The Humanitarian Arena of Lesvos: Interrogating the Boundaries of Humanitarianism and Tourism

PhD Thesis

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Declaration

I, Richard Andrew Knight, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis explores the encounter between humanitarians and locals in Lesvos, Greece. It turns attention away from the plight of refugees (which has been extensively documented) and contributes to a growing body of ethnographies of aid (Stirrat 2008; Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman, 2011; Malkki 2015; Smirl 2015; Carpi 2019) by developing a critical analysis of those who cross borders to "help", "stand in solidarity" and "witness" the lives of refugees. Despite the presence of government agencies, NGOs, and civil society networks, the humanitarian infrastructure of Lesvos is dependent on the supply of mainly young, highly motivated yet short-term and unskilled volunteers. While their presence has been an economic boon on parts of the island, it has also caused significant social upheaval. This thesis engages with processes of hospitality (and hostility) (Herzfeld 1987; Boissevain 1996; Lenz 2010; Knott 2018), identity formation and labelling (Zetter 1991; 2007; Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Crawley and Skleparis 2018), and contributes to knowledge in the anthropology and geography of humanitarianism (see above) and tourism (MacCannell 1976; Boissevain and Selwyn 2004; Andrews 2011; Di Giovine 2011; Mostafanezhad 2014). Humanitarian and tourist imaginaries combine in Lesvos as a unique context for global northerners (and others) wishing to try or do humanitarian work, meet an exotic other, have a holiday or all of the above in the safety and relative familiarity of a Greek island. Through exploring emerging subjectivities in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos, I demonstrate the fluidity and intersecting nature of the socially constructed categories of "tourists" and "humanitarians", test the analytical binary of host and guest, and argue that the island has become a site of humanitarian pilgrimage where solidarity is consumed (cf. Andrews 2011). My analysis reveals blurred boundaries between the study and practice of humanitarianism and tourism.

Impact Statement

This PhD thesis is expected to be of value to academics and practitioners with an interest in humanitarianism and development. It contributes to key debates in migration and mobility studies, development/humanitarian economics, labelling practices, and critical approaches to humanitarian action. By moving analysis beyond the scope of humanitarian policies and projects and towards everyday humanitarian practice, the thesis contributes to a broader, more holistic understanding of humanitarian action. Similarly, by shifting forced migration studies' overwhelming focus on refugees towards the relatively understudied displacement-affected populations of so-called host communities and humanitarian practitioners themselves, this thesis further contributes to a more holistic understanding of forced displacement and responses to it. As such, this thesis contributes to decolonising agendas regarding the 'white saviour' (Cole 2012; Bandyopadhyay 2019; Anderson et al. 2021) elements of the study and practice of humanitarian action. In addition to development/humanitarian/forced migration studies, this thesis makes theoretical, methodological, and conceptual contributions to the interdisciplinary field of tourism studies (within the broader field of travel) as well as to the more historically established disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and geography.

Outside academia, this thesis is expected to be of value to policymakers and practitioners in the field of humanitarian action. Through shedding light on how and to what effect local populations perceive and respond to incoming humanitarian populations, this thesis provides policymakers and practitioners with insights and indications on what possible processes and change may emerge from their presence. The increasing hostility towards aid workers in Lesvos that culminated in widespread protests and violent attacks on aid workers and their property can be contextualised within broader trends against migrants during this period, on the island, in Greece, and in Europe. It also provides some indication of what measures could be put in place before and during interventions as well as how to mitigate some of the effects. Such findings are useful not only to humanitarian agencies and their staff, but also to local government, civil society movements, and, indeed, local communities which, in turn, contribute to ongoing policy debates surrounding localisation.

Furthermore, the thesis provides insights into the key actors who constitute the humanitarian arena of Lesvos. More broadly, it is useful to those who wish to better understand the motivations of people who choose to cross borders to relieve human suffering. Through providing a deep reflection on the myriad and complex motivations of members of this particular social group, the thesis' findings provide insights that may be of use to humanitarian agencies' human resources departments with an interest in recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers. Meanwhile, the findings may also be useful to refugees and others wishing to better understand the motivations of those who 'govern' (Fassin 2007a) them. The same argument similarly applies to local communities affected by the humanitarian presence.

The findings are also useful to tourist practitioners, not least in demonstrating that humanitarian practitioners can have similar profiles as well as similar socioeconomic and spatial practices as tourists. My findings from Lesvos demonstrate that a humanitarian and refugee presence can be an economic boon for a place and, in doing so, provides insights for tourist practitioners and local businesses to pivot towards (or away from) emerging humanitarian economies and capitalise accordingly.

Findings from the study have already been disseminated through conference presentations, seminars, and international workshops, and teaching engagements at undergraduate, postgraduate, and foundation year levels. One article on methodology has already been published and further publications with conceptual and methodological contributions are planned.

