SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORIAL

Europe Trouble: Welcome Culture and the Disruption of the European Border Regime

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Illustration 1: Hanseatic Help e.V. Photo by Marie Sandberg 2018.

#EINFACHmachen. This is the motto of the Hamburg based volunteer organization Hanseatic Help e.V. and translates into 'simply do it/do it simply'. The initiative was established during the summer of 2015, when refugees arrived to Europe in extraordinarily large numbers. At this time, Hanseatic Help's main activities took place in the centrally located fairground MesseHalle Hamburg and consisted primarily in receiving and organizing clothes donated to refugees. Hamburg city decided to use MesseHalle as a temporary storage place for donations because the amount of stuff was overwhelming. The picture (**Illustration 1**) of endless

rows of boxes packed with donated clothes, and neatly organized into seasonal clothing such as *Sommer-Waren* (Summer goods), men's, women's, and children's clothing, illustrates the eagerness among European citizens to donate and to help out in this 'state of exception'.

The 2015 influx of refugees to Europe gave cause for thousands of European citizens not only to donate but also to engage in activities providing for foreign arrivals at their local communities, in storage places, at train stations, and on city squares—a border-spanning occurrence of local volunteer practices, which was later dubbed the 'summer of welcome' (Karakayali and Kleist 2015). Many citizens from Northern Europe also travelled to Greece and other parts of the Balkans to volunteer, providing self-organized humanitarian aid. Unlike the more organized humanitarian action in the international world of development aid (cf. Boltanski 1999), the volunteer practices mobilised around 2015 played out in less formalized ways calling for new conceptualizations of informal, everyday aiding practices of refugee reception. *Einfach machen* captures exactly this simplicity of many of the initiatives, as well as their accessibility, making it possible for people to join without first having to participate in volunteer training and recruitment programmes.

This NJMR special issue takes as its point of departure the volunteer practices connected to informal refugee reception during and after the refugee arrivals to Europe in 2015, yet it moves beyond this 'moment of crisis' by relating it to more established and continuous practices of solidarity and civil society participation. The special issue thereby emphasises what is at stake in the mobilisation of European citizens into self-made refugee helpers, or what we suggest to call *everyday humanitarians*. The term 'vernacular humanitarianism' (Brkovic 2017) has been suggested in order to capture the plurality of small-scale and less organized modes of helping out in everyday life (see also Richey 2018; Rozakou 2016). By investigating experiences, aspirations, and recollections of the events among the volunteer initiatives, our aim is to avoid judgemental normativity by advancing a more nuanced understanding of how everyday aiding practices are at once enacting and complicating the trope of 'the European citizen' (Rygiel et al. 2015). This trope epitomizes what Delanty and Rumford (2005: 76) characterized a 'cosmopolitan disposition' embracing not only the European values of liberty, democracy, and human rights, but also the values of 'the other'. Being 'European' thus connotes at once taking 'white man's burden' upon oneself, that is the moral obligation to 'do good' and help those in need (Bex and Craps 2016) and a fundamental self-questioning of the implications of doing this in terms of reproducing structural hierarchies of power (Balibar 2003). Our title, *Europe Trouble,* connotes Judith Butler's work *Gender Trouble* (1990), which revolutionized the notion of gender from being conceived as biological essence to cultural expression in the early 1990s. Whereas Butler's project aspired to subvert identity categories in feminism studies and beyond, with this contribution we wish to destabilize notions of EU citizenship and the idea of 'doing good' with the aim of re-imagining and re-conceptualising Europe as a bordered space. When we suggest the notion of Europe Trouble, we also pay tribute to a call from Donna Haraway urging us to be 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway 2016), which we translate into a call for examining the cross-boundary volunteer practices as being part of a frictionary, not frictionless, Europe. Haraway reminds us that trouble means 'to stir up' or 'to disturb' and that staying *with* rather than outside trouble requires 'learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings' (Haraway 2016: 1).

