

INDEPENDENT VOLUNTEERS AND EUROPE'S HUMANITARIAN BORDERS

By

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A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2017
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Master of Arts 2017
Immigration and Settlement Studies
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ABSTRACT

During Europe's refugee so-called crisis, a volunteering phenomenon emerged. These volunteers mobilized around sites such as refugee camps, transit stations, border crossings to provide humanitarian aid to refugees on the move along the Balkan route. This paper uses semi-structured interviews to examine these volunteers' work and motivations by situating them in the nexus of humanitarianism and state securitization. First, I draw from William Walters' "humanitarian border" theoretical notions to demonstrate how new humanitarian borders have emerged within Europe. Then I demonstrate how independent or "grassroots" volunteers are challenging but also becoming implicit in the reinforcement of these humanitarian borders.

Key words: volunteers; Europe; refugees; humanitarianism; borders

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge that this work would not have been possible without the financial support from Yeates School of Graduate Studies and the Immigration Settlement and Studies Program at Ryerson University.

I express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Harald Bauder for his guidance and mentorship over the course of my graduate studies. Your support and feedback have been invaluable in my research.

My gratitude also extends to Dr. J Olaf Kleist at University of Osnabrück's Institute of Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) for his guidance and encouragement with the direction of my research.

I would also like to thank Dr. Francis Hare for his insightful comments in helping me develop my ideas and writing of this MRP.

Finally, I am grateful for my wonderful family, partner and friends whose love and support have carried me throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Discussion of Findings.....	22
Conclusion	42
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	44
References.....	46

Introduction

Europe's refugee "crisis" arguably captured the world's attention as international media outlets reported extensively (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2017) on the increase of refugee arrivals around the Mediterranean but also those on the move along the Balkan route. Around the same time, there emerged a movement of European and international volunteers travelling to the Balkan route to assist refugees and migrants (McLaughlin, 2015; Gunter, 2015; Löffler & McVeigh, 2016). Stories of individuals terminating their vacation early to volunteer with refugees along the Balkan route are prominent in media reports; similarly, their humanitarian efforts have been applauded ("Young Europeans rally around refugees", 2015). While there has been a preliminary body of academic literature examining the European Union (EU)'s response to the refugee crisis (Greenhill, 2016), there is not much known about these volunteers and their role in the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees during this "crisis". Given the literature about the management of volunteers in humanitarian relief work (Lassiter, Khademi & Taaffe, 2015) and the role of such volunteers (Simsa, 2017; Kitching, Haavik, Tandstad, Zaman & Darj, 2016), this movement should be examined critically to help understand who can deliver humanitarian aid? Who are recipients of humanitarian aid? Under what conditions and terms is such aid received?

In this paper, I propose understanding the phenomenon within a humanitarian and securitization framework to help bring forward a critical analysis of the role independent volunteers play in the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees and how such a role is impacted by relations with the nation-state. This is significant given the lack of political EU cohesion over the handling of the refugee crossings in 2015 and subsequent EU implementation of policies and agreements in 2016 to stem the flow of refugee arrivals and shift refugee-sharing responsibilities

to other countries (Human Rights Watch, 2016). The purpose of this study is not to devalue or delegitimize the work of independent volunteers (which continues to be performed); such work is essential towards the alleviation of continued suffering experienced by refugees and migrants. It is my hope though that the knowledge generated can help non-state actors with developing and advocating for more effective and equitable humanitarian responses, but also initiate further discussion on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders regarding the protection of refugees. I first present a literature review on Europe's refugee crisis and volunteering phenomenon, followed by a discussion of the politics of humanitarianism and its intersection with securitization. This literature review provides the basis of my study. I then provide an overview of my methodology. I also draw from theoretical notions of William Walters' (2011) 'humanitarian border' to situate my study's key findings and demonstrate how independent volunteers resist but also help reinforce the humanitarian border through their work assisting refugees travelling along the Balkan route. Independent volunteers can be understood as "grassroots", "ad-hoc" or "freelance" volunteers. They are self-organized, some working in non-registered (or later become registered) groups while others work alone.

Literature Review

This literature review is the result of a process using initial search terms such as "volunteers", "refugees", "refugee crisis", "Europe refugee crisis" and "humanitarianism" to find relevant journal articles in Ryerson University's library catalogue and Google Scholar. Coding also helped identify which themes/concepts were more relevant than others to assist with article retrieval; I read through journal articles' reference lists to find pertinent authors/articles. The

program Mendeley was used to manage and organize journal articles and reflections to advance the discussion of my study's topic.

Europe's Refugee "Crisis"

The refugee "crisis" in Europe reached its peak in 2015. In that year, they received the highest number of first-time asylum claims recorded (Eurostat, 2016) and unauthorized border crossings on the Western Balkan route had increased sixteen-fold from 2014 (Frontex, n.d.). The route mentioned begins in Greece (with refugees arriving via the Eastern Mediterranean Route from Turkey) and stretches its way up north through former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia; this route is commonly used to reach destination countries located in Western Europe (Frontex, n.d.). The route will henceforth be referred to as the "Balkan route" for the rest of this paper. Most users of this migratory route are from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia (UNHCR, 2015, p.3). This should not come as a surprise considering the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that over fifty percent of refugees globally come from Syria (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million) (UNHCR, 2016, p. 3). The war in Syria is contributing to the number of refugees being produced but there have also been new and unresolved conflicts in 2015 that have helped contributed to the substantial number of people displaced globally (UNHCR, 2016, p.6). Moreover, migrants from non-EU member states such as Kosovo and Albania are also found to be contributing to the number of people travelling along the Balkan route (Lilyanova, 2016, p.2).

Thus, the mixed flow of refugees and migrants along the Balkan route have prompted debate among media as to which categories, "refugee" or "migrant" should even be used to describe the crisis (Ruz, 2015). For example, the demands to protect refugees could arguably be

diminished using “migrant crisis” whereas “refugee crisis” could strengthen them (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). Media discourses across EU member states have varied concerning the crisis. Austrian and Slovenian media were found to have employed a securitization discourse, constructing refugee arrivals as a mass threat to nation-state borders (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Vezovnik, 2017). German media adopted a generally receptive attitude towards refugees at the beginning (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017), encouraged by German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s affirmations of “we can handle this” or *Wir schaffen das* (Bauder, 2016, p.71). However, the tone did not last long—the word “crisis” was used more and more to associate with the number of refugee arrivals; German media and policy-makers started questioning their ability to manage such a situation (Bauder, 2016). The tone took a notable negative shift after the New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Cologne, allegedly carried out by African migrants (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017).

The use of “crisis” to describe the situation is also questioned since “crisis” can encourage the situation to be perceived synchronically, contributing to the depoliticization of ongoing refugee crossings. Instead, the so-called “crisis” paints this situation as one that requires immediate, urgent action—without regard to the larger historical context that accounts for its emergence or allowing for planning of the future (Ticktin, 2016). At the same time, it overlooks the role of EU’s border practices and regime in the manifestation of such an event (Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2016). Afouxenidis, Petrou, Kandyli, Tramountanis & Giannaki (2017) also reminds us that the securitization and border regime of the EU had been taking place even before these crossings. Menéndez (2016) brings further attention to the failure of the asymmetrical common EU asylum system as well as contradictions in EU and national policies that have contributed to the intensification of the situation. Greenhill (2016) asserts that even prior to this

situation, the United Nations (UN) was dealing with funding shortfalls and cuts to address humanitarian needs in Syria; the emergence of this “crisis” means additional funding promises coming now to UNHCR are too late (p. 330). If anything, this situation has exposed not only the dissidence among EU member-states about refugee protection but, more importantly, the heavy costs of inaction towards refugee protection, symbolised by the death of Syrian toddler, Aylan Kurdi (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). This tragedy was significant in motivating individuals to mobilize as volunteers and help provide humanitarian aid to refugees on the move (Cusumano, 2017; Sandri, 2017).