Dissemination of the research findings to these groups has the potential to better inform policy, practice, and responses. While the research was conducted in Europe, it also has implications for humanitarian policy and practice in the global south. Finally, noting the overlaps in mandates, and similarities in population groups and their everyday practices, this research is also expected to be of value to academics and practitioners in the fields of development, peacekeeping and democracy building.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In 2015, large numbers of people crossed international borders into Greece, most of whom passed through the island of Lesvos. The trend continues today as refugees and migrants continue to arrive from Turkey despite the challenges and dangers of crossing. Rather than focussing on refugees and migrants, however, this thesis is about the people who cross borders to bear witness, support or stand in solidarity with refugees. These include volunteers, professional humanitarians, journalists, and researchers amongst others. Together they form the humanitarian presence on the island. On some days, more humanitarians arrived than refugees themselves (Knott 2018). They come and go, live, work, consume and interact on the island and, in doing so, they have produced significant social change. While the people of Lesvos were 2016 Nobel Peace Prize nominees for their 'empathy and self-sacrifice', and the policies and programmes of aid agencies are well documented in policy and media discourses, there is a need for a deeper analysis of the activities of humanitarian actors outside of their project-related activities.

1.2 Background

At the border of the European Union, Greece had long been a transit country for refugees and migrants trying to reach northern Europe but not until 2015 did such large numbers of refugees arrive. During the 'long summer of migration' (Hess et al. 2016; Oikonomakis 2018), the international media was rife with images of long processions of refugees walking through Europe, most of whom started their European (or, at least, their EU) journey in Lesvos (UNHCR 2015). Media images of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy, dead and washed up on the beaches of Turkey, went viral motivating "ordinary people" into action (Snow 2020). The international media reproduced images and associated narratives of 'distant victims' whereby '[t]he audience is expected to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment' (Höijer 2004:513). And, indeed, the audience responded. Volunteers from Europe but also elsewhere, began to mobilise themselves and material resources to support those in need. As the main point of entry from refugees and an easy point of access for journalists, Lesvos quickly became the mediatic epicentre of 'Europe's refugee crisis'. International volunteers flooded the island, joining locals and other internationals in helping

people who arrived on to the shore. Armed with money raised through personal networks, they emptied local shops of clothes, tents, sleeping bags, shoes, and anything else they thought that refugees might need. They indiscriminately provided dry clothes, water, hot cups of tea and, regardless of cultural sensitivities, hugs for newly arrived refugees. They rented rooms (for themselves and for refugees where the owners would accept refugee guests) and hired cars to transport refugees across the island to the registration centres and the port from where they would, they hoped, continue their journeys through Europe. In the absence of government aid, they publicly criticised professional aid agencies from the formal humanitarian sector for not being present. As large formal NGOs began to arrive and distribute classic relief items such as blankets and dignity kits (UNHCR 2015a; IRC 2016; ActionAid 2017), less "traditional" organisations provided alternative responses such as, for example, a group of Swedish clowns who toured refugee camps to 'offer humor as a means of psychological support for communities that have suffered trauma' (Clowns without Borders n.d.). Meanwhile, independent volunteers from Europe and beyond continued to arrive with an aim of helping and/or stand in solidarity with the island's other new arrivals. Regardless of which part of the humanitarian infrastructure they represented, they all needed places to sleep, food to eat, ways to move around, and generally consume.

While businesses elsewhere in the country were closing or had closed down due to the effects of the global economic crisis and national austerity measures that began in 2009/2010, business was booming in Lesvos. Hotels, rooms to let, car rentals and other services now operate not only in the summer but all year round as they cater to the needs of humanitarian staff and volunteers. While some locals have complained of the 'neo-colonial' attitudes of humanitarian actors and the transformation of their island into a 'Third World' country (Rozakou 2017), the unfolding refugee situation on the island attracted people from around the world and across the country. Commenting on the significant changes in everyday life, Afouxenidis et al. (2017:30) note how:

> this 'surplus of otherness' brought down certainties and lifestyle consistencies the residents may have had in the past. Thoughts and feelings were recontextualized, identities were reconstructed, new cultural parameters shed light on different ways of conceptualizing everyday life, and the places where the human drama unfolded

were reconfigured and lived through new and tangible experiences, symbolisms, and significations' (Afouxenidis 2017:30).

The humanitarian context of Lesvos is arguably quite different to the "traditional" humanitarian responses that take place in the global south.[1] This, I argue, is mainly due to it taking place within Europe in the global north. Despite the presence of intergovernmental organisations, government agencies, NGOs, civil society organisations and networks, the humanitarian infrastructure of Lesvos (and Greece) is dependent on the supply of mainly young, highly motivated yet short-term and unskilled volunteers who provide services that range from handing out blankets to new arrivals, search and rescue at sea, and coordinating health services. Their role is crucial to the functioning of the humanitarian system in Lesvos. In contrast to many of the conflict and disaster induced displacement contexts in the global south, Lesvos provides an easily accessible, safe, and familiar place for global northerners where humanitarian and tourist imaginaries combine for people who wish to engage in humanitarian work, meet an exotic other, have a holiday or all of the above.

1.3 Research Questions

This thesis explores the encounter between international humanitarians and locals in Lesvos, Greece. It asks specifically the following question and sub-questions:

What everyday practices have emerged from the encounter between international humanitarian and host community actors in Lesvos?

a) Who are the different actors in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos?
b) How is the humanitarian presence conceptualised by humanitarian and host community actors in the humanitarian arena?
c) How do host community actors respond to the presence of humanitarian actors?

[1] Here it is worth noting that UNHCR was active primarily in Europe until the 1960s when it extended its work into the global south.