For our purpose here, we aim to understand how Europe was troubled by the occurences of the Summer of Welcome 2015, which is why we find it necessary to re-think Europe through bordering processes. We take recourse to the term 'the border regime', widely used in critical border and migration studies to engage with the complexities of European borders, not only capturing their inherent logic but also opening the field of bordering to a multiplicity of

actors involved in the power struggles to settle and disrupt borders (Hess and Kasparek 2017). The border regime is defined by Tsianos and colleagues as a 'space of negotiating practices' formed by 'a multitude of actors whose practices relate to each other, without being ordered in the form of a central logic or rationality' (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010: 375). What thereby appears as very flexible (but also evasive) processes of bordering can be exemplified in real life, for instance through the way in which the external borders of the EU are managed, which is work done by EU actors, foremost Frontex, alongside a multitude of others, including governance as well as business actors (Klepp 2010; Vaughan-Williams 2008).

In attempts to critically assess the otherwise highly evasive logic of multiplicity associated with neoliberalism (Sohn 2016), the border regime has also been described as *assemblage*, referring to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). The assemblage theory asks of us to think of spaces as confined, not by clearly defined boundaries but as membranes, that filter particles, thereby constantly changing the very constitution of the space itself. We are in this way invited to critically and self-reflexively investigate 'Europe' as bordered space performed by a multitude of actors and involving highly complicated selection processes in relation to who and what is allowed into the space.

Europe's bordering and its project of filtering mobilities—that is its migration and border regime—is clearly being challenged from many sides today. In the light of such challenges and viewed from within the regime itself, it remains unclear how the European border regime will reinvent itself, so to speak, leaving a space of creativity to re-invent Europe. We believe the volunteers we engage with in this SI disrupt and challenge the European border regime constructively, not by undermining Europe but by calling out for Europe to take a different path, and we suggest thinking Europe's borders through these attempts. Attempts that are of course not just successful, but also enacted in conflict, they are contested, and they are more often than not bound to fail. By focusing on everyday aiding practices in informal volunteer reception and how these practices *trouble* Europe and potentially disrupt the European border regime, we contend that another Europe is possible: a truly multiple Europe.

After the smoke has gone – European citizens left in a vacuum

Scholarly contributions on volunteers and refugee relief offer several ways of understanding and conceptualising the act of helping out, for instance as 'solidarity work' (Rozakou 2016), 'hospitality culture' (Hylland-Eriksen 2013), or as an 'act of humanitarianism' (Fassin 2012), all of which signal aid work as neither an unambiguous act of 'doing good', nor one of easy altruism. Whereas the term hospitality culture signifies the hosting of another, thus confirming asymmetry between giver and receiver, solidarity work stimulates meetings at equal levels of humanity. In order to capture the less organized or ad hoc modes of everyday refugee reception, notions like 'vernacular humanitarianism' (Brkovic 2016) have been proposed. We suggest to designate the volunteer mobilisations sparked by the refugee arrivals to Europe *the 2015 volunteer phenomenon*, because it not only defines the recent notable increase in attention to refugee support, but also includes the (often critical) attention to that attention, as is seen for instance in the anthropology of humanitarianism. The *volunteer phenomenon* prompts further interrogation and research inquiry: How were the aims of helping out aspired and which further implications of the volunteer phenomenon in terms of power relations, moral economy, and ethical registers of 'doing good' could be discerned?

When the refugee influx to Europe peaked during the summer of 2015, the Mediterranean shores and temporary camps were crowded, not only with displaced people arriving (as they still are), but also with humanitarian actors representing formal aid organizations along with a burgeoning group of spontaneous networks for refugee relief. Impressively soon thereafter another influx of people could be observed: those aiming to study and report on the refugee arrivals. Researchers and journalists alike would approach the so-called refugee 'hotspots'

in order to document the European 'border spectacle' (De Genova 2013). As critically diagnosed by Cabot (2019), the fastness of researchers chasing the latest developments in order to live up to still more pressing relevance criteria for research is fascinating, if not worrying. It worries because it links to the 'business dimension of anthropological work', as Cabot states, and creates new '"tides" of humanitarian actors, "voluntourists", humanitarian actors and researchers' (Cabot 2019: 261). With the special issue we therefore invite you for a discussion on vernacular or everyday humanitarianism as ethos, burden, and self-reflexive practice. The critique of Humanitarianism (Fassin 2007) is well developed, yet on this occasion we aim to take the reflections a step further by discussing how we move from deconstructing humanitarianism to actually grasping how informal volunteer mobilisations happen and transform worlds (Malkki 2015; Rozakou 2016).

