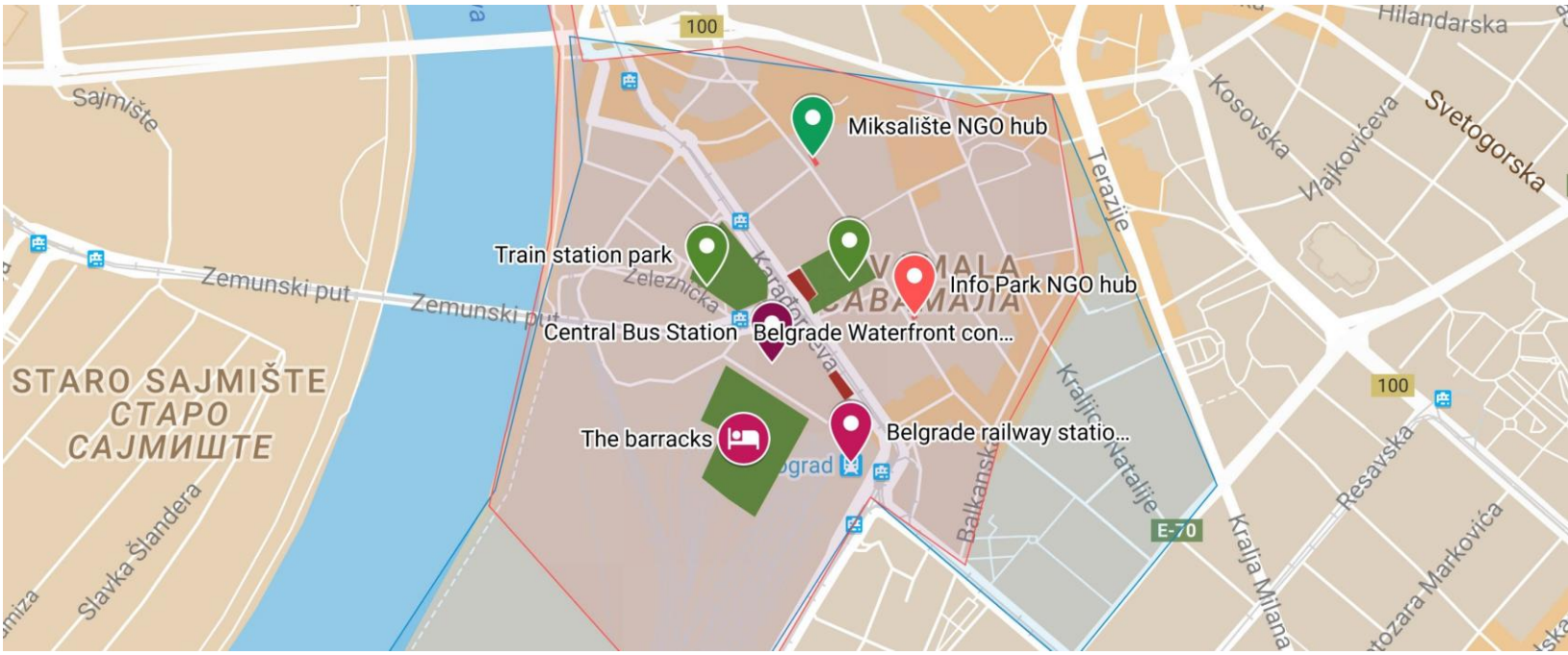
Quotidian migrant spaces of Savamala

[see an interactive map online]

As for Belgrade, it has always been a site of passage, making it difficult for any permanent lifestyles to prevail (Stojanović 2008). In a similar vein, the port district of Savamala, where my research was located, has played a significant role in the movement of peoples. Contrasting the

megalomaniac project of Belgrade Waterfront[10] lay Miksalište, Info Park and most strikingly – the *barracks.* The first two are diverse, local and international NGO hubs of multiple purposes (education, healthcare, food, etc.). The *barracks,* however, are an informal settlement based in abandoned portal storage buildings, inhabited by migrants who are not in the state provided premises. According to the conversations I have had, these, 1200 people in April 2017 were living there because of a general distrust in the (Serbian) authorities and the greater possibility to quickly get on transportation to the border[11]. Similarly, to the *barracks,* there were two parking lots whose lower level was transformed into a temporary settlement with tents. These 3 premises were located between different buildings of both the bus and the railway station, facilitating departure regardless of time (see *Map 1*). One park separates the stations and the *barracks* from the street Gavrila Principa. Miksalište and Info Park are located on this street, that if followed ends at *Afghan Park,* the main meeting point of smugglers and their prospective clients. On the little streets, full of railway-station styled hotels, several smuggler check-points are noticeable. *Phone cafes, internet cafes,* bars owned by smugglers, their favorite Serbian fast-food kiosks are hostile places that people, in general, tend to avoid[12]. With the development of the soon-to-be luxurious Belgrade Waterfront district, Savamala has been exposed to severe gentrification processes that leave a sensation of temporariness.

[10] The city authorities and an investor from the UAE are building a Dubai-like district on the Sava riverside, regardless of general architectural concerns about building *desertic* skyscrapers on the sides of a big river
[11] Unlike the camps that are located in the very outskirts of the city
[12] By this I mean the local population and the migrants