In doing so, it turns attention away from the plight of refugees (which has been extensively documented) and instead contributes to the growing ethnographies of aid that focus on the lifeworlds of humanitarian actors (Stirrat 2008; Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman, 2011; Malkki 2015; Smirl 2015; Carpi 2019) by developing a critical analysis pertaining to the thousands of people who cross borders to 'help', 'stand in solidarity' and witness the lives of refugees. Instead of focusing on the programmes, projects and policies of humanitarian actors, however, this thesis focuses on the everyday practices of international humanitarian actors outside of their projects with a particular focus on the encounter with the island's pre-2015 population. The findings of this study have relevance outside of Lesvos and will be of use to both scholars and practitioners of humanitarian action.

1.4 Why this topic?

When I originally applied for a PhD, my proposed topic was quite different to the present thesis. Following nearly two decades of frontline humanitarian work in the Middle East, Africa and Europe (including in Lesvos), I originally intended to study community-based and refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism in the urban contexts of Amman, Jordan and Athens, Greece. I was motivated both to pursue a PhD generally and on this topic in particular due to a combination of personal and professional interest in refugee-to-refugee humanitarianism (Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto 2015; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016b) as well as an affinity with some of the literature on the subject. Not long after returning to academia, however, I heard the various calls to 'study up' the cultures of the powerful rather than 'down' the powerless (Nader 1972; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Gusterson 1997; see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion). Given that I had already built a career on the back of refugees, I decided that I did not want to pursue this line of inquiry. Moreover, there is already a substantial body of research on the everyday practices of refugees (Malkki 1995; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a; Ehrkamp 2017; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018). While I realised that I was interested in studying humanitarian practice, I was also not interested in researching the intended effects of humanitarian programmes and policies, partly due to my professional background in this area, and also as there is already much research that takes this approach (Harrell-Bond 1986; Malkki 1996; Bakewell 2000; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010; Olivius 2014; Turner 2020), as well as 'grey literature' produced by development/humanitarian agencies and policy-oriented research institutions (Betts et al. 2012; IRC 2016; Hamad et al. 2017).

However, reading ethnographies of aid and the "Aidland" body of literature (Mosse 2011; Hindman and Fetcher 2011; Harrison 2013; Smirl 2015; see Chapter 2) while reflecting on my own experiences in "Aidland", I was surprised by the late aid worker-cum-academic Lisa Smirl's (2008:237) observation that the 'highly visible bodies and physical environments of aid workers are almost completely overlooked in any analysis of post-crisis reconstruction or emergency response'. Hence, I decided to address this gap and research the everyday practices of humanitarians outside of the projects they implement and, specifically, the everyday practices at the heart of the humanitarian/local encounter.

My interest in this topic is inextricably linked to my experiences as an aid worker. It was already clear to me that aid workers do not just drop into a country, provide some aid, and then leave. While individuals come and go fairly regularly, aid workers as a group tend, for the most part, to remain for extended period and I had always wondered about the effects they might have on the people and places they encountered. I had often wondered what the relatively conservative residents of a Middle Eastern neighbourhood were thinking as drunken Euro-Americans would continue their revelry, music, noise and all, long past the call for morning prayers. In South Sudan, I remember my surprise at the response of a Nuer boy who told me he wanted to work for the United Nations because 'they live in the biggest houses and have the best cars'. I too had wanted to work for the United Nations in my youth but not for those reasons. At the same time, I had never actually ever met someone who works for the United Nations by that stage of my life and certainly was not aware of where they might live or what car they drove. Instead, my thinking was influenced by a then version of the humanitarian imaginary produced and reinforced by media representation that constructs humanitarian aid workers in a similar light to missionaries or as someone who 'stands out as a strange and revolutionary moral figure precisely because humanitarians routinely provide care for strangers' (Beckett 2019:162).

The main focus of this thesis is on international volunteers. I had initially set out to study humanitarin practice generally which, from my personal experience, had mainly involved professional humanitarians with international volunteers on the peripheries of responses, if present at all. However, due to the particular form that the international humanitarian response has taken in Greece, the vast majority of the 'highly visible bodies' in my field site

were international volunteers. If I had conducted fieldwork in Amman, as per original intention, there would be a greater than present emphasis on professional aid workers due to the lower ratio of international volunteers there (Daskalaki and Leivaditi 2018; Iliadou 2019; Shay 2019). At this point, it is important (for me) to clarify from the outset that while this thesis is both a critique and critical of the role of volunteers in the humanitarian system, it does not take a position against volunteering. Nor, for that matter, against aid workers generally – indeed, as I continue to practice aid work, I still consider myself an aid worker as well as a scholar. However, sometimes when explaining my research, I have been asked, 'So do you support volunteering or are you against it?'. To be clear, I fully believe that the principle of volunteering itself is commendable as, indeed, are the fundamental principles of humanitarianism. While I am critical of some of the practices of volunteers in this thesis, my purpose is neither to advocate for or against international volunteering but, instead, to understand it and its practitioners with regard to everyday humanitarian practice. Moreover, like many people in the aid industry, I also started my career in the humanitarian sector as a volunteer. This largely consisted of unpaid internships (volunteering by a different name) that I was only able to carry out with the support of additional paid work, mainly in the private sector. Having explained how I arrived at this topic, the next section discusses my thesis' contributions to key academic and policy debates.

1.5 Contributions of the thesis

In the siloed world of academia, this thesis emerges from development studies. However, as Uma Kothari ([2005]2019:3) notes in the introduction to her volume:

> There are diverse views concerning what development studies is or should be, ranging from opinions as to whether it is primarily about academic research or more concerned with policy and practical relevance, whether it possesses a specific epistemology and methodology, and the extent to which it is multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary or crossdisciplinary.