Volunteers and Refugee Crossings along the Balkan Route

To date, there is a small but growing body of literature devoted to examining the emergence of the volunteering phenomenon during Europe’s refugee “crisis”. As this phenomenon continues to evolve, it is imperative that academics understand how this phenomenon is situated in relation to the plight of refugees but also what it signifies. Several authors have already taken upon the task of shedding light on these volunteers who mobilize in support of refugees at different points along migratory routes to Europe (Chtouris & Miller, 2017; Cusumano, 2017; Kende, Lantos, Belinszky, Csaba & Lukács, 2017; Sandri, 2017; Simsa, 2017). Volunteers are found to be members of various civil society actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector but also grassroot organizations (Simsa, 2017). The role of these volunteers in the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees, specifically in affected states along the Balkan route, has been documented by previous studies: volunteers help provide medical care, accommodation and legal aid help, translation and language courses, to name a few (Chtouris & Miller, 2017; Kende et al., 2017; Simsa, 2017). Their humanitarian

work is wide-ranging to the extent that in some cases, volunteers were running their own refugee camps (Simsa, 2017).

Volunteers in this phenomenon are not only engaged in humanitarian aid but have extensive networks (Chtouris & Miller, 2017) which enable them to play a key role in increasing awareness among the public. For O'Hagan (2013), humanitarian non-state actors (NSA) play a role in the dissemination of information through different forms of media but they also help to generate new knowledge. Specifically, this knowledge generation can take on the form of volunteers being a "witness" or engaging in *témoignage*, a core founding principle of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) that underscores their commitment to speak out against abuse witnessed and bringing it to the public consciousness (MSF Canada, n.d.). Fassin (2013) however critiques that in the process of bearing witness, there arises the challenge of representation: "[w]hen they defend their causes, however, they translate social realities into other social realities. They transform combatants or civilians into victims. They change their experience of violence and violations into suffering" (p.45). Nonetheless, volunteers themselves can enhance or expand their political awareness through solidarity initiatives (Theodossopoulos, 2016). The exploration of volunteers' experiences is then a major step towards understanding this phenomenon, of what it means to volunteer with refugees but also the impact of this phenomenon on the roles and responsibilities within the refugee "crisis".

There also needs to be a greater examination of these volunteers' motivations, given the heterogeneity of volunteers within the phenomenon and presence in different nation-states along the Balkan route. For example, distrust in the government's ability to fulfill their duties in supporting refugees is the most common motivator among Austrian civil society groups. A personal need to help as well as their family's own immigration history also served as motivators

(Simsa, 2017). For volunteers in Hungary, their affiliation with movements in support of refugees and moral convictions served as key motivators in light of many not possessing previous volunteer experience. Interestingly, volunteers helping refugees were viewed by the government as political dissidents (Kende et al, 2017). While moral attitudes serve as a common motivator among different volunteer studies, Fassin (2005) challenges the assertion that humanitarianism is separate from the political. This discussion will be later expanded in the literature review, but insofar highlights areas that could be expanded upon in the examination of this volunteering phenomenon.

There also remain questions as to whether volunteers can sustain their work. One concern is whether groups or organizations have adequate psychological supports available for volunteers given the emotional and psychological strain or distress they may experience (Jones & Williamson, 2014; Sifaki-Pistolla, Chatzea, Vlachaki, Melidoniotis & Pistolla, 2017). Volunteers have also been targets of hostility, aggression or violence by their local communities (Sandri, 2017; Simsa, 2017), underscoring the need to address how volunteers can be supported in their work. It is unclear whether the volunteering phenomenon can act as a sustainable solution to the plight of refugees (Simsa, 2017) because humanitarian work is often focused on the short-term than building capacity for the long-term (Castañeda, 2011). Karakayali and Kleist (2016) also raise the challenge of maintaining the phenomenon since volunteers themselves lament how their provided ad-hoc support is not efficiently planned. Volunteers' financial reliance upon donations presents another challenge (Sandri, 2017; Simsa, 2017). At the same time, nation-states may not necessarily have incentive to get involved if volunteers are too successful themselves in delivering humanitarian aid (Castañeda, 2011). Despite bigger organizations such as UNHCR struggling to respond to refugee arrivals, there have also arisen

tensions between these bigger organizations and grassroots volunteers—grassroots volunteers are perceived to have challenges with constant turnover; alignment of efforts; and appropriate training for volunteers (Morgan, 2015). These tensions should be explored to also understand how the volunteering phenomenon is affecting the international humanitarian order.

Situating Volunteers in the Politics of Humanitarianism

There is limited research on the emergence of independent volunteers assisting refugees within the politics of humanitarianism literature. Additionally, there is a segment among these independent volunteers who are politically active (Chtouris & Miller, 2017); these volunteers differ from morally-driven volunteers by considering themselves as “solidarity citizens” (p.72) as they avoid replicating the “prevailing ideology” (p.72) in their work. The need to understand the work of such volunteers is essential as Erickson (2012) contends how volunteers working with refugees can help reproduce the nation-state’s criteria of who is a “worthy citizen” while also leaving other types of hierarchies (i.e. race, culture, gender) unchallenged. Chtouris and Miller (2017) however argue that volunteers can provide refugees with the opportunity to self-organize or help them become engaged in organizations that promote their autonomy. While volunteers can help promote refugee empowerment, Ilcan and Rygiel (2015) assert that “resiliency humanitarianism” under neoliberal governmentality, where refugees are encouraged to partake in the management of daily life in the camp, is actually a disempowering process since refugees are re-constructed as resilient and empowered subjects who are encouraged to accept rather than resist conditions in the camp, thus “responsibilizing” them of their futures (pp.347-348). Furthermore, power inequalities between humanitarian aid providers and refugees can also

promote refugees to perform their “deservingness” by presenting themselves as “helpless sufferers” (Huschke, 2014, p.353).

The volunteering phenomenon raises not only questions about the role and obligations that nation-states have regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid and protection of refugees, but also what kind of role independent volunteers play. For Sandri (2017), this volunteer movement can offer hope for a new model of humanitarian aid that is not reliant upon institutional help, acting as a powerful symbol against Europe’s repressive migratory policies. Kende et al. (2017) however contends that the presence of humanitarian aid can help deflect attention away from nation-states’ inaction towards the situation. This apolitical focus further masks how volunteers may be unknowingly promoting social inequalities between themselves and refugees (Theodossopoulos, 2016). Humanitarianism discourse can reinforce such inequalities as it operates on the binary categorization of refugees as “innocent” or “guilty”, where innocence necessitates a passive victim who is deemed worth saving, thus dismissing other refugees who are unable to clearly fit into this category (Ticktin, 2016, p.259). In the process, “[i]nnocence establishes a hierarchical relationship: those who care and those who are cared for” (Ticktin, 2016, pp. 259-260). In other words, this relationship constructs a “saviour” and a “victim”, a construction that denies the opportunity to recognize our own complicity in the refugees’ situation as well as preventing us from perceiving them as equals (Ticktin, 2016, p.261). Interestingly, the process to humanise refugees in humanitarian discourse can still fail to avoid the trappings of paternalism, as Kirkwood (2017) found that British parliamentarians during the refugee crossings still operated from their own moral framework to recognize refugees as worthy recipients of their support and sympathy, reinforcing the hierarchical difference between who

provides compassion and who deserves to receive it. Thus, volunteers themselves are not immune from the politics of humanitarianism.

Humanitarianism and State Securitization

Moreover, previous studies examining independent volunteers have not adequately explored how they are situated within the nexus of humanitarianism and state securitization. As briefly mentioned earlier, Fassin (2005) asserts that humanitarianism is not immune from politics but entrenched—a departure from Agamben’s separation of the political and humanitarian (p.368). O’Hagan (2013) argues while humanitarian non-state actors can pave the way for new expressions of solidarity in the international humanitarian order, they must still deal with the complex relations with the state (p.120). The nation-state’s securitization practices of refugees further pose a significant challenge to the work of humanitarians in their efforts to support and protect refugees. Pallister-Wilkins (2015) points out the irony of how border authorities are policing groups that need humanitarian aid while these groups are also constructed as risks that need to be controlled; the paradox comes when those who are at risk become a risk once they enter the space marked by the border and border police (p.54). Humanitarianism has also become implicated in the agenda of securitization practices. Williams (2015) discusses how “[s]imultaneously, the criminalization and regulation of non-governmental forms of humanitarian assistance, shrink alternate spaces of care outside the enforcement regime. In turn, receiving advanced medical care is increasingly aligned with and contingent upon subsequent deportation” (p.17).