Map 1 Migration premises in Savamala, 2017, Google MyMaps

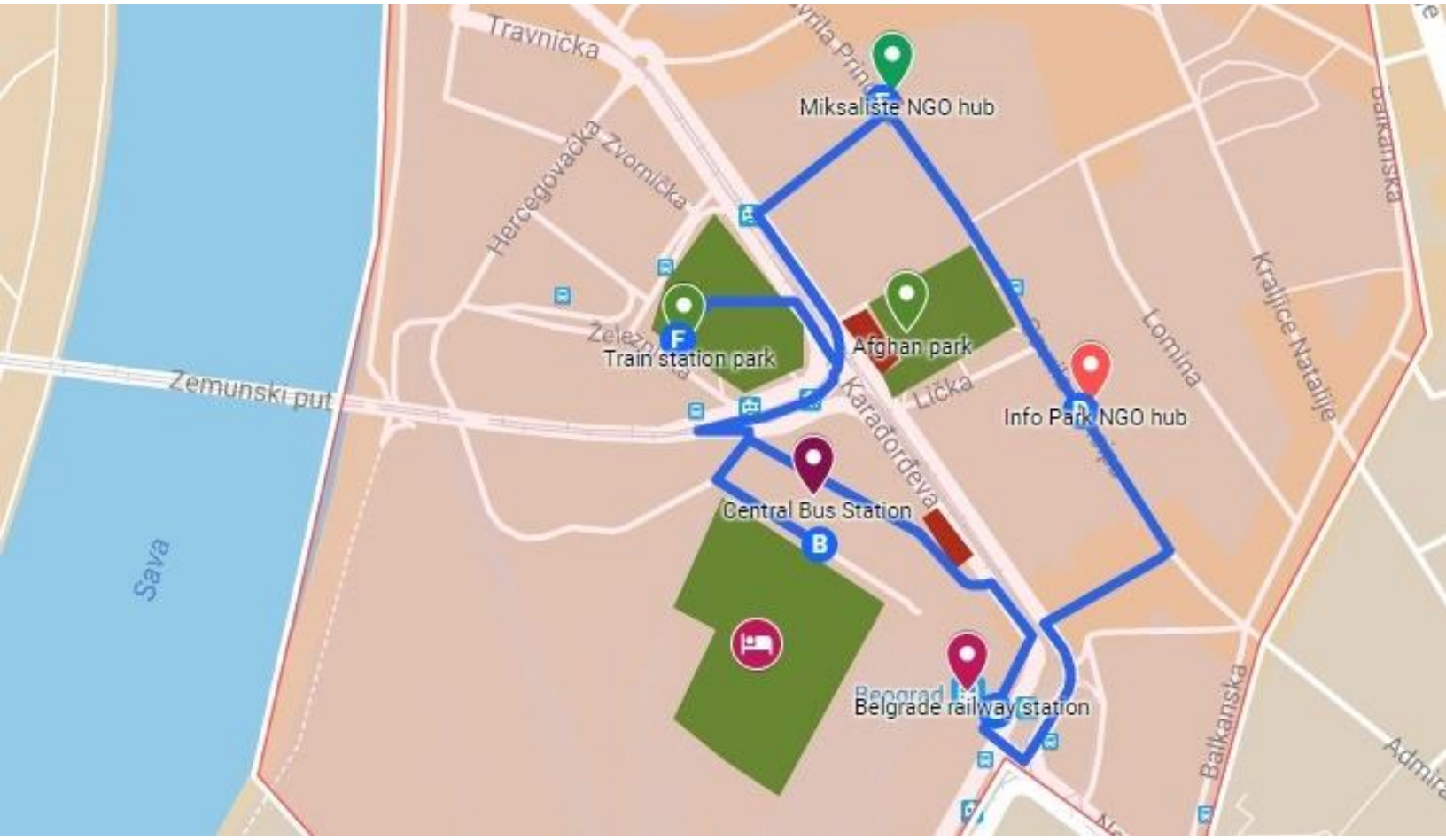
I will try to illustrate the space in to make my points clear: the main room where people are spending time welcomes about a couple of hundred people at the time, with no air conditioning. Space conveys a general ambiance of a massive waiting room, where men sit on the floor in groups and use their phones. Families occupy corners with chairs and tables and tend to communicate more in person, always keeping an eye on their smartphones occupying the nearby plugs. The main space is divided into sub-sections by canvas paravanes, permitting women to have some privacy on one side, and teenagers on the other. The main room has a "kitchen corner" where lunch is served everyday ay 1 pm when hundreds of people wait in line. However, *MSF*[13] and *Save the Children* have their own separate offices by the kitchen. Inside the *kid's room*, there is a *baby room* in the corner, transformed from a storage section to its current purpose. At the very end of the

[13] Médecins Sans Frontières

corridor, there are two toilettes, where people tend to take showers[14] by using the sink for that purpose. Consequently, the corridor connecting the main space to the *MSF* office is permanently flooded. Miksalište Refugee Aid NGO's offices are in the building connected to this one, where they manage the *supply room* and the *clothing section* from their office.

Miksalište is at its peak around 1 pm. Some people prefer to take the food to one of the nearby parks, and then return for the afternoon tea. Volunteers and NGO workers organizing these activities are the only *managerial* staff around, they keep track of the simple daily statistics such as counting people and asking about their origins. *Map 2* illustrates the typical quotidian movement of migrants I have met in Savamala. The pathways indicated between different points of interest equal to about 1.6km of walking if done once per day, yet my observations show that people tend to circulate more than once in this area. Belgrade is a peculiar place for refugee studies since the migrant spaces of Savamala function in relatively polarized ways between (un)regulated premises. The state has no physical offices in the area, but it depends on several immigration officers circulating around dressed as civilians. Their observations and notes are secret, as I was told by one of them, while he was commenting on my activities with suspicion. NGO activists and the state officials collaborate on a superficial basis, providing only the information they are required to by law. I observed relative animosity between the employees of diverse civilian organizations in Savamala and the state representatives. It seemed like, in the eyes of the humanitarian workers, they were the ones exposed and opposed to the influence of smugglers, while the police were acting as a neutral, passive factor.

[14] showers were under construction in 2016, but were stopped because of lacking funds



Map 2 - Observed everyday migrant routes in the district, 2017, Google MyMaps

Access and connectivity

Access to an internet connection and power plugs looked essential in my observation of the Miksalište dynamics. Wi-Fi and phone access did not seem to be a burning issue (cf. Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017a). Verbalized as an evidence, daily communication with relatives was, however, a possibility, rather than a rule for those owning personal smartphones[15]. Phones, thus seem to had become entirely internalized objects that offer the primary form of communication with intimate contacts (*cf.* Harney 2013, 549). As a common denominator, the smartphone comes

[15] As opposed to communitarian, which in my experience ranged from 2 to 23 people travelling in groups or families

into the equation of exile by offering people the opportunity of being in touch with their comfort zone, anytime and anywhere. The *ephemeral materiality* (Miller 2005, 4) of the mobile phones seems to make them an object even more crucial to exile than money. The ability of this device to transcend space and time is especially relevant to this research. Therefore, I take the smartphone as the essential object in the constant negotiation between people's exilic imagery and the world that physically surrounds them.

During conversations held with migrants around Savamala, most were carrying chargers on them. The cycles of the battery may alter people's habits and movement through space based on charging opportunities[16]. Yet, through the Balkan route, there are moments narrated as *dangerous* for keeping phone's power on. State border surveillance came across as a major preoccupation in smartphone use. It seemed to evoke fear of the institutional power exercised through surveillance systems. I would like to introduce the ethnographic data by opening a parenthesis of a situation of not simply phone absence, but a gendered one.

[16] Part of the interviewees live in distant camps and others sleep rough on parkings and barracks

CHAPTER I

SMARTPHONES AS VISUAL MEMORY REPOSITORIES

Image 3 - Photograph taken by the author, Savamala, 2017

In this chapter, I will touch upon a complex web of notions that are connected, as observed in my ethnographic work, in the migrant's daily use of smartphones. Firstly, I will explore the importance of everyday imagery in memory practices. Secondly, I will focus on the purposes and meanings of image sharing, based on levels of social intimacy between people. Thirdly, I will clarify the notion of affective images through the migrants' engagement with aesthetics. Finally, I will question the concept of the "absent", or what remains outside the photo frame – which images are not taken and why.