As true today as when it was first published, this statement also applies to the new and growing field of humanitarian studies. That the contributors to Kothari's volume rarely distinguish humanitarian practice from development practice, or humanitarian studies from

development studies can be attributed, at least in part, to the relative youth of humanitarian studies at the time of the original publication. Thus, in terms of disciplinary contributions, this thesis contributes primarily to development studies and its younger cousin, humanitarian studies. Taking a wider lens, it contributes to forced migration studies with its focus on responses to displacement. Meanwhile, it also contributes to the anthropology, sociology and geography of development, international relations, as well as humanitarian studies and tourism studies.

The thesis contributes to the burgeoning 'ethnographies of aid' (Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Harrison 2013; Malkki 2015; Smirl 2015). In particular, it contributes to what Lisa Smirl's (2015:xv) describes as 'the elephant in the room: the way in which aid workers work and live'. While she was interested in understanding what might be done about 'the way in which aid is delivered that continues to reproduce situations where aid money is wasted, projects left unfinished and aid workers are themselves under attack', the present thesis is less concerned with aid workers' specific projects and their waste than it is with their everyday practices outside of the projects they implement. It does, however, contribute to broader conversations regarding the way that aid workers are perceived by others (Donini 2007; Dijkzeul and Wakenge 2010), and helps us to understand how and why, for example, they came under violent attack in Lesvos in 2020. As such the findings from this thesis have significant relevance for policymakers and practitioners.

The thesis' most important contribution to knowledge, however, is its explicit identification of the blurred boundaries between the study and practice of humanitarianism and the study and practice of tourism. On the surface, it would appear that these two forms of mobility could not be further apart. Social constructions of humanitarianism in the global north concern the important work of saving lives and alleviating suffering while tourism is associated with leisure-seeking, fun and refreshment. Practitioners of each are constructed accordingly. However, as this thesis reveals, the social and economic practices of the humanitarians of Lesvos are very similar to those of tourists (Chapter 6). So similar that their colleagues often cannot tell them apart; and so similar that the tourist label is often deployed by humanitarians and many of the island's pre-2015 to criticise and denigrate the work of the 'other' while reinforcing their own identities and subjectivities (Chapter 7).

While scholars of tourism point to similarities with centuries' old practices of pilgrimage (MacCannell 1973, 1976; Turner and Turner 1978; Graburn 1989), humanitarian travel can also be considered a form of pilgrimage (Chapters 2 & 8). The thesis argues that all three forms of mobility bear both structural and experiential similarities. Furthermore, every single international volunteer (and international professional) I encountered during fieldwork presented their reasons for travel as a way to give back to society and/or, for the more religiously inclined volunteers, to give back to God. At the same time, analysis revealed a sense of alienation that travellers realised before or during their travel, be it from their work, their relationships or from the increasingly (politically and socially) rightwards-leaning centres of power back home. As Hazel Andrews (2014:10) argues in her study of British tourists in Mallorca, 'If the home world cannot provide a sense of identity or security, it becomes necessary to look for the self elsewhere'. In trying to help the lives of others, many were also trying to help themselves, practically and spiritually (Malkki 2015). While tourists are constructed as consumers of leisure, pilgrims as consumers of salvation, and humanitarians as consumers of solidarity, the analysis developed in this thesis reveals that these boundaries are often more blurred in practice.

Having recognised and highlighted these links, I argue that the contribution of this thesis is greater to the field of humanitarian studies than it is to tourism studies. I make this case because, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2, there is already a significant body of research in tourist studies that identifies volunteers as tourists in development contexts and, increasingly since 2015, in humanitarian contexts. In humanitarian studies, however, scholars (many of whom have also practiced as volunteers) tend not to identify their subjects (and themselves) with labels associated with tourism, preferring those related to humanitarianism. This thesis analyses these processes and posits possible explanations for this phenomenon that are relevant and useful to scholars and practitioners of humanitarianism.

1.6 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, *Chapter Two* explores relevant literature on the thesis' topic, thereby providing the foundations for the analysis to follow, and tracing the contours of key debates that my research contributes to. Recognising the thesis' reliance on anglophone