With this special issue we are immediately at risk of being yet another volume adding to the knowledge mountain capitalizing on the crisis. Yet, we beg to differ, arguing that something happened to Europe and its borders with 'the spectacle'. Building on Della Porta and colleagues (2018), we contend that the summer of welcome created a new opening for 'acts of citizenship' (5) in a context of late neoliberalism in which citizenship rights were generally precarious and insecure. Della Porta and colleagues thus invites us to read what happened in 2015 as an overall European protest movement against both state- and EU-controlled ways of dealing with migrants and borders, thus mobilizing European citizens at an unprecedented level. Referring to Isin and Turner (2007), Della Porta (2018: 5) argues that the citizen activities during the 2015 refugee arrivals were assessing and challenging the citizenship regimes of Europe, for instance by questioning who counts as insider/outsider to the rights' regime.

A contrasting analysis is offered by Pries 2019 who suggests that the 2015 volunteer initiatives for refugee reception were filling in for the state who refrained from providing refugee protection (Pries 2019: 6; see also Feischmidt et al. 2019). State authorities were without doubt late in responding to the needs of the arriving refugees; they were often reluctant or not able to respond in many Northern European contexts. For instance, in Sweden, it took six weeks before the Swedish Migrationsverket appeared at Malmö Central Station, which was the main destination of arrival for refugees travelling from Flensburg via Copenhagen, Denmark (Frykman and Mäkelä 2019: 167). At the Copenhagen Main Central Station there were no authorities present except the police, and even in the land of *Wir-schaffen-das* (we can make it), Germany, the state was by and large absent and instead calling for local authorities and citizens to take charge and engage in activities on the ground (Sandberg and Andersen in this issue).

We would like to take both of these points a step further: During the 2015 refugee arrivals, European citizens—themselves positioned in contexts of precarious rights—were not only either filling in for or protesting the state, they were both at once. In other words, volunteers were mobilised by fellow citizens, donations, and in some cases authorities at the same time as they mobilised themselves into active humanitarian citizenship, thus enacting many different versions of solidarity with newcomers. What is particularly interesting to us is how they did so, only to be left in a vacuum by the very same states (and by the EU) on behalf of which they acted. After the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement (European Council 2016), refugee arrivals were significantly dropping in numbers because refugees were held back in camps on Turkish territory. On a Europe-wide scale, volunteers were at this point still in the process of mobilisation, having found a way to engage beyond borders, thus challenging the European border regime. Almost at the peak of their enthusiasm, they were left behind by the system, some experiencing fatigue, others with questions of whether and how to continue the efforts in other ways. For Hamburg-based Hanseatic Help, for instance, the trouble, in fact, soon became how to manage all the donated stuff; there was simply too much stuff, too many

hands, and not much need. If Europe was not troubled in its entirety by the 2015 refugee influx, then a vast amount of its citizens was most certainly left troubled in the aftermath of the spectacle.

Seen in this light, rather than understanding the summer of welcome as a refugee crisis, in the context of Northern Europe it might have been more appropriate to see it as the crisis of the welfare state and its precarious relation to its citizens. The sheer scale of involvement and the strength of its emotions call out for further investigations, including exactly how spatial imaginations of Europe were challenged; there are in other words more stories of Europe Trouble to be told.

Reception initatives in the Western part of Northern Europe

The special issue presents insights gained from collective work pursued in the context of *The Helping Hands Research Network,* an interdisciplinary network of 11 researchers from 6 different countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Scotland. With financial support from the Danish Research Council, the research network has explored the volunteer phenomenon in its aftermath, in a selection of European field-sites and based on ethnographic field visits. Whereas recent related studies present cases predominantly from the Mediterranean (see for example Della Porta 2018), this special issue focuses on reception initiatives in countries of the western part of Northern Europe, which have become central destinations of refugees arriving to Europe.