Communicating memory practices of 'wearable' devices

Apart from a merely communicational purpose, smartphones, or in Anna Reading's words, wearable devices (2008, 355) have a central role in people's memory practices, providing an immense and uninterruptedly available repository of images. Camera phones[17] keep on shaping the ways memories are produced, viewed, stored and shared. In general terms, memory practices in contemporary societies are shaped by two factors – the proliferation of photography (by its digitalization) and the wearability of camera phones (enabling photo production anytime, anywhere). Smartphones, thus, clearly incarnate the *omnia mea mecum porto* maxim as they inflate almost infinitely the opportunities for taking pictures. Everything, even the most minute and irrelevant quotidian experience are susceptible to becoming part of a group's repertoire of visual memories. The narrative importance of everyday life is visible, for example, in the recent smartphone applications development such as Snapchat, followed by other virtual giants like Facebook and Instagram, where user's daily experiences are shared with their contact lists by means of the multimedia messaging option called Share my day. Yet, a question arises about the

[17] I will use both terms – camera phone and smartphone interchangeably, depending on the function I want to emphasize, even though camera phone seems to have become an outdated term it serves my text's purpose.

difference between long-lasting memories and instantaneous daily visual communication.

Everyday images taken with smartphones become a sort of photo "evidence of existence",[18] possibly originating the overwhelming massification of *selfies* witnessed in the past few years. Oddly enough, the social uses of personal photography did not receive much attention from academia (Gye 2007a; Kindberg et al. 2005a). Individuals may be negotiating their self-understanding (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) through the communication of memories. However, a photography has the power of conveying a broader meaning than the one intended by the person who took it (N. A. Van House 2011, 131–32), and misrepresentation is always a possibility. The tensions of this identity negotiation processes through visuals become even more complex if we look into the experience of exile. During the time I spent in Miksalište, it became clear that social relationships are administered by photography primarily as a medium transcending communication, rather than form of memory construction. It is interesting to note that other forms of visual expression and communication came up as important among migrants and refugees. Video calls, for example, resurge as a passage between the 20th-century visual memory based on photography, and the current one that transforms images into immediate forms of communication. The moving image seems to have emotional effects that still photography cannot offer.

Another social function of communicating visual memories implies a negotiation of the public and the private spheres (Reading 2008, 361). More precisely, photographs can be employed as a sort of public testimony of existence that can create dialogues and links between people. This theoretical point made by Reading makes me think of an anecdote that happened during an interview with a Pakistani male focus group. We were sitting in a very busy place between the

[18] "Evidence of existence" might be considered a too dramatic concept. However, as we will see, in the context of exile, the photos of everyday life can become public testimonies of the living conditions of migrants and of their existence in a society that denies them any formal status.

railway and bus stations when an old lady approached us by curiously inquiring about our activity. To start with, she was eager to practice her English with Hassan and Yasser,[19] then her desire amplified upon seeing that she interrupted a family photo-viewing. She then insisted on joining us by presenting her family album. The object she pulled out of her purse was a life-long testimony of the places she visited around the world. However, this show-and-tell moment quickly transformed into a match-making session between an image of her granddaughter and Hassan. This was the only event where we were approached by random locals and I do believe that image swiping encouraged this lady to do so. This memory vignette leads to problematizing the smartphone's influence on people's relations to personal memory in general. On that matter, Nancy Van House and Elizabeth F. Churchill (2008, 296) suggested that memory is selective according to available socio-technological practices. Memory practices enabled by visual mediums, typically *worn* on the route of exile are central to this reflection.

Though often for immediate social use, the sample of images that were shown to me in Belgrade transcend communicational use and represent affective images, further analyzed in the following chapter. The ways in which people emotionally engage with viewing seems to be determined by two types: the long-lasting memories and immediate snapshots. Those photographs that can be taken as long-lasting memories are illustrating special occasions, or milestones in people's lives, just as camera photography used to do in non-professional use. Snapshots are produced in order to communicate an information or emotion, immediately shared with the chosen receiver (Gye 2007b). However, both are *emotional freight* carriers (Keightley and Pickering 2014, 578) that gain importance if immediately shared.

[19] A 22-year-old Pakistani man I will focus on later in this chapter.

Sharing is caring

How digital photography develops intimate visual co-presence

Photo-sharing has shifted from the 20th-century couch family gatherings around physical albums to albums being incorporated in one device. Smartphone photo albums did not change the human tendency of linear narrating with the help of visual repositories (Rubinstein 2005). Yet, sharing does not seem to be about having a manageable overview of personal memories anymore. Nowadays photographs can be shared in real time with specific or unspecific groups or individuals regardless of their location.

Rather than spreading mobile photo albums to wider circles, intimate mnemonic framework seems to function around deepening established relationships (Keightley and Pickering 2014, 587–88). While wearing a smartphone everywhere at every moment instant photo sharing results in creating a sense of presence and visual intimacy (Ito 2005), as illustrated in Eshani's quote:

> I take pictures because I send them to my family because they asked for, they want to know about my son, to see how is he doing. I receive family pictures from my sister and from my mother, children's pictures. I get happy when I get those when I get to see them. When I am in a good mood I look at those pictures. Because when I see a sad picture I become sad, the whole day I become sad.

Her words resonate on the "distant closeness" (N. A. Van House 2011, 131) or the act of "[d]rawing someone into an experience in real time despite being separated by a distance represented a compelling way to stay close" (Kindberg et al. 2005a, 46). This type of action operates by a certain reciprocity in visual exchange, meaning that for every sent picture there is one expected in return (Okabe and Ito 2006, 12), a rather Maussian concept. The decision on whom to share which material with is made upon intimacy levels and types of relationships. Sharing photos is mostly done with people to whom there is no need for another kind of explanations

(Kindberg et al. 2005a, 48). Sharing ambient awareness with those who are not present in the same location.

Cautiously choose with whom photo-remembering is shared was a present narrative among the people I have met in Miksalište. Internet privacy was theorized by a number of authors regarding visual imagery sharing (Keightley and Pickering 2014, 587; N. Van House and Churchill 2008; N. A. Van House 2011; Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017b) with warnings about internet privacy consciousness. However, I believe this topic should be regarded through a more relational lens, aiming at decoding the dynamics of individual's private and public lives expressed virtually or physically. Several men, I spoke to expressed great doubts about keeping images of their family on their smartphones since they were used communally. Yasser,[20] a 22-year-old Pakistani builder, Hassan and I met in front of the *barracks*, phrased it in this way:

> There are no family pictures on my phone, I deleted them. Because also my other friends use this phone and I don't like that people see my family pictures. Because no one likes other men to see their family like this. No, we are a religious culture, we don't like that people see our family in pictures.