literature (with a few mainly Greek exceptions), it begins by examining diverse conceptualisations of 'humanitarianism' in the academic literature as well as in policy and practice (Arendt 1963; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; M. N. Barnett 2011; Donini 2012; Ticktin 2014; ALNAP 2015; Brada 2016; De Lauri 2020). It then situates the study and practice of humanitarianism within the study and practice of development, noting the conceptual and practical links between the two. The chapter then situates the thesis itself within the abovementioned emerging ethnographies of aid, or 'Aidland' literature (Mosse 2011; Hindman and Fetcher 2011; Harrison 2013; Smirl 2015), while taking care not to confuse this body with actor-oriented studies of aid (Long 2001; Krause 2014; Swidler and Watkins 2017). This section also introduces the concept of 'Aid towns' (Büscher et al. 2018) before providing some general critiques of the 'Aidland' body. The next section engages with literature on the 'humanitarian actors' (R. L. Stirrat 2008; Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2015a; Twigg and Mosel 2017; Sandri 2018), recognising the diversity of the agencies and individuals who are at the heart of this research. This subsequent section examines literature on humanitarian economies (Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf 2002; Büscher and Vlassenroot 2010; Weiss 2013; Hammar 2014; Carbonnier 2015; Jennings 2015; Carpi 2019) which is the focus of Chapter 6. The chapter moves on to review the growing literature on the phenomenon of 'ordinary' people providing humanitarian aid to displaced people generally (Brković 2017; Dunn 2017; Horstmann 2017; Fechter and Schwittay 2019) and with regard to Europe in particular since 2015 (Rozakou 2017; Twigg and Mosel 2017; Guribye and Mydland 2018; della Porta 2018; Sandri 2018; Birey et al. 2019; Cederquist 2019; Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat 2019; Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019). In doing so, the analysis of this literature identifies links with the localisation agenda and solidarity initiatives. The following section critiques the literature on conceptualisations and the homogenisation of the 'local' in academic (Appadurai 1995; Severine Autesserre 2014; Redfield 2012; Heathershaw 2016b; Wagner 2018a; Rigon and Broto 2021) and policy literature (Grand Bargain 2016; UNOCHA 2022b) before moving into a discussion on labelling practices and identity negotiation in forced displacement contexts (Wood 1985; 2007; Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007; Zetter 1991; 2007; Polzer Ngwato 2012; Stevens 2013; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Janmyr and Mourad 2018).

The chapter continues with an analysis of the literature on tourism and pilgrimage (MacCannell 1976; V. Turner 1969; V. Turner and Turner 1978; Graburn 1989; Di Giovine 2013). It links these practices of mobility to humanitarian travel while exploring the concepts

of liminality, authenticity and communitas and the ways they have been and can be applied to the study and practice of humanitarianism. Before concluding, the final section links tourism and the humanitarian initiatives that have emerged since 2015 through the concept and practice of volunteer tourism (see above) while discussing some of the overlapping debates including their relationships with global citizenship and colonialism. Building on this discussion, the next chapter sets up the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis.

In *Chapter 3*, I introduce the humanitarian arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Hilhorst and Serrano 2010) and set out my own contributions to this framework. As described by Hilhorst and Serrano (2010:199):

> The humanitarian arena framework focuses on multiple actors rather than international agencies, analyses processes rather than projects, and premises the analysis on social negotiation rather than planned interventions. This offers a different way of seeing crisis response and helps in assessing the scope and political ramifications of service delivery.

In this chapter I discuss the framework's roots in the actor-oriented approach (Long 2001) which starts with the simple premise that actors have agency. I engage with Long's 'interface analysis' (*ibid.*:243) that interrogates 'critical point[s] of intersection between different lifeworlds, social fields or levels of social organisation, where social discontinuities based upon discrepancies in values, interests, knowledges and power, are most likely to be located'. My main contribution to the humanitarian arena is threefold. First, I shift the focus of the humanitarian arena away from institutions (such as the state, UN agencies, NGOs, the humanitarian community, the local community, etc) and toward a more micro-level analysis of the people who constitute these institutions. Second, I focus on activities of humanitarians outside of the projects they implement. Third, I use 'interface analysis' to explore the relatively unexplored humanitarian/local micro-dynamics in Lesvos. Having set out the humanitarian arena approach as the overarching theoretical framework, the next chapter demonstrates the links between the framework and the ethnographic methodology chosen for this thesis.

Chapter Four presents the methodology used in this project. Grounded in the ethnographic study of humanitarian practice, Hilhorst (2018:2) argues that the humanitarian arena framework 'derives from and underpins a steady stream of ethnographic studies (Harrell-Bond 1986; Apthorpe 2005; Marriage 2006; Autesserre 2014; and many others)'. Long (2001) stresses the 'added value' of detailed ethnography in light of the complexities, nuances and fluidity of social life in general and the social life of development in particular. I argue that this also applies to understanding the humanitarian encounter in Lesvos. The chapter begins by introducing the research context of the island. It then demonstrates the suitability of an abductive study design that analysed the words and actions of the actors under investigation while continuously feeding back into the theoretical framework throughout the research process. It goes on to provide background on the study population(s) and their characteristics while paying attention to the challenges of categorisation in the context of overlapping positionalities. I also delineate my own positionality within the context of these overlaps as well as my choice and ethical responsibility to 'study up' (Nader 1972; Reem Farah 2020) on humanitarian actors. The next section discusses the snowball, opportunistic, judgement and stratified sampling methods (Agar 1980) employed for this research, followed by a section on data-generation methods. Participant observation served as a 'strategic method' (Bernard 2011) as I volunteered in the humanitarian response and 'hung out' (Geertz 1998)[2] during my everyday life on the island which provided further access to participants for both informal and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The following section on data analysis demonstrates how some concepts pre-identified in the literature from chapter two in conjunction with an analysis based on grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) facilitated the emergence of the thesis' key concepts resulting from participants' language and behaviours. The chapter continues with a discussion of the researcher's responsibilities to participants (Brydon 2006; Bryman 2016; Babbie 2016; Laws et al. 2013) and towards academia more generally (Babbie 2016; Creswell 2014; Sukarieh and Tannock 2019). It also draws attention to some of the limitations of the study as well as areas for future research. Throughout the chapter I use ethnographic material to explain my methodological process and highlight some of the challenges of negotiating informed consent in the context of multiple positionalities. Having set out the

[2] A term 'borrowed' from Renato Rosaldo.

methodology, the next chapter sets the scene in Lesvos, the Greek island of the Aegean at the heart of this thesis.