Moreover, Pallister-Wilkins (2015) explains Frontex (the EU’s border authority)’s use of humanitarian discourse to legitimize themselves as “moral actors”; this discourse is used to

justify their intervention and securitization practices. Perkowski (2016) contributes to this understanding by demonstrating how humanitarianism, human rights and securitization discourses converge to reinforce securitization practices in defense of European borders; humanitarianism discourse is reliant upon the victim/saviour dichotomy while human rights depend on a victim/saviour/perpetuator and securitization needs “illegals” that can be juxtaposed to citizens in need of protection. Moreover Perkowski (2016) argues that it is a fallacy to understand humanitarianism and human rights as separate from securitization. It is also important to understand that that humanitarianism and securitization is not a process where one precedes another, as this overlooks how they operate dynamically (Walters, 2011).

Yet, Mavelli (2017) argues that governments are not just concerned about the governing and care of refugees, but they are also concerned about the governing and care of their own populations. Specifically, they achieve this by maintaining their populations’ emotional and material care by how they govern and care for refugees. Mavelli (2017) uses the example of Germany to explain this emotional care by noting how deliberations of justice and compassion towards Syrian refugees can help reproduce Germans’ understanding of themselves as caring and committed. Material care is attained by weighing the refugees’ potential as a workforce (through assessment of ages and skillset) to help sustain the state’s welfare system (p.3). This thus provides credence to Herzog (2009) who argues how humanitarianism is embedded in nationalism, and how both are complementary elements in that they help to reinforce the nation-state’s position in the global order (p.200). Walters (2011) however criticizes such a biopolitical framework of understanding humanitarianism because “... if terms like biopolitics and biopower are to have any critical purchase, we should also note all those instances where they combine with other forms of power and other specifications of the subject” (p.152).

Humanitarian responses can then be also understood in relation to a nation-state's identity as Bauder (2009) describes how German immigration law has constructed the nation-state as a protector of human rights while refugees and asylum seekers' country of origin are considered "deficient" of such rights (pp.270-271). Thorburn Stern (2016) argues that a nation-state's self-image as a "bastion of humanitarianism" (p.13) does not really have much impact on refugee policies during crises, but rather functions as a mechanism to some limit in averting harsh policies from being adopted; if this image is challenged in times of crises where they are faced with high numbers of refugee arrivals, the nation-state will then rationalize their approach as being the most realistic given the context. Hence, there is a knowledge gap about the greater implications of the humanitarian work performed by independent volunteers in relation to how humanitarianism and securitization are intertwined.

Using the 'Humanitarian Border' as a Theoretical Framework

To fill this knowledge gap, this paper draws on the theoretical notions of William Walters' (2011) 'humanitarian border' to interpret the study's key findings (which are later discussed in this paper). While there is no clear definition, the humanitarian border is understood as the "reinvention of the border as a space of humanitarian government" (p.138). The reinvention occurs when securitization practices become normalized and depoliticized by humanitarian interventions at the border. Yet, according to Walters (2011), humanitarian borders do not emerge everywhere but only in particular locations and conditions, "...where gradients of wealth and poverty, citizenship and non-citizenship appear especially sharply" (p.145) between the Global North and Global South. But its emergence is further complicated by other factors such as NGOs' decisions on which issues, injustices and suffering to devote resource towards

and for which to raise awareness about (p.147). Also, the humanitarian border is not a fixed geography but changes according to the routes taken by migrants and refugees (p.148). When a humanitarian border emerges, it is understood as a site where the nation-state and other actors interact, deal with and contest each other (p.154). Walters (2011) considers the humanitarian border as a “zone of qualification” (p.148) where NGOS inspect sites (i.e. detention centres) to see whether they fail or adhere to international refugee protection norms and standards (p.148). The border is also seen as a site of knowledge production; specifically, humanitarian knowledge is produced and shaped by the progression of events. Additionally, “it is a knowledge which depends much more upon the work of ad hoc missions, delegations, and visits whose task it is to gather data and testimony in the field” (p.151).

It is my hope that the application of these theoretical notions will build upon the knowledge gap concerning the volunteering phenomenon by situating and considering the broader implications of volunteers’ work with refugees in relation to the humanitarianism-securitization nexus. Thus, my study seeks to address how volunteers assist refugees travelling along the Balkan route and what does it mean for volunteers to assist refugees. These two secondary research questions help to answer the study’s primary question: how do volunteers resist or become implicated in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border? In the next section, I provide an overview of my methodology to demonstrate how I address these research questions, but also identify the limitations to my study before proceeding to a discussion of key findings and conclusions.

Methodology

Researcher Location

Before I outline how I address the research questions, it is important to acknowledge the paradigm I subscribe to as a researcher as it has without a doubt shaped the formulation of my research questions. The philosophical assumptions I hold are closest to the transformative research paradigm. As a researcher, I believe that the aim of inquiry is to incite some form of social change in peoples' lives whether that is through a shift in policy or thinking. This is reinforced by my substantive belief in the importance of giving back to one's community through volunteer experience. My exposure to different social issues (local and global) have shaped my worldview. Therefore, it is not surprising that my ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs fall under the key tenets of the transformative research paradigm.

Ontologically, I do not believe in an objective reality but one that is shaped by power produced from hierarchies and oppressive systems. For Mertens (2007), the ontological tenet of the transformative paradigm is that "[t]here are multiple realities that are socially constructed, but it is necessary to be explicit about the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial, gender, age, and disability values that define realities" (p. 216). I agree with Mertens on the principle of how different values define realities, but question her use of multiple realities. Mertens (2010) later clarifies the difference between the transformative and constructivist paradigm's multiple realities, asserting "... [the transformative paradigm] diverges from this belief in that it holds that there is one reality about which there are multiple opinions" (p.470). Mertens (2010) asserts that the acceptance of one reality prompts the question of whose version of reality is getting privileged (pp.470-471).

Drawing from this ontological position, I believe the reality of the refugee crossings is saturated by versions offered by governments and intergovernmental organizations like UNHCR, both which hold political power, and whose worldview may be rooted in high privilege. Recognizing these stakeholders' various positions of power and privilege led me to seek alternate versions of the refugee crossings (such as one offered by volunteers). Volunteers were selected since they work directly with refugees, providing insight to challenges associated with the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees as volunteerism helps foster civic participation and engagement (United Nations Volunteers, 2011). Ultimately, their perspectives can help contribute towards the better protection of refugees. This is supported by my substantive belief that refugees have the right to seek asylum and nation-states have an obligation to protect refugees. Epistemologically, I believe knowledge is formed from our lived experiences—where we work, study and live are all contexts that influences how we form knowledge. Knowledge is formed in interaction, exchanges with one another. Mertens (2007) speaks of the researcher-study participant 'interactive link' that must exist to uncover these versions of reality (Mertens, 2007, p.216). Guba and Lincoln (1994) refers to this 'interactive link' as being influenced by the researcher and participants' values (p.110). For Mertens (2009), "[k]nowledge is neither absolute nor relative; it is constructed in a context of power and privilege with consequences attached to which version of knowledge is given privilege" (p.48). In sum, knowledge is formed through the researcher's interaction with study participants; knowledge formed is also shaped by the location of the researcher and study participants' values and privilege. My epistemological position then supports the qualitative approach taken in this study to establish this 'interactive link'. Additionally, reflexivity is incorporated in my study given my position that certain values impact the formation of knowledge. Schwandt (2007) defines reflexivity as "...the process of critical

self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth" (p.260).

Strategies to incorporate reflexivity included reviewing interview transcripts again after the first analysis and consulting my supervisor for feedback (Berger, 2015, p.230).