Smartphones as memory repositories seem to give the option to their users not to share certain mementos with anyone. This little space of intimacy seems to be negotiated with their environments in different ways, always seemingly motivated by affect people experience when looking at images.

[20] Freshly arrived after working in Saudi Arabia, Yasser was in a group of three men. Even before shaking my hand he asked for my name so that I could receive money for him through Western Union. I was very surprised by his directness and relied on Hassan at first.

Affective imagery of the exilic imaginary

"Photographs are often treated as extensions of the people represented" (N. A. Van House 2011, 131)

The type of images that are shared with a very selected group of people can be called affective images, taken with the purpose of enhancing a mutual experience with somebody who is far away (Gye 2007a, 284). Affective, unlike functional images, are mostly for social use and personal reflection or reminiscing (Kindberg et al. 2005b). Samim,[21] a 15-year-old traveling in a peer group of eight illustrates:

> I have pictures of me and my youngest brother. I will show you his pictures. He is very small. (gets emotional upon showing me the image, stops on it for a while and then continues to group photos) This is me with all the people from Syria and Afghanistan in Bulgaria. These pictures are not good; the other ones were better. I send these pictures to my brother and I look at pictures of my family when I miss them.

Like wallet pictures, images of important people are portable, yet smartphone images are possible to capture at any moment. Samim's reminiscence over his stolen phone stresses the importance of portable quality that digital memories have if stored safely:

> In that phone, I had a lot of pictures. Pictures of my family, all my friends in Afghanistan which I took. I miss them, of course. I have a small brother and a sister. When I miss them, I call them. I also check on GPS images of towns, streets...

This exceptionally friendly Afghani teenager offered a glimpse into the reach of affective images as far bigger than it might seem. He relates not only to portraits but to other forms of visual representations of space he is attached to – Google Maps Street View is an example he gave in the

[21] Samim's father is in England and he finances his journey to London, where he wants to study IT. He gave out an impression of a connoisseur of the spaces we were seeing him at. He proudly approached us in the middle of a cricket game as we were passing through the *barracks,* showing more intimacy with us when his friends were looking.

rest of the conversation. Perhaps in this chapter sound is unjustly disregarded from its affective value, but hearing a person's voice remains one of the emotional focuses of most communications I witnessed. What is more, his relationship to space and people binds him to a certain community. Group identity seems to be reinforced by visuals Samim seeks for and aesthetics that his circles might identify with. Affective images, thus, have a role in identity-building on several levels of exilic imagery – people seem to visually and emotionally relate to what brings them aesthetic pleasure. Samim also told me that he keeps in his phone "funny pictures" that make him laugh. Also, he likes to have images of car models he fancies in his gallery. Similarly, Gayan, a Sri Lankan auto-mechanic has images of motorcycles and cars as ownership aspirations that he reflects on. In this manner, visual imagery of their aspirations may be building a part of their exilic imaginary.

Yasser's playful stories about online dating he is engaged in went beyond amusing his faithful entourage of young men.[22] He said something that later underlined the cruciality of aesthetics in his exilic imaginary under construction on the Balkan route:

> [with girls] we share pictures. When they look at pictures of this country they're happy. I go to the market, I take pictures of shops, they like it. I go to the river to take pictures, with ships. They feel happy when they see me and pretty, nice views. That makes them feel happy. Girls also send me their pictures.

By constructing aesthetics with the smartphone, he might interpret the meaning of his surrounding, an unknown city he has never heard of before. Yasser relates to and is influenced by the urban setting around him, as aesthetics seem to evoke affect. Beauty shots and landscape images seem to be part of a wider mechanism of communicating through the aesthetics of a place or person. The process of posing and choosing scenery for photo shootings might imply a strive

[22] We were always followed by at least two other men who did not speak English and Hassan, my main informant and interpreter. These two men made the ambient of the conversation so entertaining that Milka, an older citizen decided to randomly join us.

for normalization of the everyday life Yasser is exposed to in his complex episode of exile. What is more, bragging about multiple virtual romantic relationships brings humor to his entourage. However, the irregular bureaucratic status is what seems to make the legal limbo of Belgrade dehumanizing. Yasser contradicts this dehumanization by bragging about being a Casanova, while he is decoding the local aesthetics and in a way, *owning* them. Thus, the aesthetic experience should not be considered irrelevant. Particularly in extreme situations, where the human condition is put into question, the search for beauty may become fundamental, as in that passage narrated by Primo Levi, when in Auschwitz he was reciting Dante to a fellow prisoner and suddenly forgot the next verse: "I would give today's soup to know how to connect… the last lines" (Levi 1987, 120). As if the aesthetic value of life was more important to his humanity than the very food that kept him alive. All proportions kept, refugees in Belgrade are also dehumanized by an authoritarian system that denies them basic access to a recognized and decent existence, and in similar ways look for those apparently unimportant experiences that reaffirm their humanity. A picture of the Danube, a selfie during the sunset, a tree, an old building or a bunch of flowers, become the images of the little beauty they find around them and are able to enthusiastically share with their intimate circles. At this point of social engagement, taking away the phone might gain another dimension of loss.

On the less romantic level of socialization, Samim engages in aesthetics through humor and nature-gazing:

> I use Instagram and Facebook the most, posting pictures of landscapes. I like to take pictures in the night when the background is full of lights, at the river. We often go to the river here. We go there for pictures. I like it there, it's a big river.

Samim elaborates on sharing outside of his kinship circles. By posting photographs of places on Facebook, he lets people know where he is and when; then waits for their comments.

This implies mapping the information of the progress of his journey with several hundred people, which was rarely the case with adults I had met. Further, Samim made me think that the school socialization he was used to might be, at least to a certain level, replaced by chatting with his friends for long hours in Miksalište. Nurani, a 24-year-old from Kabul, said that she chats with her cousins from Europe every day, all day long. Verbal communication is only one part of her engagement with the phone, she posts photographs on Facebook almost daily, unlike the women with children I have spoken to:

> I like to post beautiful things. I don't like to put my picture on Facebook, I just like lovely things beautiful pictures, nothing else. I like pictures of flowers, herbs, some poems that have a good meaning. I send pictures of myself or of my mother on WhatsApp.

Affect seems to be evoked not only by specific visual representations of people, space, and objects, but personal memory may transcend the visual form. However, in theory, Lisa Gye and Susan Sontag draw the reader's attention to the ways access to photo material shapes what is important or not. Particularly, Sontag's comment that "whatever cannot be photographed becomes less important" is underlined by Gye in her article (Gye on Sontag 2007a). I would like to underline the events on the road of exile that are, certainly both *newsworthy* and *picture worthy,* yet people are prevented from shooting images for various security reasons. The latter is nicely illustrated by Eshani, explaining how her need of taking her phone out to ask for help escalated during her forced stay in Bulgaria:

> It would be very difficult to be a refugee without the smartphone. This happened to me once, in Bulgaria, we were not allowed to take phone calls and to use the phone there was no Internet. There were some Smugglers in the room and they would take our money and mobiles. […] The only person who kept their phone with me and another old lady. We had our phone in some bags and other things and they did not take it away. That time I had my phone in my bag secretly I could not use it. So, I was feeling like the world's most helpless woman. I wanted

> to somehow make a call to my brother tell him what I am going through and to tell them to give us food. We were without food for four days. Yes, for three or four days. We were about to die.