Fieldwork among volunteer network initiators and their projects have been conducted in the Netherlands (Nijmegen), the UK (Glasgow), Denmark (Copenhagen), and the Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg region, Germany, with comparative outlooks to the Mediterranean region of Europe. In focus were informal networks rather than established organisations, because these types of volunteering mushroomed especially in the wake of the humanitarian crisis in Europe during the summer and fall of 2015. Further, this type of low-level organisation appears to be particularly appealing to and thus a strong motivation force among the volunteers.

Field-workshops

Between May 2017 and October 2018, the research network visited around 20 initiatives for refugee support in the European cities Copenhagen, Nijmegen, Glasgow, Hamburg, plus a few initiatives in the more rural areas of the German-Danish border region (Flensburg and Sønderborg) and the Dutch-German border region (Kleve and Kranenburg). Fieldwork was conducted through short, intensive so-called 'field-workshops' (Sandberg 2020), which implied field visits, workshops, museums visits, and conversations with a range of informal refugee reception initiatives. The field-workshops were organized by network members who opened their ongoing field sites to their colleagues' short-term visits. Moreover, the research presented through the five contributions was conducted in a collective, including not only us as researchers but also our interlocutors as conversation partners and co-analysts. Doing fieldwork as loosely organized research collectives with different disciplinary backgrounds and aspirations obviously has many implications (Sandberg 2020). Foremost it demands a joint commitment of understanding and becoming more knowledgeable on refugee relief among informal volunteer networks and initiatives.

Our aim with conducting fieldwork in several European locales was not to perform a multi-sited study (cf. Hage 2005: 466) but rather to explore the possible similarities or convergences in the volunteering practices across European borders. This requires a reflexivity on the selections made and on the motives for highlighting some actors and networks rather than others. Hence, our encounters were not designed to carry out fully-fledged comparisons

but rather to learn from experiences from the volunteer initiatives across borders to better understand the processes of volunteer mobilisation in Europe. It thereby became clear to us how the networks were at once locally situated and globally substantiated, thus cutting across both space and time: specific historical trajectories and past experiences with volunteerism and activism would be pinpointed or used as explanatory frameworks for why things were organized as they were. To 'do the right thing', motives were not only localized, they would also draw on more long-term global aspirations, moral codes, and ethical registers such as figures of humanitarianism and human rights protection.

The contributions

Thinking these different yet related registers of volunteering and fieldwork-sites through each other has acted as a methodological, comparative-relational take during our fieldwork and in our analytical work. This take includes reflecting on the practices and places, as well as the material and organisational settings, of other fieldwork sites as comparative outlooks to sites and volunteer initiatives presented in each of the fieldworkshops. The aim is in this way to trace relations between the volunteer networks as entities or nodes made up of constituent inter-related practices, materializations, and affects.

We start out the SI with a contribution by Kolar Aparna, Oumar Kande, Joris Schapendonk, and Olivier Thomas Kramsch aiming at opening our geographical imaginary. Questioning notions of 'help' and 'gratitude' as expressed in migrant experiences, the article asks of us to dislocate moral responsibility from its tie to the nation-state. When studying and exploring the 'helping hands' volunteer networks, 'the giver' is often centre-staged (cf. Marcel Mauss' work on the anthropology of relations and reciprocity in the *The Gift*) (Mauss 1970), and figures of 'deserving and grateful receivers' are accordingly produced. These power dynamics prompted discussions and reflections in our collective fieldwork on the ways relations, established in our fieldwork encounters and beyond, were blurred and transformed, such as relations between researchers and interlocutors, refugees and volunteers, guests and hosts, and academic and humanitarian interventions. This article further explores these relations, making its spatial dislocation powerful by way of montage opening the possibility of cutting across time and space, thus speaking at once from both the historical and contemporary trenches of a Dutch-German borderland, from a train-station in Bolzano connecting locations in the South and North, and by way of wartime aid practices linking Europe with its colonies and beyond. Doing so, a radical politics of place is suggested connecting Europe not only by way of self-reflection but, more importantly, in and to a wider world.