Research Approach and Strategies

To help answer the research questions, I employed a qualitative approach to understand the emergence of a volunteering phenomenon and its implications in a political context. A qualitative approach was necessary to sufficiently answer the 'How' component of my research questions. Limited data about the volunteering phenomenon also underscored the importance of taking a qualitative approach. Flick (2006) explains that as new social developments occur, social researchers are using inductive rather than deductive strategies to understand these developments (p.12). The consequence is that the phenomenon can be adequately explored and key variables, concepts and themes to be identified for further research; this is made possible because of the focus and value placed on locating rich descriptions in the qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.9). This contrasts with the quantitative approach, which is often reliant upon mathematical and statistical data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.9). The emphasis of obtaining rich descriptions is also used as a measure of reliability in the qualitative approach. Collingridge and Gantt (2008) contends "...reliable qualitative methods consistently produce rich and meaningful descriptions of phenomena" (p.390). Since a qualitative approach can answer the research questions adequately by itself, a mixed-methods approach is not needed (Klassen, Creswell, Plano Clark, Smith, & Meissner, 2012, p. 378). Moreover, this approach offers flexibility in probing or obtaining clarification on participants' responses. A qualitative approach further permits the practice of reflexivity as research is not value-free, meaning that a

qualitative research process considers the values/bias of participants but also researcher's (Flick, 2006, p.16).

Specifically, a case study method was adopted as the research strategy. Phenomenology could have been applied to this study to understand the participants' perspectives of the phenomena experienced (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008, p.393) but I do not believe it is a strategy that allows the study's research questions to be sufficiently addressed. At the forefront of my study is not just the examination of volunteers' experiences but also the implications of these experiences shaped within a political context. For this reason, a case study is more appropriate especially when it is difficult to discern a phenomenon from its context (Yin, 1981, p.99).

A case study also allows for the examination and identification of the environment in which a phenomenon emerged, what caused it to emerge and what consequences are produced (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p.314). Since there is limited knowledge about volunteers assisting refugees and the research questions are focused on a specific phenomenon that emerged within a specific geography (Balkan route) and timeframe (2015 to Summer 2017), a case study approach is logical. Gerring (2004) defines case study as:

... an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units. A unit connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon—e.g., a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person—observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time. (p.342)

In this study, the case consists of independent volunteers from Germany. This case helps address the research questions posed as there is a lack of information on volunteers from Germany. It is also an important case because Germany is a top destination country for refugees and migrants (UNHCR, 2015, p.11). In 2016, the country accounted for 60% of first-time asylum

claims in the EU and had the highest number of first-time asylum applicants to habitants (Eurostat, 2017). During the refugee crossings, Germany distinguished itself from their European counterparts with Chancellor Angela Merkel's 'open-door' policy, temporarily opening German borders to asylum-seekers (Hall & Lichfield, 2015). This openness has also been accompanied with the emergence of a 'Welcome Culture' or *Willkommenskultur*, promoting civil society involvement in the assistance of refugees (Funk, 2016, p.292). However, Balder (2016) points out the contradictions of this response with Germany's reinstatement of border controls with Austria; decrease of financial payments to support refugees; acceleration of failed asylum claimants' deportations; and listing Balkan countries as "safe countries"—such measures, as Bauder (2016) suggests, reflects Germany's shift in trying to manage the refugee situation. The country thus makes for an interesting case to help provide a more comprehensive overview of the volunteering phenomenon.

Sample

The sample thus consists of three participants from Germany who meet the following inclusion criteria: are adults (18 years or older); are presently volunteering or has volunteered with refugees/migrants along the Balkan route; and can communicate in English. Adults are targeted because they make up most of the volunteer demographic in Germany (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2010, p.35). Participants are required to have volunteer experience with refugees/migrants travelling along the Balkan route because the study's focus is on volunteers and how they help refugees/migrants. Originally, the study inclusion criteria focused exclusively on volunteers who had acquired such volunteer experience with a German non-profit organization. However, this was later expanded to include independent

volunteers from Germany as they proved to be more active during the refugee crossings. Communication in English was required since I do not have proficiency in the German language. I was not able to provide translation services either due to a lack of resources and funding. This is a limitation of the study.

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling. For Schutt (2004), snowball sampling is used to reach populations that are difficult for the researcher to identify or access (p.151). For me, it was difficult to identify this population since I was not a German national. My unfamiliarity with German grassroots self-organized structures, organizations and networks also posed a barrier. Thus, I was positioned as an “outsider”. With the guidance of my host supervisor at the University of Osnabrück, I identified German non-profit organizations and independent volunteer groups to help in my recruitment of participants. Using contact information publicly available on the Internet (websites), I approached these non-profit organizations and independent volunteer groups by e-mail and requested their permission to circulate a recruitment e-mail on my behalf to their volunteers. If the organization or group had a Facebook page or group, I also requested their permission to post a recruitment notice on my behalf to their Facebook followers or members.

Potential participants interested in the project were provided with information about the study, the nature of their participation and my contact information. E-mail was used as the recruitment method because of the emergence of online databases at the local and regional level in recent years to promote services and volunteer opportunities in Germany (European Volunteer Centre, 2012, p.11). Facebook was also targeted because many independent volunteer groups were found to be more active on this social media platform. E-mail and Facebook made it possible to conduct a tailored recruitment approach. These recruitment channels also enabled a

greater reach of participants who are not necessarily restricted to a specific geographic region. This is especially important since the study was recruiting from all of Germany and recruiting for participants who shared a specific type of volunteer experience (Hamilton and Bowers, 2006, p.826). Recruitment for this study followed a Research Ethics Board-approved protocol.

Data Collection Instruments, Processes and Analysis

The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. All interviews were conducted over Skype as this was the most feasible option due to limited funding and resources. A semi-structured interview is “...generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p.314). The study used an interview guide (see Appendix A) and field notes as data collection instruments. An interview guide consists of questions to structure the flow of conversation in an interview (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). It “...provides the invaluable link between the research problem, research questions, past relevant literature and the sought after data that can fill the gap identified by the researcher” (Krauss et al., 2009, p.246). Not only did an interview guide offer structure to ensure the study’s research questions were addressed, but it provided flexibility in allowing subject areas to be explored that are not outlined in the guide. The guide also enabled follow-up questions to be asked (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interview guide however was sensitive to my comfort and skill in asking questions, maintaining flow and knowing how to probe and ask follow-up questions so rich descriptive answers are solicited. I solicited the feedback of supervisors to improve this data collection tool (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). Field notes on the other hand are “[n]otes that describe what has been

observed, heard, or otherwise experienced in a participant observation study. These notes usually are written after the observational session” (Schutt, 2004, p. I-12). While notes were taken briefly during the semi-structured interview, more comprehensive field notes were taken right after the interview (Schutt, 2004, p.293). Field notes were used because they helped capture enormous detail about the phenomenon. They are also helpful in drawing connections between ideas, creating awareness of novel concepts and theories (Schutt, 2004, p.293). Field notes also allow for critical reflection, creating awareness of location as a researcher in relation to participants (Maharaj, 2016).

Data of the study was recorded with Call Recorder software (specific for recording Skype audio and video calls) with the consent of the participant. Audio files were transcribed into text in Microsoft Word. The participant had the opportunity to review the interview transcripts for accuracy and clarification. To keep track of transcripts and codes, I used NVivo, a qualitative data software program that helps researchers organize and analyze data. NVivo was used to keep track of transcriptions (QSR International, n.d.). Microsoft Excel was used to track recruitment progress, interview logistical arrangements and overall study timelines. Unfortunately, data saturation was not reached due to limited recruitment timelines and financial resources. Coding was the data analysis strategy used. I started with open coding, which is the first pass over the data collected, where “[t]he researcher locates themes and assigns initial codes or labels in a first attempt to condense the mass of data into categories” (Neuman, 2004, p.321). After open coding is completed, axial coding was used to further analyze the initial codes or labels before clustering them according to related concepts, themes or ideas. The last step was selective coding where the central themes of the data were established and I re-examined the data again in its entirety to support the case of these central themes. As for data interpretation strategies, I re-examined the

initial analysis after a certain time to check if interpretation had changed. This was to incorporate a reflexivity practice into the data interpretation process.