Eshani's words imply a long-lasting memory of what was left out of the photo frame. Situations described as difficult in these conversations were, in fact, suggesting a deeper understanding of the exilic imaginary of affect is needed.

Absent visuals

One episode of crossing the Mediterranean Sea left an especially telling impression on me. Namely, Saba[23] and her family paid 13,000 euros per person to cross from Turkey to Germany[24] out of fear because she cannot swim. They thought their boat was going to be better since it was the most expensive one and ended up in a journey with 70 other people, on an inflatable boat like any other. No one was navigating the boat, she said. The current was taking them to the shore of a Greek island when a bigger boat started circling around theirs and trying to sink it. She continues by judging herself, visibly irritated and glad she can speak to someone about it:

> At that time, I was so stupid, I had to record all that. But everyone told us: "don't record it!" […] I wish I could record that. Because they told us: "if you record such things, their police, they will take your mobiles and destroy them". They were just making circles to misbalance us. I was sitting here, and the water is here (showing behind her back) coming on me, and it was again and again and again, for maybe 2 or 3 hours. And after that, we don't know where they went, they just left. We were just praying, we were just showing the kids, there were maybe 20 kids with us on the ship. We were just saying "Please for God's sake, for the children, leave us".

[23] 26-year-old English teacher from middle-class Kabul. We had many informal conversations that shaped our, rather intimate relationship. Either in my flat or in a nearby hotel we used to have meals together in these intense 48h we spend getting to know each other. Saba, for example, was managing the lives of her husband, her younger brother and her cousin. She easily finds the legal information she needs by browsing the internet on her phone.

[24] The smuggling networks are organized by selling offers to illegally transport people from point A to point B. the "client's" money is locked with a third party in the departure place and unlocked when she/he reaches their destination. Exceptions apply to this model

Finally, a moment of visuality made their cruelty even more complex: there were two men on the boat recording the people on the boat they were trying to sink: “they were recording—Saba continued—, I don't know why. They took the mobiles, cameras, 2 or 3 boys that were on that ship, oh yes, I forgot that they were recording”.

This gives, in part, an answer to the question – which pictures are not taken. Suffering images of refugees are most frequently taken by outsiders, photo-journalists whose professional calling is at least doubtable.[25]. Saba describes the peer-pressure on the boat for self-censorship:

> Saba: I don't usually use video, only sometimes. The people told us: " don't record, if these men see your recordings, they will do bad things to us, maybe they will hit our ship". That's why everyone put their mobiles in their hands. Nobody recorded. Yes, there was a mobile with everyone. But just because of our safety we didn't record. Just when this person sees that we are recording, so they will see us, no? Because of that, we don't record.

Saba expressed frustration and regret of her own “stupidity” when not recording this violent episode. With the absence of visual imagery, there was no proof that this had ever happened, let alone the general feeling that undocumented migrants are disregarded by the police on the Balkan route[26]. Her fear of drowning, accentuated by her disability to swim, could have been interlaced with the anger she felt about the dangerous situation. If this had ended tragically, no one would know that they had not simply drowned. The regret regarding the self-imposed censorship might have added to the experience of not being treated like persons, let alone citizens. The exilic experience is linked to the absent (home, family, comforts, aspirations, etc.) with images, through the smartphone. Without these images, the absent is exceedingly absent, threatening to become

[25] These images are produced in situations that could be seen as disturbing. They are the visual material feeding the mass media and generating an image produced by outsiders. My point is not to differentiate this work from the fact that I am also an outsider, but to distinguish this approach from essentializing.

[26] One of my NGO informants was closely working with the police on targeting smuggling networks. She/he explained that the local police tend not to react on trafficking crimes that do not involve Serbian citizens

inexistent. So even the most utterly real situations are susceptible of being forgotten, because without visuals they seem non-communicable.

CHAPTER II

AFFECT MEDIATIONS

Image 4 - Photograph taken by the author, Savamala, 2017

Sara Ahmed reminds us of the etymology of the word emotion, coming from the Latin verb "to move, to move out" - *emovere*. Affect and migration is, thus, a line of thinking not so new to our language. Emotions have been central to discussions in a wide range of disciplines. However, connecting emotions to femininity evidences the dark past of our language and conceptions, rooted in evolutionary thinking.[27] This chapter is not a techno-psychologized account on the analysis of emotions (Ahmed 2014, 2–11), but an effort to understand how people express through narratives what they are willing to share, that is, how emotions are involved in the publicizing of private experiences.[28.] Firstly, I will focus on positive affect and relations to phones extending Ahmed's analytical approach to the exilic imaginary. Then, emotions of loss, fear and female empathy will be discussed concluding with a gendered perspective.

Certain objects, according to Sara Ahmed, become "saturated with affect". They represent individual and collective interactions charged with emotions, as the feelings people develop for those objects make them fetishes (2014, 11). An object whose original purpose is to be an ICT device, a tool for communication, might acquire additional qualities that are subjectively constructed. Its value, thus, goes beyond practical means. This is what objects overcharged with affect possess – affective transcendental qualities.

Emotions work by shaping surfaces of an individual or collective bodies (Ahmed 2014, 11). Subsequently, the author also implies that attributes of emotions are, in fact, gendered. I am interested in what people express through emotional narratives that include or are told through smartphones. One of the purposes of researching affect is to challenge the oversimplification and homogenization of refugeehood under the outsiders' gaze. Academic research tends to reify the

[27] Darwin suggested that emotions are a sign of evolutionary primitivism, states Ahmed.
[28] Both personally and by means of devices

experience of exile, the quotidian life of the migrants, with all its nuances and almost infinite subjectivity is fit into the box of "general human trauma". Refugeehood can be and often is traumatic, but it is also so much more. By focusing on the affective dimension, through my ethnographic work, I was able to deconstruct the reified experience of exile and find subtle, little pieces of "normality" or the strong desire and intention of "normalization" of life.

On the Western Balkan route, like in non-exilic circumstances, smartphones can play out as providers of a sense of security and content. Nurani, for instance, spoke of her new phone with great pleasure, emphasizing the good relationship she has with her brother who brought it for her. However, it was a soothing gift after a turbulent period:

> My brother was really happy and he said: "you went through a lot, for all the dangers that are past you I must bring you a special gift". The road was really hard, I cannot explain how hard our way was to get here. My brother promised: "when I come to see you I will bring you a special gift". And he brought me this mobile phone.