Chapter 5 introduces the reader to the island of Lesvos, its history, geography, politics and previous migrations to and from the island. It situates contemporary migrations from the global north and south within the context and continuities of historical patterns and processes of migration. It maps and analyses the roles of the actors who constitute Lesvos' humanitarian arena. It presents the background and context surrounding the 2015 'long summer of migration' (Hess et al. 2016; Oikonomakis 2018) at a time of national economic and political crisis. The chapter adopts and adapts Evthymios Papataxiarchis' (2019) three phases to the refugee crisis on Lesvos. The first is the era of mass arrivals and search-and-rescue that exploded in the summer of 2015 and lasted until March 2016, when the 'EU-Turkey deal' was agreed. The deal represents the beginning of the second phase, which saw a significant reduction in refugee arrivals from Turkey and the introduction of the legally questionable 'geographical restriction' whereby new arrivals were required to remain on the island until their asylum process is resolved. This phase also saw a significant change in the makeup of the humanitarian infrastructure on the island whereby many volunteers left and stopped going to Lesvos due to the reduced numbers of arrivals. This period also marked the beginning of what Papataxiarchis calls the 'age of lawyers and teachers' who were responding to the needs of the now much less mobile asylum-seeker/refugee population on the island. The final phase is one of 'violent resistance' which is marked by the violent end to a peaceful refugee protest against their squalid living conditions. According to the Observatory of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the Aegean (2018), the 'rally not only manifested extreme xenophobic violence, but also exhibited the toleration of such violence among various strata of local society'. While anti-refugee and humanitarian sentiment had been bubbling since at least 2015, this event marked the beginning of a period of increasingly open hostility towards refugees and humanitarians. This was not only reflected at the ballot box in 2019 but, by March 2020 when the Covid-19 national lockdown began, had manifested in large scale local strikes and protests demanding 'we want our islands back', clashes between riot police from Athens and islanders resisting the construction of a new reception centre for refugees, and violent attacks on aid workers and their property. The remainder of the chapter examines some of the possible causes of the disconnect between locals and international humanitarian

in Lesvos, including the role of conspiracy theories and the limited interactions between the two groups.

Chapter 6 contributes to debates on 'displacement economies' (Hammar 2014). I shift the focus away from displaced populations (Callamard 1994; Whitaker 1999; Jacobsen 2002; Landau 2004; Maystadt and Verwimp 2014; Taylor et al. 2016), toward the 'helping' populations. Specifically, I focus on their everyday practices and activities outside of the projects they implement. Bridging peacekeeping studies and humanitarian studies, my approach engages with Kathleen Jennings' (2014:315) 'peacekeeping economy' to analyse 'economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence' and applies it to the humanitarian context of Lesvos. It examines two key areas of the local/humanitarian economic encounter: the tourist sector and labour markets. Specifically, I analyse the interface of these markets with the humanitarian presence. Building on Hilhorst and Jansen's (2010:1121) claim that 'in an arena approach, the kinds of actions or actors considered to be humanitarian are not predetermined', I address the narrative that Lesvos' tourist industry has suffered due to the refugee crisis and argue that the kinds of actions or actors considered as 'tourist' should also not be predetermined. Like tourists, humanitarian actors eat, drink, sleep, move and generally consume on the island. Its hotels, bars, cafés, restaurants, car hire companies, AirBnBs operate all year round instead of during 'season-time' only. The island's booming property market benefits anyone with property or a spare room to rent. Businesses have adopted the language of humanitarianism to sell their wares. Meanwhile, students, civil servants on deployment, tourists, pilgrims and others find themselves displaced by the soaring rents. In the section on the humanitarian labour market, I analyse economic relations between international and local humanitarians (including refugees). I argue that these relations manifest in different ways to those encountered in more 'traditional' humanitarian responses in the global south. I attribute this to the geographical and political location of Lesvos within Europe and argue that, despite the different makeup of these economic relations, they nevertheless produce power relations similar to those encountered in the global south. Exploration of these economic relations lays the foundations for the next chapter which analyses processes of identity formation and negotiation amongst the islands' different actors.

Following on from on Chapter Two's discussion of conceptualisations of humanitarian actors, *Chapter Seven* examines how different humanitarian actors in Lesvos self-identify and are identified by others. It analyses: who labels whom as "humanitarian", "volunteer", and "tourist"; how these labels are co-produced, negotiated and mobilised in Lesvos and beyond; and how they are deployed in relation to other groups and labels. It contributes to debates on identity formation and labelling in displacement contexts (Zetter 1991; 2007; Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007; Polzer Ngwato 2012) by shifting the focus away from the figure of the 'refugee' and towards the figure of the 'humanitarian'. As Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) note how different actors deploy discourse as a strategy in their search for resources and authority, and to assert their power, gain legitimacy and renegotiate the humanitarian arena's values and structures, this chapter discusses how different people engage with these labels and concepts. Social constructions in the global north of humanitarians as important and life-saving, and of tourists as frivolous and leisure-seeking, are mobilised by different actors within and outside the humanitarian community to assert their own moral superiority and legitimacy regarding who is more humanitarian than who. Following on from the previous chapters' identification of the similarities between humanitarians' and tourists' social and economic practices, this chapter moves on to analyse how, why, and to what extent different actors embrace or resist this label. Noting how volunteers at an international environmental charity rejected the 'volunteer tourist' label during the 1980s whereas now the same organisation is heralded as an example of best practice in voluntourism, the chapter suggests that a similar process may take place with volunteers in humanitarian contexts. The chapter moves on to discuss why locals apply the tourist label and, in doing so, reveals practices and processes of micro-resistance as well as identity formation in opposition to the humanitarian presence. The analysis reveals processes of identity formation and emerging subjectivities amongst the different actors of the humanitarian arena.