Limitations

The study is limited by its sample size as only three independent volunteers (all German) were recruited. Independent volunteers are evidently heterogeneous and encompass a multitude of different socio-political positions. Analyzing more independent volunteers as well as different civil society actors would be useful to broadly understanding the work and motivations of civil society, and how differences might exist along organizational structure, size, composition, work and mission. Due to the study's two-month timeline, I was unable to account for all these perspectives. Since I do not have proficiency in German, I was unable to read or analyze research written in German that explored the role of volunteers in the refugee "crisis". I was unable to conduct interviews in German and did not have translation services available due to lack of funding/resources. Another limitation is that the study cannot account for other stakeholders (i.e. refugees/migrants, state officials and intergovernmental organizations) engaged in the delivery of humanitarian aid. However, it should be emphasized that these are all possible areas for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Emergence of Humanitarian Borders along the Balkan Route

Applying Walters' humanitarian border lens, I argue that a new humanitarian border has emerged along the Balkan route, specifically at sites where volunteers are delivering humanitarian aid to refugees in the presence of military/police authorities. As part of my

discussion of findings, I draw on interviews from the study to demonstrate how independent volunteers are resisting but may also become implicated in the reinforcement of humanitarian border. To understand how new humanitarian borders emerged during Europe's rise of refugee crossings, one needs to understand where independent volunteers are delivering humanitarian aid. From the interviews, participants¹ reported travelling to several countries along the Balkan route (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece) on multiple occasions to assist refugees when crossings reached its height in 2015. It is no accident that volunteers are travelling to these countries (as well as others) along the Balkan route, considering the series of securitized responses that have been implemented against refugees. For example, Hungary had responded by using tear gas and water cannons against refugees (Akkoc, 2015) and later constructed a razor-wired fence along the shared border with Serbia and Croatia (Dearden, 2016). Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia had implemented border closures, thus stranding refugees in Greece (Kingsley, 2016). While the zone around the Mediterranean, North Africa and EU southern states (Greece and Italy) has long been understood as a humanitarian border, the refugee crossings in the Balkans have demonstrated that humanitarian borders are as fluid as ever (Walters, 2011). Interestingly, these borders have emerged not in spots where confrontation is most felt between the Global North and South (Walters, 2011), but where confrontation is most felt within the Global North (in this case, the EU). Participant B expresses the situation of Greece and the reception of refugees:

I think there were- it was a really interesting dynamic to see how this- the Greek population that is also in crisis, that has a lot of problems, and that fears some kind of left behind by the European Union and then, the refugees who also feel left behind by the European Union... (Participant B)

¹ Gender neutral pronouns ("they", "their") are used in this paper to protect participants' confidentiality.

It is possible then, that refugees' fear of being left behind helped propelled some volunteers to mobilize and help refugees.

A common theme that resonated in the interviews was that emotions served as a primary motivator. For Participant B, they felt indignation after seeing the inequality or contrast of their mobility with the refugees' lack thereof while vacationing in the Balkans. They also had prior experience volunteering with refugees in Germany. In the case of Participant A, they felt surprise and fear after reading racist responses to a well-known local band's concert in support of refugees: "...[the comments] kind of like, struck me and scared me a little bit seeing that people who pretend to be tolerant aren't tolerant" (Participant A). Such feelings motivated them to get involved. For Participant C, they credited reading media reports that had highlighted the importance of volunteering, encouraging them to act. Interestingly, both Participant A and C had no previous volunteer experience; they had planned their initial trip as a single action but continued after feeling shocked and horrified at the conditions experienced by refugees.

Participants reported working at various sites such as refugee camps, transit stations and border crossings to help refugees in these affected countries. Their work clearly reflects an active presence of humanitarianism at these securitized sites—they performed tasks that included providing basic emergency relief through the distribution of food, water, clothing and other resources; watching for and welcoming boat arrivals; providing first aid and other medical assistance; translating; organizing language classes and women's spaces; finding refugee accommodation; and supporting refugee self-organized groups. This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the tasks the volunteers performed but lends support to how borders and other spaces within the Global North are being re-invented as spaces of humanitarian government (Walters, 2011, p.139). Humanitarian government is defined by Fassin (2012) as

“the deployment of moral sentiments in contemporary politics” (p.1). Fassin (2012) further elaborates on this definition by stating that:

“government” is then the “set of procedures established and actions conducted in order to manage, regulate and support the existence of human beings: government includes but exceeds the intervention of the state, local administrations, international bodies, and political institutions more generally (pp.1-2).

Given that humanitarian governance can be performed by non-state actors (Walters, 2011), one can argue that independent volunteers are performing humanitarian government in these spaces. However, in the examination of independent volunteers’ humanitarian work, I argue that independent volunteers are offering resistance towards the reinforcement of the humanitarian border.

Offering Resistance as Non-Institutional Actors

Even though independent volunteers are performing humanitarian work, several characteristics of their work can offer indications of how they may be resisting the re-invention of securitized borders. First, resistance can be understood in that independent volunteers see themselves as non-institutional actors. This is expressed by Participant A:

We- we always, we still consider us short-term volunteers, because all of us, we have families, children and job so we can only like spare, let’s say, four or five, six weeks per year. In the beginning, they- the employers were very um nice and would give, give some time off, paid vacation like a week or so, if you went somewhere. But I mean, I’m independent work- so I do it- I can decide on myself, my time however I wanna work or not work. (Participant A)

Their position as non-institutional actors is further supported by Participant C who mentions how the undertaking of volunteer trips are primarily dependent on independent volunteers' own time availability (i.e. having to take time off from work), non-monetary and monetary donations received and in some cases, their own personal finances. This self-organization is reflected in the experience of Participant C who also revealed that they had initially planned to go on vacation but ended up booking a flight to Greece with a friend to volunteer when they had heard about the border closures in Idomeni and 9,000 people were stuck. By not relying on funding from NGOs and nation-states, independent volunteers are exerting themselves as non-institutional actors. Independent volunteers are then offering a different model of humanitarian aid that is not reliant on institutions (Sandri, 2017).

Growing Resistance through Networks and Knowledge Production

Independent volunteers' expression of resistance is further facilitated by their networks as participants disclose how networks are used to perform functions related to volunteer recruitment, planning and delivery of work in different countries but also in the dissemination of information such as calls for donations. For example, both Participant A and B also started volunteering with refugees travelling along the Balkan route because they knew people in their own networks who were previous or current volunteers. Not only do networks recruit and engage individuals but Participant C indicates how networks can enable the dissemination of information among volunteers, disclosing where and what type of help is needed:

[U]h we have to rely on the calls of others on the information we receive. Um, like, when we hear from a camp, we are running out of pullovers or jackets or whatever.... Um, so we

try to prepare our convoys in Germany as precise and effective as possible, who fit the needs on the ground. (Participant C)

Networks have also helped volunteers who have returned to remain engaged in the movement, highlighting how their resistance can be further sustained. Participant A explained how they collected and sent money and/or donations to local volunteer groups operating along the Balkan route with whom they had established partnerships. Networks can further help to reinforce the volunteers' feelings of solidarity, providing volunteers with a collective identity and sense of belonging, thus helping to sustain the volunteering movement. This can be especially important given the hostility and aggression some volunteers face by others (Simsa, 2017). Participant A reveals how belonging in a group gave them more energy to volunteer, in addition to having extensive connections with other groups, connections that are underlined by reciprocal relationships of mutual aid and solidarity:

I mean, we're still connected with all the other groups and uh, if help is needed, everyone knows where we can, you know, or we can knock. And I think, at some point, I was sure that I could walk from [place] to Syria without having to pay one hotel. (Participant A)

Independent volunteers also offer resistance through the production of their own knowledge. Participant C described being involved with a news digest created to help keep volunteers informed of developments in the field (i.e. situation of hotspots). The use of alternative media platforms then supports how independent volunteers can resist the humanitarian border by producing and disseminating their own knowledge (through their networks). This knowledge can help increase their capacity to respond more effectively to refugees' needs and protection. While this humanitarian knowledge is shaped by multiple actors as Walters (2011) asserts, there are also "dominant modes and styles of truth production" (p.151). Thus, independent volunteers can

be understood resisting these hegemonic discourses by producing alternative forms of knowledge about the plight of refugees along the Balkan route. Such knowledge can further help to mobilize more individuals into volunteering.