I complimented her on her phone and she seemed happy, proud. It was covered in glitter. Her family, composed of three women of different generations traveling together had five phones at that point. The two old ones were used as memory storage in the camp, while the three new ones were daily used. Both of Nurani's phones could be experienced as symbolically important. The new one as a gift reinforcing kinship and the old as a reminder of her bravery in overcoming difficult episodes. Others, mostly men, were not of Nurani's luck. They told me about the traumatic events in their encounters with the Bulgarian border police. All their possessions apart from the clothes they were wearing were set on fire, while their phones were either stolen or broken in front of each owner. The destruction of the phones might imply several layers of emotion. State authorities destroying may make it feel more relevant to own one as a migrant or refugee. Moreover, its absence can become a personal symbol of state cruelty, difficult episodes and last

but not least – the loss of personal memories.

Mediating loss

The complex emotional web constructed toward and with the help of smartphones puts an important part of people's intimate lives into risk from being violated. Nevertheless**,** Ahmed claims that fearing the disappearance of an object is more profound than the simple relationship between the object of fear and the person (2014, 65). Nearly every conversation I have recorded has mentioned a stolen phone episode. The most recurrent scenario was the Bulgarian police, followed by the Croatian police, random Serbian citizens and other refugees in Belgrade's *Afghan Park.*[29]

In Yasser and Gayan's cases, theft happened while they were video calling their families. The loss of the smartphone at the moment of amplified emotional experience such as video calling can be particularly imposing for the individual (Panagakos and Horst 2006, 113; Federman 2006, 437). An intimate moment is interrupted and taken away from the person on the spot. What is more, this violence is simultaneously transmitted to their close ones through their sudden virtual absence. Mediating emotions through smartphone devices helps understand the ways in which technology enables the intervention of emotions and feelings stressing fear, love or intimacy through internet devices (Panagakos and Horst 2006, 119).

As Gayan explained, in most cases people know who stole their phone. However, the legal limbo they are in, as well as precarity in general, might push them away from reacting against these episodes.

> I know who stole my mobile. A Pakistani guy. I asked him and he said: "I don't have your mobile". Because he is using my mobile, my application numbers,

[29] The area around the train station is the main migration zone of transit for refugees, one of the parks around accordingly gained the name *Afghan park*, known for smuggling deals.

> everything. I think it is very difficult to be a refugee without a mobile. And also in general. We have no money, we are poor people. I understand why the other one stole my phone.

What is more, the losing a mobile phone is expensive and time-consuming. Part of the attachment to phones might come from the time and effort people put into interacting with the device in order to shape it to their ideal usage (Federman 2006). People participate in creating a highly personalized and tactile virtual space. The phone's screen becomes an extension of their personalities and intimate lives. As Mark Federman notes (2006, 8), an object that is tactile bridges virtual barriers, making the physical and the cyber coexist. When I asked people to show me the way they used their phones and apps, it reminded me of someone showing me their carefully arranged desk, speaking of each pencil's use with care. For example, Eshani prioritized verbal and textual communication, yet the teenagers I spoke to were attached to different functions of the device. Through apps such as Instagram, the object gives them the possibility of producing something aesthetically pleasing like images that were discussed in Chapter I.

Moreover, the way individuals interact with apps and read information from their devices seems to vary and open an infinite virtual space to people who currently have no physical private space of theirs. This little tactile and carefully ordered cyber universe is personalized enough so that people can say that it is the most important out of the few possessions they have at the given moment (Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017a, 241).

Narratives on stolen phones also imply danger of personal data leaking where it should not be accessed. In Yasser's words: "It is dangerous to have it stolen because I have family pictures I have contacts. I changed all accounts and passwords." And this is Gayan: "I told my family, my mobile is with another guy, don't call me. Don't call this mobile. I heard pictures inside, of my family, from school, yes. Too many pictures I had in that phone. I had all sorts of pictures in my

phone, my friends (...) I had those pictures on my phone."

Anxiety tends to "stick" to objects, according to Sara Ahmed. It is potentially involved in a more generalized fear of others accessing one's phone. In these cases, it can be even seen as a mode of attachment to objects (Ahmed 2014, 65). To liberate himself from this type of fear, Yasser seems to have unwillingly adapted his practices (like many others I have spoken to). Measures confronting the fear of jeopardized privacy were the following:

> There no family pictures on my phone, I deleted them. Because also my other friends use this phone and I don't like that people see my family pictures. Because no one likes other men to see their family like this. No, we are a religious culture, we don't like that people see our family in pictures.

MEDIATING FEAR

My friend Selim[30], a 25-year-old political science student from Syria, shared with me the experience of crossing the Mediterranean, which had left a big psychological impact on him, still visible when we met. Seven months before our meeting, he was crossing from Turkey to Greece by boat, knowing that he will be the one navigating it.

> At night, the smuggler knocked on my door and said: "Prepare yourself, that's your group." It was 51 people; I was the 52nd. My whole group was minors, children, me and my friends who were nine men, and twelve women with children.
>
> [In Turkey I did] nothing. I just paid the smuggler to let me stay in the hotel, and watched YouTube learn how to drive a boat. The first week I spent on searching, the second week of study. Watching YouTube almost 15 hours every day.
>
> They said: "ok at least you are from Latakia"[31]. They don't know about the river

[30]Selim was one of the most important people we have met in 2016. He was working for an international NGO in Miksalište, and helped us occasionally with interpreting. We engaged in dozens of dialogues on exile and he proved to be a passionate story-teller.

[31] A costal town in Syria

and they didn't see the sea before.

> At six in the morning, the smuggler with the Turkish police told us: "Ok, the sea is yours for two hours. After two hours if you're not gone we'll put you in jail." I said, "Ok, just give me one hour and I am ready to leave". I prepared the boat and spoke to the people because I didn't have experience. They told me "You will make it, you are from Latakia, a good swimmer." There was one family from Aleppo - a wife, husband and 3 children; The woman fell into the sea between Turkey and Greece. Her husband came to me and said, "Please save my wife!"

Since he was the only one who knew how to navigate the boat, he faced the choice of abandoning a group of people who had never seen the sea before and saving the woman or staying in the boat and leaving her behind.

> The husband was kissing my arms and legs and begged me. I told him "Ok, just hold on to this boat, I will go to your wife." She was about two kilometers far from me. two kilometers, I am a smoker, it destroyed me. (…)

Selim managed to get the woman back onto the boat but was not able to climb himself. He was completely exhausted:

> I was screaming "Guys just keep moving and I will cross the sea swimming". I was floating because I knew I would not make it, I just wanted that group to make it. I knew that if the police had caught them it would be good because that part of the sea belonged to Greece, not Turkey. They made it and they told the police: "There is one guy, drowning in the sea". It was near Farmakonisi island, a military one. After two and a half hours they came to me. I thought that I would die but I didn't. When I arrived at Farmakonisi I was shocked that I was alive. They took me to the hospital because a lot of water was inside my body and it was cold (October weather).