The next two articles follow up on this geographical and moral troubling of Europe, here by way of local experiences of volunteering in 'a time of crisis'. Each in their separate way, the articles engage with volunteer practices in and around the summer of welcome in Denmark and Germany. Line Steen Bygballe Jensen and Lydia Kirchner zoom in on the everyday practices of volunteer networks in Copenhagen and Berlin, respectively, showing how aspirations and vulnerabilities in the daily work of volunteers enact new forms of engagement that contribute to the making and remaking of citizenship imaginaries. With their enthusiasm and engagement, volunteers in these locations managed to critically question the European border regime, momentarily allowing for a different kind of bordering than the one dictated by the international state system. Marie Sandberg and Dorte Jagetic Andersen follow up on this retrospectively, letting the volunteers reflect on their own participation in the processes to thereby perform their own versions of European civil society action. Thus designating volunteer engagement as valuing practices of 'doing good' opening the possibility for overall European civil society action (as well as the retrospective imagination of it), the article further reflects the emotional stakes of volunteering by looking at what went on in Copenhagen,

Sønderborg, and Flensborg as activities defined by 'a state of emergency', making it trouble-some to keep up the appearance of a European civil society after the trouble had gone.

Kerstin Poehls brings in the semantic field opened by the very term trouble and shows how the field is practiced in various exhibition spaces across Europe, thus substituting the brief encounter of volunteering during crisis with the more stable notion of trouble. During our fieldworkshops we encountered such exhibition spaces, wishing to make migrant experiences more accessible (Copenhagen War Museum) or celebrating 'the humanitarian giver' (Glasgow City Hall). The article investigates and questions the imaginaries and spaces that are opened by exhibiting these experiences: do they merely reproduce the 'trouble' and the 'crisis'? Or do they open our semantic fields to think beyond distinctions between 'the political', 'the public', and 'the economic', thereby challenging the border regime in ways it might not expect? When the latter is the case, the spaces support opening our geographical imaginary suggested by Aparna and colleagues, and they further the life of the European civil society identified by Sandberg and Andersen in more than respiratory form.

The last two articles trace relations to locations outside continental Northern Europe: Teresa Piacentini, Gareth Mulway, and Cetta Mainwairing investigate continuity and change in the volunteer networks in Glasgow, showing how, despite many similarities in volunteer aspirations, the UK migration policies constitute a very different context for solidarity practices in the city than is the case in the continental North, and finally, the article by Daniela de Bono and Cetta Mainwairing connects up with the 'edge-of-Europe', namely solidarity in the Mediterranean, asking us to relate the deeply troubled bordering processes of the South to those in the North. Trajectories in these two locations are longer and each in their specific way, more directly and openly related to power-struggles on the ground. In the Glasgow case, volunteers very explicitly confront and struggle with state policies stemming from Westminster, and at high sea in the Mediterranean, the volunteers struggle with EU agents as well as member state officials. Both articles thereby radically question the noton of 'time of crisis' by showing that crisis is in fact ongoing and an integral part of the systems that produce it.

In sum, the insights presented in the contributions invite us to re-think notions of help, solidarity, and humanitarianism, not so much in the light of a crisis but rather as Europe Trouble, that is, a necessary re-thinking of Europe as both a geographical and normative space in the light of current events. With this special issue we contend that Europe needs to be troubled in the sense that we aim for new modes of criticizing and destabilising established notions of political and economical kind (see Papataxiarchis 2018). Through our collective fieldworkshops, we co-created knowledge as well as sociality with our research partners at the volunteer initatives, with volunteers, refugee friends, and colleagues alike. A huge salute and thank you goes out to each and every one of the participants who made this study possible. We hope that the following articles each and together contribute to the steady and ongoing disruption of the European border regime.

Competing Interests
The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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