Tensions with NGOs in Humanitarian Aid

Independent volunteers' position as non-institutional actors are also supported by participants' rejection or feelings of tensions towards NGOs. Such tension is captured in the comments of Participant B, who rejected volunteering with NGOs from the on-set:

...from the beginning on, we said, we don't really want to work with the some- big NGOs or organizations that... yeah, because I think that, for me, of course these organizations also do important and good work but I didn't want to be part of this organization because I feel like often they don't really, understand the problems of the people because it's, they're so bureaucratic... (Participant B)

Bureaucratic structures are then seen as a barrier to the delivery of humanitarian aid since it promotes a disconnect of what refugees' needs are. Interestingly though, Participant B recognizes the work of NGOs as being "important and good" but laments that bureaucracy has hampered NGOs ability to assist refugees. Participant A echoes these sentiments in their comments:

And they don't really- they're not really very, um helpful in those- in the proc- at least in this process. I mean, they might be good somewhere else but um, in the refugee crisis I've realized that um, my money would have been- would be better off somewhere else. (Participant A)

Participant C elaborates that NGOs are often perceived by independent volunteers as wasteful in the use of money devoted towards providing humanitarian aid to refugees. Independent volunteers see NGO expenses as being consumed by the salaries or wages of workers. This perception of NGOs reveals an important distinction that is made by independent volunteers. First, NGOs are seen to be aligned closely with governments. Participant B explains how NGOs and military/police authorities wield significant power in a refugee camp, explaining their frustration with these actors:

It's just really really difficult to- to organize... in a structure that is so oppressive because I mean, um of course, these big NGOs and military and the police, they- they were there and they had the biggest influence and sometimes it felt like we were just talking to a wall, and um, it's yeah, really difficult and also I realized that uh, yeah, I think in a, in a structure like this, some self-organization of course it's helpful but it cannot really be successful because, uh yeah. Because it's inside of this military structure, you know?

(Participant B)

This perception of NGOs being closely aligned with nation-states is not surprising as Walters (2011) noted how NGOs such as MSF and Amnesty International, despite their efforts, are involved in the global order, since they assist in the “construction of emergency” (p.147).

Independent volunteers may also find professional opportunities with NGOs to be “restricting and alienating”, thus rejecting them (Chtouris & Miller, 2017, p.71). Secondly, this distinction between independent volunteers and NGOs reveals how individual volunteers see themselves within the order:

I think the biggest problem is administration [in Germany] and that's why the, the, the... let's say 'freelance' volunteers, the independent ones could work so well because we didn't care. (Participant A)

Participant A's account supports how independent volunteers are non-institutional actors in that they do not always partake in the rules and procedures. This disregard for rules and procedures in favour of efficiency can help resist the humanitarian border since the border depends on NGOs to assess sites and whether they meet international norms and practices regarding the treatment of refugees (Walters, 2011) to transform into a space of humanitarian government. The flexibility of the independent volunteers in the provision of humanitarian aid can be argued however as contributing towards the reinforcement of the humanitarian border. As the volunteers become more effective at flexible delivery of humanitarian aid, the re-invention of securitized spaces into humanitarian ones can be quickened. However, the flexibility is also perhaps out of necessity because of the perceived failure of NGOs to help refugees. Thus, this humanitarian border can be interpreted as emerging not only because of state failure but also NGO failure. Independent volunteers then have come to absorb the humanitarian aid gap left by state and NGOs. While they are providing humanitarian aid though, volunteers' presence can still provide legitimacy to the securitization of refugees, diverting attention away from the border regime that oppresses refugees.

At the same time, NGOs' lack of receptiveness towards independent volunteers further confirms independent volunteers position as non-institutional actors who are resisting the humanitarian border:

[MSF] are the only ones who were able and flexible enough to consider what we were doing and to reward what we were doing and to help us. Because sometimes we arrived

with a lot of goods, but we didn't have enough people to hand them out. So we would call on- on um MSF and they could come and help us. (Participant A)

The reluctance of other NGOs to recognize the legitimacy of independent volunteers and to answer such calls for help confirms that independent volunteers are not seen as part of the global order. Thus, NGOs reluctance to cooperate may also be an indication of not only independent volunteers resisting the humanitarian border, but international humanitarian order that is used to NGOs actively helping to advance the order's setting guidelines, codes and frameworks (O'Hagan, 2013). While there are signs of resistance exhibited by independent volunteers, the extent at which they can resist the reinforcement of a humanitarian border is unclear.

Implication in Securitization Practices

Heavy influence and presence of securitization practices can implicate volunteers in the making and reinforcement of the humanitarian border. Specifically, border security and police/military authorities can impact and outline the boundaries of volunteers' humanitarian work through the imposition of securitization practices (Walters, 2011). This challenge is particularly felt among all three participants. Participant C for example recalled trying to distribute donations to refugees at a train station in Slovenia and feeling shocked by the treatment of refugees and overall heavy security presence:

The people totally exhausted, had to walk 3 km to get to the transit zone. We weren't allowed to get in touch with them at the beginning and it was becoming already dark.

They all had to gather at some square then, and got advices or orders in several language-languages with some speakers and, um, some of them were, after waiting in the transit zone, they didn't know for how long. It was cold, they didn't have anything, made fire

with blankets and clothes just to keep warm a bit. And later, we were allowed to distribute them clothes over and through the fence. But not to get in touch with them. And there were armed soldiers around us... covering us and checking that we don't do anything wrong. Um... in... for us, it was very shocking and I think for the people as well. (Participant C)

This account illustrates how securitization practices are controlling the movement of refugees using order within an armed environment. Such practices dictate the circumstances in which refugees are afforded dignity but also control volunteers' access to refugees. Specifically, authorities are dictating volunteers' terms and conditions in which they can deliver humanitarian aid. In some cases, state authorities have also limited or prevented volunteers from being in contact with refugees:

Um in Greece, since you don't have Idomeni as an open camp anymore and you have the hotspots on the islands, it's much harder to get access to the people, um every camp in Greece is now managed by some authority, let it be the military or the police, um, or someone else uh so, you have paperwork before now, you have to register, you have to identify yourself, prove that you're not a criminal... (Participant C)

Participant C reveals that prior to the border closures, state authorities also limited NGOs' and volunteers' access to refugees, as they did not want to "anchorage" refugees in their country, but for the refugees to continue passing onto other EU member-states. In such a case, the humanitarian border is still functioning due to the presence of humanitarianism, but securitization practices have prevented humanitarian work to be carried out. The interviews also revealed how securitization practices were controlling volunteers' movement to territories with refugees requiring humanitarian aid. This is reflected in Participant A's account of experiencing

visa issues when trying to enter Serbia, a non-EU member state, to volunteer. Participant A attempted four times to cross the border from Croatia to Serbia before they were successful. These findings demonstrate how securitization practices are actively taking place at these points of humanitarian intervention and more importantly, how volunteers can become implicit in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border. Their work is further constrained as certain tasks that may be necessary to their goal of delivering humanitarian aid, can become securitized. Intensive checks on volunteers were conducted at the border due to trafficking and smuggling suspicions held by state authorities:

It was only when you tried to cross the border, you had like more intensive checks and yeah, they were always on the Balkans, they were always suspecting you to smuggle something or, you were human trafficker especially when you have that German plate on your car and are there with a van, it's like they look to you like you're a smuggler.

(Participant C)

The act of transporting refugees (regardless of their physical state) in volunteers' personal vehicles then made volunteers liable to charges of smuggling.