Building on Chapter Two's discussion on the similarities between pilgrimage and tourism, *Chapter Eight's* analysis reveals similar parallels with humanitarian travel to Lesvos. As with pilgrimage and tourism, volunteers step aside from the normal rules of life and society for a limited duration to purposely travel toward a highly anticipated destination where unique social relations (including mixing of classes and rapid making of 'friends') are formed and

feelings of intensity experienced. As such, humanitarian travel bears both structural and experiential similarities to pilgrimage and tourism in modern and earlier times. Building on Alexandra Knott's (2018) observation that the camps, dinghies, lifejackets, boat landings and indeed the refugees themselves have become 'tourist attractions' for many visitors, this chapter analyses the role of a municipal rubbish dump where lifejackets are stored (the 'Lifejacket Graveyard') using MacCannell's (1976) formula for identifying an attraction. Where Nelson Graburn (1977, 1989) mapped tourism to Victor Turner's structure on pilgrimage, this chapter maps humanitarianism to this structure. It argues that if travelling to Lesvos can be considered a form of pilgrimage for those inclined towards supporting or standing in solidarity with refugees (or locals), then visiting the Lifejacket Graveyard can be considered as a pilgrimage-within-a-pilgrimage. The analysis demonstrates the different way that different actors engage with the site and, in doing so, highlights the broader conflict over the island's identity as a "refugee island". Using ethnographic examples and analysis of interviews, this chapter further engages with concepts from the study of tourism and pilgrimage including the pilgrim/tourist continuum (Smith 1992), the quest for authenticity and communitas. While international volunteer interlocutors unanimously stated that they travelled to Lesvos to respond to the unmet needs of refugees, many also indicated that they were also responding to needs of their own. While much scholarship on tourism has focused on 'the quest for authenticity' (MacCannell 1976), there is much less on the concept of alienation despite its essential and foundational role with regard to authenticity. Through focussing on volunteers rather than professional humanitarians, this chapter both echoes and adds to Malkki's (2015) thesis that various forms of alienation "back home" are key motivating factors for humanitarian travel.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by bringing the various strands of analysis together. It reaffirms the theoretical lineage that underscores the ideas explored in the thesis, draws the thesis to a close through bringing together the threads of the arguments presented in the preceding chapters, and articulates its key methodological, theoretical, and conceptual contributions to academic and policy debates.

Despite the dominant narrative that the refugee crisis has scared away tourists, the arena approach provides an alternative view whereby the kinds of actions or actors considered to

be humanitarian or tourist are not predetermined, and reveals tourism to be flourishing all year round rather than only in 'season-time'. The thesis confirms the arena approach's recognition that humanitarian action is based on a range of complex driving forces besides the humanitarian desire to alleviate "life threatening suffering wherever it may be found". Through detailed ethnography, the thesis contributes to discussions on self-perception versus external perceptions of humanitarian actors (Donini 2007; Dijkzeul and Wakenge 2010). Meanwhile, the links between tourism, pilgrimage and humanitarianism represent a novel approach to understanding humanitarian practice. As Tom Selwyn and Julie Scott (2010) argue that the tourism's foundations are located within the three broad fields of leisure, culture, and hospitality, I argue that these are also three of the key themes that underpin the study and practice of international humanitarianism. Free/leisure time (outside of work), an interest in an exotic other, and an opposition to the spread of anti-immigrant sentiment in the global north have found an outlet in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos and have been co-opted by the refugee regime (of the global north) in providing a space for the 'consumption of international solidarity' in the form of volunteering. Where charity-giving, fun-runs, ethical purchasing and other solidarity practices provide outlets at home, the safe and accessible spaces in the emerging humanitarian arenas of Europe provide a more embodied way to consume solidarity for those who have the time and money to do so. I argue that these processes and events have produced a new generation of people (in the global north) with not only an interest in working in the humanitarian sector but now also the field experience needed to break into the sector's continually expanding professional labour market (Bioforce and PHAP 2020). I conclude by arguing that the processes uncovered by this analysis of the humanitarian/local encounter in Lesvos are representative of trends in solidarity, xenophobia and humanitarian governance in the global north.