After this experience he was, as he puts it "completely freaking out", overwhelmed by fear for other people's lives. Ahmed reminds us that "[f]ear involves an anticipation of hurt or injury" (Ahmed 2014, 65). This episode, that he clearly labeled as distressing in our conversations shaped the rest of his *route,* until reaching Belgrade. He spent some time in Greece trying to find his way through the Western Balkan route. Taking videos or photographs was out of the question, he says,

since he was the one responsible for driving people who couldn't swim. Later he explained that the experience on the boat was so difficult to recuperate from that he hadn't taken any photos in Greece, at all. Selim decided to stop in Belgrade and was granted asylum for 5 years.

Mediating Female empathy

"The women from our country, I am just sad for them, I just want to stop the rule of girls getting married at young age."

Who is entitled to which emotion seems to be regulated by social differences such as class, gender, race or ethnicity. It is important to notice that this might have framed the answers people offered to me to a large extent. As a consequence of different entitlement to nuanced emotions, there is a large variety of verbal articulation differing between social categories when expressing a particular emotion (Ahmed 2014, 43).

Eshani[32]'s rational view of her restricted freedoms in Afghanistan seems to have made her detached from the urban space she comes from. Her words showed the lack of identification with land, but she seems to do so with her gender and migrant situation (Franz 2003). Her narration was becoming increasingly suggestive throughout our conversation, that she even ended with an idea of a preparative system for migrant women before they enter the EU. We connected on this topic and were speaking about her desire for mass-scale female migrant education.

> [Being in Belgrade] is the best time for them to get education because they will be moving to Europe and they must be alert for that for life, education and women's rights there. (…) [I]t takes a lot of time for her to adjust to that European country. But, if we tell her that life there is like this and women are

[32] Eshani is a 32-year-old woman and single mother of a 10-year-old. She works for an NGO based in Miksalište and spends her professional and private time trying to help disseminate correct and necessary information among migrant women. Part of her overwhelming phone usage is due to her work, but privately she seems to be bothered by extensive virtual presence of friends and family. I will come back to her accounts on

> treated like this and children like this, then, maybe it will stay in their mind and they will be ready for the life there in Europe. So, this is my request for you. For the women, especially [W]omen's rights are very much restricted.

However, before saying goodbye, she was relatively reluctant on giving me her phone number because of the possibility that I share it with other refugees. The ambiguity between privacy and intimacy influenced our relationship. Yet, Eshani was openly certain about her connection with the boundaries Kabul provided for her:

> I do not miss Kabul at all. Because Kabul was not a place for me. People may be missing their countries. I do not miss it because I was not respected there. That's why I do not miss it. I am much happier here than in my country. Because at least I have my freedom of thinking, of going somewhere with my son, to a restaurant, for an ice cream, or for a walk. In my country, I was not even able to go for a walk. A woman that has no freedom of having a walk with her son, he is 10 years old, what kind of life is that?

Her son's education was stressed, as distant as possible from sexist limitations she has experienced. She is sure that her son will treat his wife in a respectful way. Eshani's concern about his future education was articulated through a series of questions she posed on schooling systems in her prospective asylum countries. The information she gets through her phone is vital to her constructions of new networks and ways of life that are ahead. Her aspirations might need to be sustained by a dynamic acceptance of new cultures, leaving the old behavior behind, at the doors of Europe. The pity she feels for women from Afghanistan and child marriage she decided to illustrate by a personal story of her mother's early marriage. To make a final point she directed me to see Rania, a 15-year-old who has just arrived at Miksalište with a child.

The contrast between the two could not be sharper. Rania, a young woman from rural Afghanistan had never owned a phone. She was 15 years old and had given a birth to a child a few days before leaving her country. I met them in Miksalište's *baby room,* a very small space with a long window facing the busy street. Two friendly women were working there, folding mountains

of baby clothes in improvised closets. Rania's mattress was laying on a base of Pumper's, showing the improvised character of this changing room. My interpreter Hassan and I were sitting opposite her. Dressed in black with her hijab resting on the shoulders, she spoke Pashto to Hassan while, to my surprise, breastfeeding in front of us. However, I could not take a picture of her impressive face features, my camera was directed to her baby instead. Rania had been living in the baby room for two days since her husband was separated from her and sent to a camp in Southern Serbia. Rania occasionally receives messages transmitted through a male relative of her husband's. She was not allowed to use nor own a phone. Even though she knew how to use it, she could only do so in her husband's presence, then there are no problems between them she said. Rania told us she usually plays video games or listens to happy Pashto songs on his phone. She understood that it was a rather unfamiliar scenario for me and kindly explained that among women only refugees from certain places own phones.

This vignette shows the possibility of social access to mobile phones being denied. According to scholars, these restrictions can be related to age, gender or class and can represent continued practices from their lives in origin countries (Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017a, 246), exactly the cultural practices Eshani is strongly criticizing, and happy to be free from. Rania's way of "normalizing" her life seems to be entirely different, as she reproduces her old habits and aspirations. However, these contrasting ways of adapting to the new cultural space make socialization between women from different backgrounds a complex phenomenon.

Image 5 Rania's 3-month-old boy, image taken by the author, Miksalište, April 2017

Nurani and her mother had to leave Kabul because of her sister Nur's abusive ex-husband. The man was mentally and physically harassing her, Nurani explained in English while Nur was sitting silently next to us. Still, she was living with him while she had access to spending time with her three children. Words of feminist thought resonate well: "emotions can attach us to the very conditions of our subordination" (Ahmed 2014, 12). When Nur's ex-husband forbade her from seeing their children, she left Kabul with Nurani and their mother. The three women finally decided to join their brothers in London. Nurani said:

> It's because of her ex-husband that we decided to come here. He is a mental person. A lot because of him in the past and because of him, we decided to leave. She was forbidden from seeing her sons, it is really horrible for her. Because of this, we left all over stuff in Kabul. We did not have any economic problems, we were at risk because he said: "if we catch you we will kill you, we will cut your nose and do things like that". Because of that we were afraid and decided to go and be next to my brothers.

Ahmed prompts that time is crucial to fear – people are afraid of an approaching object. Similarly, pain is "an unpleasant form of intensity", anticipated by fear in a temporal dimension (Ahmed 2014, 65). Therefore, these vignettes of affect illustrate what the people I have met were willing to share in the light of their future. The general security situation in Kabul seems to be the reason for which most people I spoke to left. While explaining to us how they were living in abundance in their country with an openly angry tone, Saba phrased the security issues rather concisely as forcing them to leave "[j]ust because of this stupid security problem." She also referred to the suicide bombing reasons as "stupid". It is important to note the nuances and directions of affect in these cases - the difference between fear and anxiety lays in the lack of an object in anxious feelings. (Ahmed 2014, 64).