These intensive checks on volunteers were not just restricted to border crossings but also at the entrance points of refugee camps. Participant B remarked how you had to be on a list to get into the camp. While such a securitization practice may be a method to protect refugees, Participant B criticized this practice as authorities only asked for identification from individuals entering the camp if you looked "European":

And in the end, like, when people wanted to enter that looked European, they asked uh, for the ID and to see if they are on the list. But for example, lot of drug dealers who came inside, who were like, I didn't know, had.... looked Arabic or I don't know, and they just

passed through the front door, to sell their drugs and the police or the military of course didn't stop them because they had no idea of who was actually living in the camp.

(Participant B)

Thus, this example shows how humanitarian discourse can conceal securitization practices in its role in the oppression of refugees (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015). Suspicions of smuggling or drug-trafficking also help to uphold and justify these security practices to “protect” refugees. As Walters (2011) states, “...the common thread is that the practice of humanitarian intervention is revealed to be contestable. It is contested under law, where the prosecution seeks to redefine humanitarian action as ‘trafficking’” (p.155). Therefore, the state securitization of humanitarian borders works in two ways: to create a need for humanitarian aid but also to discipline humanitarian aid when it seeks to threaten their agenda of restricting the mobility of refugees. However, it is important to acknowledge how the criminalization of non-racialized and racialized actors occur and in what contexts, a domain that is crucial for future research. Independent volunteers are thus left implicated in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border.

Co-opting Humanitarianism and Securitization

The co-option of humanitarian aid by state authorities has also diminished the signs of resistance by volunteers, and arguably help to normalize the presence of securitization practices taking place. Participant A had commented how authorities in Croatia were already delivering humanitarian aid themselves:

In Croatia, the police and the military were doing a lot of good work. They had a really big camp in um, installed on the other side of the border where they were registering

people, giving them food, giving them clothes, uh as far as they had any but there were also volunteers bringing stuff down there. (Participant A)

Thus, the security authorities undertaking humanitarian work helps to reinforce themselves as “moral actors” but also reinforce the increased securitization of humanitarian spaces and construction of security actors as “moral actors” (Pallister-Walkins, 2015). Interestingly, the participants’ interviews reveal how volunteers are performing securitization functions.

Participant A reported an instance where they had to perform crowd management control because border authorities would only allow two people to pass at a time, creating a frantic environment. Participant C also reported having to keep refugees calm in tense atmospheres, especially as refugees became delayed or stuck at transit points or border crossings:

[W]e couldn’t give them any precise information because we didn’t have them. So, only thing we could tell them is ‘Please wait, we are trying our best to support you. Um, and also, when the situation calls the anger, or frustration, um, just to tell them, it’s not about us, and for us, it’s not about them but it’s a- political decision at the moment, and that’s nothing which is in our impact um, so only thing we could do is to deal with the situation. (Participant C)

Thus, independent volunteers can become implicated in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border because they are forced or compelled to help manage frustrating situations that are created by securitization practices. It is then evident as to the overwhelming influence that state securitization wields on independent volunteers specifically in the boundaries of their work, proving it difficult to challenge the humanitarian border.

However, in the case of Participant B, they did offer a way in how independent volunteers can resist the humanitarian border as they did not want to “feed the hand” of the

government by doing work (i.e. handing out food) that they felt should be done by the government. Participant B left volunteering for a self-organized refugee structure in a refugee camp in favour of starting a housing initiative in the city:

We want them to live in the city and we don't want to support military camp structures.

We want that these camps don't exist and so sometimes it felt a little bit contradictory to like, make the life in the camp better if we don't want life in the camp, you know what I mean? (Participant B)

Their attempt to self-organize outside of the humanitarian border by starting an initiative in the city rather than continuing to volunteer in the camps show how volunteers can resist. By bringing humanitarian aid to a place that is less securitized (the city), one can argue that the humanitarian border is effectively weakened to expose the state's securitization of refugees.

Politics of the Humanitarian

At the most basic level, the participants all indicated a personal goal of wanting to help people through humanitarian aid. However, this raises the question whether participants saw their goals as explicitly political or not. The responses were mixed. Participant A and C indicated their work was humanitarian, rejecting that it was political:

I, um, no- I, when I work with refugees and I'm doing that special work, I leave my beliefs and I leave my, all my other points of views at home. (Participant A)

But I wouldn't consider myself a political activist. In this case because I'm not protesting the governments. Uh, I'm trying to support the people. (Participant C)

Protest, demonstrations, riots, voting and party affiliation were also cited as examples of political activity, thus excluding their volunteer work then as 'political'. Interestingly, Participant A made

a distinction between their volunteer group and personal goals. They explained that their volunteer group had tried to form a lobby group to apply pressure to the government. While this can be interpreted as political work on a collective scale, Participant A noted that their own personal goals were not political, but humanitarian in nature. This may touch upon how volunteers fundamentally conceptualize their volunteer work goals in relation to their personal selves but also at an organizational level, demonstrating the complexity of volunteers' goals.

However, the insistence of their work as being non-political reveals fundamentally how they conceptualize humanitarianism: neutral and impartial. This understanding is further reflected as Participant A discusses volunteering in face of such a situation is as an exercise of humanity, expressing that in these situations, “[o]ut of all the normal, the rules and the laws, and what you can, and what you can’t do, you are, I don’t know- just be human” (Participant A). The universality of humanity is not new to the humanitarian discourse which promotes moral acts of compassion, caring, dignity as necessary criteria to what it means to be human (Fassin, 2013). However, is it possible for such moral sentiments to remain excluded from politics? For Hutchison (2014), certain sentiments elicited by imagery of humanitarian disasters and crises are implicated with the humanitarian discourses built around the Global North and South, which then shapes how we respond to these events.

While Participant A and C have identified their humanitarian work as non-political, the humanitarian is neither immune to the politics that enable the reinforcement of the humanitarian border (Walters, 2011) and prompts debate as to who can provide compassion and who deserves to receive it (Kirkwood, 2017). This is especially important to question as independent volunteers are confronted with moral dilemmas during situations that challenge or overwhelm their capacity to help. Participant A spoke of an instance where they did not have enough jackets

to distribute to the 6,000 refugees standing in the freezing cold and having to struggle knowing that you can only hand out 100. This account shows how independent volunteers can find themselves in positions of being a “moral actor”, in that they must exercise choices that may help to solidify the humanitarian border as a “matter of life and death” (Walters, 2011, p. 137). Ticktin (2016) further argues that the humanitarian border is not enough in understanding the role of humanitarianism and how it participates in the reproduction of securitization norms and practices, as she raises the limitations of compassion and humanitarianism, which depend on our notions of gender and race that help to formulate our opinions as to who is considered “deserving” (p. 265). Pallister-Wilkins similarly emphasizes how there needs to be consideration of how the delineation and assignment of categories (based on hierarchies of gender, age, nationality) that are entitled to help is necessary to also understanding the interaction of humanitarianism and securitization (Jones et al., 2017, p.7).

In this regard, volunteers can help to reproduce the humanitarian border by using discourse that continues to reproduce the hierarchy between the “innocent” and the “guilty” or “deserving” and “undeserving”. Participant B echoes this sentiment as they explain:

Like it doesn't have to be the people helping here. And then the people who are helped here, are just, um yeah- I mean, it always creates some kind of hierarchy and yeah, for me, it was something I didn't really want to be part of, so for me this refugee [structure], it sounded really nice opportunity to, to like support structures of self-organization and to support people that want to be active, that want to change something about the situation and also have some kind of political, yeah... demand and yeah... and want to be seen and heard. So we decided to go there and support this [structure]. (Participant B)

Compared to the other two participants, Participant B does acknowledge their work as being political. In fact, it was important to connect their volunteering with an overall political struggle as Participant B came from an activist and political background:

But for me, it's important to um... to always connect this humanitarian work or like this help in the moment with the broader picture, and with the fight for um, yeah, against this structures that causes it. And that cause. And to not forget political uh... the political side of it and uh yeah. (Participant B)

Participant B's comments reveals how some volunteers can help to challenge this humanitarian discourse by reviewing how they are situated in relation to refugees. Moreover, there are indications that Participant A and C have shifted their goals. All three participants remain active as volunteers. Participant C expresses that since the refugee crossings have not ended, the goals have remained the same for them. Despite this declaration, Participant C's goals did alter in the manner in that they were now considering volunteering outside of Europe, in Africa. Participant A shifted their work to Lebanon, focusing on refugees there while still assisting refugees along the Balkan route through active networks. It would be fruitful to conduct more research to see how independent volunteers' goals may change then considering this heavy securitized environment in which they operate.