Anna Reading interestingly argues that women have the primary role in keeping up with and deepening social circles (Reading 2008, 119), yet the democratization of personal mobiles involves emotional burdens (Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017b). With the massification of smartphones the opportunities for communication naturally multiplied, but so did the channels for emotional labor through the device. The following vignette with Eshani will illustrate the oversaturating effects that tech-democratization has brought. During my time in Miksalište, I noted Eshani, as the busiest and most intriguing woman around. Unsurprisingly, she was strongly bothered by the continuous presence of her phone. She described her somewhat ambiguous relationship with the smartphone:

> What should I say, I am sometimes very much tired of my phone? I want to turn it off and keep it like that, I am so tired of my phone apps, Viber calling, Viber calls. Also, my family, I have to talk to them a lot, my sisters, my brothers, my mother, my aunt, some other relatives, who is there, in Afghanistan. Sometimes I think then I will delete each and everything, and I will do it. This is my promise; I will do it (giggles). I do not have my own life here. I mean I am so busy with the phone sometimes I also need relaxation; I want to be free. I am sorry to say this, even when I go to the toilet I am using my phone. Even if I try to keep it away and I go to the toilet, my son will say: "Mama there's a call for you"; "Mama, there is a message for you"; "Mama an important call for you". So, what kind of life is this? I mean, I want to enjoy my life, I don't want to hurry to the toilet, to the shower, fear that there might be someone trying to call me, or to message me, I want to be my own. I should keep it simple just the old Nokia only for the call. I always like to keep things simple.

Eshani's statement strikes by the desire for ICT simplicity. Nevertheless, she is very devoted in communicating through images with her family. The ambiguous relationship she has with her smartphone might result from socially negotiating relations of care and control. More specifically, her availability is not as innocent as it might sound. The instant character of her mobile replies can be indeed seen as digital emotional labor. It could be argued that smartphones, in this case, simply create more pathways for emotional labor. Privacy and intimacy deriving from this device are, therefore, in constant negotiation, normalizing her life through communication.

The visuals she shares with her family convey her nuclear family's presence, but also the caring control she has as a single mother who managed to leave Afghanistan and, against all odds, has a stable life in Serbia. Before leaving she suffered from physical and mental health issues, bounded to being a single housewife connected to the identity of a man that has disappeared eight years before her departure. These experiences Eshani characterized as limiting, seem to have been restricting her personhood in complex ways (Parkin 1999). Her phone, however, gives access to communicating and creating dialogues that may help to recover parts of her personhood. What is more, it makes people connect to other things that are probably more fundamental to a person's eyes than papers.

As it was implied through privacy issues Yasser expressed, the smartphone is also a repository of the most intimate, non-shareable memories. Access to these mementos might be a way of recovering what was dehumanized by bureaucratic treatments. Sharing content, as many of my conversations witnessed, provide recognition from others in an extra-juridical way. The way this research approaches exile is *du bas en haut*, focusing on the way people experience the world, and not to owning or not a type of document.

The somewhat heavy presence of the personal memory device is decoded through a gendered lens by Anna Reading noting that "women 'wear' their phone even within the home" (Reading 2008, 359). Eshani's duty as a family member might represent a "form of remembering between intimates" (Keightley and Pickering 2014, 587). Theoretical approaches directed this thesis onto questioning the importance of the male ability to control emotions (Ahmed 2014). As Eshani said: "Men, they don't care, they get adjusted to new places. They are more powerful in adjusting themselves than women. Because of this, women are used not to be asking for help for themselves". I will let Eshani's words resonate on the need of addressing migrant women's needs both analytically and through activist endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Yael Navaro-Yashin (2008) went a step further with conceiving technology in migration by regarding ICT devices as "pacifist" agents, bridging geographic and political divides in a cyberspace of dialogue. In this research, I had the intention to shed light on the reciprocal relationship between people in migration and their smartphones, by focusing on the affective outcomes of this rapport.

Screens are a constant of everyday life since the 20th century, their presence logically seems to influence the formation of exilic imaginary migrants and refugees are establishing in their affective lives. People in extreme situations seem to search for what humanizes them through the tools they have at hand. Refugees find segments of their humanity in their smartphones, in the virtual worlds that are filled with emotions and possibilities to connect with others, relatives, friends, even strangers. It is also on their phones that some find a truly private realm, protected from the eyes of others around them. A fundamental quality in situations where everything else seems to be shared, the toilet, the shower, the dining space, the sleeping space. What is more, phones are supposed to help maintain a sense of oneself beyond a certain role – that of a migrant (Wall, Otis Campbell, and Janbek 2017a, 241). Through technology, some transcend their precarious legal status.

Finally, there are a couple of methodological points I would like to draw the attention to in these concluding remarks. I faced important linguistic limitations in this research while using English as a lingua franca. Drawing on the very positive feedback I had from migrants and refugees to the few basic Farsi sentences I can use, languages deserve a more central point in social sciences. The bonds I have created with women could have had deeper communicational implications

without the male interpreter.

The information gathered in Belgrade is instructive. However, more accounts focusing on female migrant populations are needed (Hyndman 2010). Feminist cultural geography needs more research on the specific ways that migrant women engage and adapt to new spaces. I observed hints of specificities involved in female physical movement through the NGO premises and the streets of Savamala. The boundaries of the district seem to have left a stronger impact on women than on men, often illustrating a different way of existing in public and private spheres. Migrant private spheres are importantly changed by the loss of intimate space in refugee premises, which is also noteworthy.

Social media activities are another, possibly virtual field of interest for the anthropology of emotions. Affective messaging and posting are the tip of the iceberg I did not get to tackle it in this research. Although networking may look more socially consequential, affective text and image messaging seem to have noticeable emotional outcomes. Images people produce, view, share and store seem deeply rooted in migrant's and refugee's *self-understanding* (Brubaker and Cooper 2000).

Fieldwork has dimensions we are unprepared for. Pulling personal strains to get Hassan out of a camp resembling a detention center is one example that proves Jennifer Hyndman about the field not being "temporally bound, something periodic and over there" (2001, 270). The field and home, thus, tend and need to coincide. Contrary to my experience, I have not witnessed an important enough emphasis on emotions and human contact in academic syllabi I was exposed to in several European countries. To produce this research, it was pivotal for our group in 2016 to meet a psychologist specialized in exile. The training she gave us on contact with first-level traumatized people was decisive in our understanding of the emotional labor migration research

involves. Being psychologically prepared for human contact in delicate situations involved that we learned to leave some space for our own, according to psychologists, second-level trauma. The researcher, after all, influences the field as much as the field changes her/him in return.

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