What also emerged from these interviews is that participants understood their own positions as volunteers as they engaged in self-reflection. The interviews revealed participants exhibited varying degrees of awareness regarding their position in relation to refugees.

Participant A reflected on the impact of volunteering on them as an individual, emphasizing that not everyone can be an independent volunteer:

So... this overall has, has changed a lot for me and my um... my thinking. And I'm just grateful for, for what I have and that I'm able to, to help others because not everyone can do that. (Participant A)

For Participant C, they understood the inequality between themselves and refugees reflected in their freedom of movement, as they knew that despite the border closures, they had the freedom of movement due to their nationality:

[W]e volunteers knew like for me, I'm going back to Germany in five days by plane. I don't have the problem to cross any border. Even the Macedonians would let me pass through the highway border. (Participant C)

This awareness manifested differently for Participant B, who saw their privilege also rooted in their position as a volunteer. Such a role created a power difference between themselves and the refugees they were assisting.

But at the end also, for me, it's always, like uh, I constantly try to, to... reconsider like my power, and like, the power inequalities that there are with the people I work with, because at the end, I am- I am a helping person, and like these kind of help... uh helps structures they always also, um... yeah, cause some kind of inequalities and hierarchies... (Participant B)

These varying degrees of self-reflection in relation to the humanitarian discourse provides hope to how independent volunteers are demonstrating resistance to the humanitarian border. At the same time, their continued engagement in volunteering may further promote their ability to question their involvement in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border (Theodossopoulos, 2016). Remarkably, the reproduction of the humanitarian discourse can be further adopted and enforced by refugees themselves as they perceive certain nationalities as being "worthy" and

others are “unworthy”. This reproduction is observed by Participant A who notes such divisions among refugees:

It’s what they call the economic immigrants, like the Americans have from Mexico- people hoping for a better life or knowing that if they even, if they stay only here for three years and they get welfare, it’s going to be easier for them to start up something at home. So we have a lot of those. And those fight with the others, and Afghanis don’t talk to Syrians, Syrians don’t talk to Afghanis, and um, then you have every now and then, we have some Africans and they’re the last in the food chain, you know? They are the... they didn’t- when you had, on the, on the- Serbi, Serbian-Bulgarian border, for example we had this little tent where we were handing out soup and giving some basic medical care to the feet and the and the bruises of the, of the boys and uh... one day I saw this this family standing back with very small children and so far we had seen were young Afghani man and then I went out of the tent and talked to the family and then they said they wouldn’t want to come because they were Syrian. (Participant A)

The tensions among refugees themselves shows how volunteers can become implicated within the humanitarian border, as they must respond to such discourse that operates to reinforce categories of those who are “innocent” and “guilty”, a discourse which is necessary to legitimizing and reinforcing the state’s border practices and need of humanitarian aid at the border. This example further underlines the powerfulness of humanitarian discourse and its intertwined interaction with the humanitarian border to manage the movement of refugees. It also reveals how deep such discourse can permeate and be reproduced not only by nation-states, NGOs, volunteers but also refugees’ understandings of who is “innocent” and “guilty”. If the resistance of the humanitarian border is to be effective, there needs to be a greater emphasis of

questioning our own complicity as well as institutional structures in the maintenance of such discourses that operate on power structures.

Conclusion

From the discussion of findings, the paper has shown ways in which independent volunteers are challenging but also becoming implicated in the reinforcement of the humanitarian border. Independent volunteers have shown their resistance as non-institutional actors who are shifting how humanitarian aid is being delivered, particularly through their reliance of networks and knowledge production to mobilize around emerging humanitarian needs of refugees in different nation-states situated along the Balkan route. Independent volunteers' tensions with NGOs also reveal the contentious politics that take place within the humanitarian border but also signal how the international humanitarian order is possibly changing, prompting debate as to who can provide humanitarian aid and in what capacity. While the paper has shown examples of how independent volunteers are helping to challenge the humanitarian border, I have argued how volunteers may become implicit in its reinforcement as authorities' heavy presence of securitization practices help dictate the extent and effectiveness of independent volunteers' humanitarian work by restricting the mobility of volunteers and their access to refugees as well as the criminalization of certain humanitarian tasks. It should be understood however that volunteers themselves are implicated in the reinforcement as humanitarianism itself is dependent on the category of the "deserving" and "undeserving", or "victim" and "guilty". Thus, situating independent volunteers within this discussion is crucial to understanding how their movement can bring about a more effective and equitable humanitarian response. It would

also be worthwhile to explore how maintenance of nation-state identities impact such humanitarian responses.

Lastly, we need to understand how humanitarian border is not just sustained by the interactions of humanitarianism and securitization, but in its emergence, creates and promotes a local economy that promotes and supports the vitality of the humanitarian border. Local communities of humanitarian borders may welcome the creation of camps, because the business of refugees, volunteers, NGOs and state authorities may help contribute to the local economy. This is an area that demands greater research attention, particularly in exploring how the economics of industries that have emerged or is sustained by the humanitarian border can contribute to the further securitization practices of refugees. Ultimately, while volunteers may challenge the humanitarian border, they remain implicated in the humanitarian border dynamics in helping to reinforce the securitization of refugees. Another possible area of future research could also be how the volunteer movement has affected the model of humanitarian aid delivery during humanitarian crises. Moreover, it would be worthwhile to include voices of refugees to understand their perspectives of the aid provided by independent volunteers but also how refugees are self-organizing themselves to also challenge the humanitarian border.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Becoming a Volunteer

- a. How did you start volunteering with refugees travelling along the Balkans route?

Prompts: Getting involved, becoming aware of the issue

How did you learn about the refugee crisis?

How did you find out about this opportunity?

How did this become organized?

- b. What motivated you to become a volunteer?

Prompts: motivations, reasons for joining the cause

What event made you decide to volunteer with refugees?

How did you decide to get involved?

What does it mean to be a volunteer?

2. Volunteer Role

- a. Tell me about your volunteer work with refugees.

Prompts: Volunteer tasks, responsibilities, programs, services

What did you do?

What kind of support was provided?

Who did you help?

Who did you work with (i.e. the state, NGOS, activists)? What did they do?

How has your work changed since you started?

Are you still active?

- b. What difficulties or problems did you face when volunteering?

Prompts: Challenges, barriers, resource issues

What impact did these challenges have on your work?

How have these difficulties changed (or have they not)? (in response to certain policies, events)

- c. What are the goals of your work?

Prompts: Contributions, broader impact, identity

What impact does your work have?

How important is your work in respect to helping refugees?

What message is your work communicating? To who?

3. Views of Refugee Crisis

- a. Who is responsible for the situation?

Prompts: stakeholders, causes, policies

What makes the situation a 'crisis'?

How did the crisis happen?

What do you know about the crisis?

Who are the stakeholders of the situation? What are their roles?

- b. What responsibility is there towards refugees?

Prompts: providing humanitarian assistance, funding, integration

Who is responsible for helping refugees?

What should be done to help refugees? (national, European, international)

4. Views of Refugee Inclusion

- a. How important is it that refugees be included in society?

Prompts: individually, nationally, internationally

What is the result from the inclusion of refugees?

What is the result from the exclusion of refugees?

- b. How can refugees be included in German society?

Prompts: belonging, encourage participation in society

What can be done to help refugees feel a sense of belonging?

What factors influence the inclusion of refugees?

What supports do refugees need?

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