CHAPTER 2 – Studying everyday humanitarian practice

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to address the gaps in the literature surrounding the everyday practices of humanitarian actors outside of the projects they implement with particular reference to the humanitarian/local encounter. It is only recently that scholars of forced migration and humanitarian studies have started to explore this encounter with most research focusing on the policies and programmes of aid agencies while overlooking the everyday activities of the people who populate these institutions outside of their projects. Beginning with a discussion of humanitarianism, the following section situates the thesis within the burgeoning ethnographies of aid before an examination of the literature on humanitarian economies that highlight humanitarian studies' relative lack of relational approaches to their conceptualisations. The next section on "citizen humanitarianism" analyses the various conceptualisations of local responses to displacement that have emerged, particularly since the "European refugee crisis" in 2015, before moving on to a critical analysis of the ways in which the concept of "local" is mobilised and applied in the literature. Forced migration studies' overwhelming focus on the displaced is critiqued in the following section on labelling practices which argues that more analytical attention is needed towards the vernacular practices of individual humanitarian actors rather than the institutions that host them and the policies and labels they produce. With the emergence of tourism as a key concept of my thesis, the remainder of the chapter examines the concepts of liminality, communitas, and the quest for authenticity that are prominent in tourism and pilgrimage studies. I then discuss their relevance to humanitarian studies with a focus on the overlaps and gaps between volunteer tourism and citizenship humanitarianism. Finally, the chapter concludes by positioning this research amongst these debates and bodies of literature while suggesting ways in which this thesis contributes to existing gaps in the literature.

2.2 Humanitarianism in this thesis

At its broadest level, humanitarianism has come to be understood as alleviating the immediate suffering of others. ReliefWeb, a humanitarian information service provided by

the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA), does not have a specific definition for humanitarianism in its Glossary of Terms (ReliefWeb 2008), but does for humanitarian action and humanitarian assistance. The former is defined as 'Assistance, protection and advocacy actions undertaken on an impartial basis in response to human needs resulting from complex political emergencies and natural hazards', a definition adopted from ALNAP, a network of mainly formal or traditional international humanitarian actors (see below). Humanitarian assistance, for its part, is defined as 'Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population…[which] must be provided in accordance with basic humanitarian principles…with full respect for the sovereignty of the States'. Funded by UNOCHA, ReliefWeb's definitions are perhaps unsurprisingly state-centred and rooted in a world of international humanitarian practice that is dominated by funding from global northern governments. This world of practice is described variously as a system (ALNAP 2015; Walker and Maxwell 2009), an empire (Barnett 2011; Donini 2012), and an arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). This thesis adopts an arena approach which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Meanwhile, Bornstein and Redfield (2010) distinguish international humanitarian practice from development (which, they argue, focuses on economics), and from human rights (law), by arguing that humanitarianism focuses on the immediate alleviation of suffering (physical and psychological). While development, human rights and, indeed, humanitarianism could be defined more broadly or narrowly, the focus on the immediate alleviation of suffering is nevertheless a common theme across the literature.

Beyond this, however, humanitarianism as a concept remains difficult to define. This is perhaps why, in the recently published dictionary *Humanitarianism: keywords* (De Lauri 2020), there is no specific definition for humanitarianism itself but instead a list of 107 entries to help navigate the conceptual universe of humanitarianism. More succinctly, Miriam Ticktin (2014:274) recognises that humanitarianism can be understood as 'an ethos, a cluster of sentiments, a set of laws, a moral imperative to intervene, and a form of government'. Meanwhile, Betsey Brada (2016:756) rejects the notion that humanitarianism is 'a stable concept and easily recognisable phenomenon' and argues that 'humanitarianism only becomes apparent in relation to other categories'. Here, she adopts the position of Peter Redfield (2005:330) that humanitarianism is more readily defined as 'an array of particular

embodied, situated practices' and argues (Brada 2016:756) that '[i]n short, humanitarianism is contingent: it depends on circumstance and varies from one context to another'.

One of the key critiques against humanitarianism as a means to alleviate the suffering of others concerns the power relations that emerge between sufferers and alleviators as a result of the intervention. According to Hannah Arendt (1963), humanitarianism builds on a 'politics of pity' that depends on a spectacle of suffering viewed by people who are able to help. Simplified representations of passive, weak, helpless and vulnerable victims are juxtaposed with their binary opposites of active/agential, strong, able, powerful saviours. In displacement contexts, Liisa Malkki (1992, 1996) has analysed the construction of the 'refugee' as a 'generic and essentialised figure' through legal and political discourses whose experiences are removed from their socio-political, cultural and economic contexts. The media reproduce images and narratives of 'distant victims' whereby '[t]he audience is expected to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment' (Höijer 2004:513). Responses takes various forms ranging from political/emotional sympathy/pity for the issue/people at hand to mobilising resources aimed at alleviating said suffering or even travelling to said distant place to 'save' these distant victims. Such responses and the imaginaries whence they emerge are located within 'white saviour' narratives that have their roots in the civilising mission of the colonial project (Harrell-Bond 1986; De Waal 1989). This imagined and/or real relationship establishes the framework for personal and policy interventions from a perceived and/or real position of power by the humanitarian saviour. This thesis focuses on the practitioners of humanitarianism.

2.3 Aidland and Ethnographies of Aid

Ethnographies of aid have been widely used to study development and humanitarian aid since at least the 1980s (Harrell-Bond 1986; De Waal 1989) with most focussing on refugees as the unit of analysis. Until recently, most research on humanitarian action itself (rather than its targets), has tended to focus on aid-providing institutions, the policies and programmes they implement, and their effects on the displaced with little research conducted on the people themselves who populate these institutions and implement the policies. The emerging ethnographies of aid or 'Aidland' literature (Mosse 2011; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Harrison 2013; Smirl 2015) have begun to address this gap to some degree. Moving

development studies beyond theories of global capital (Frank 1971; Harvey 2001), the discourse analysis of post-development literature (Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Doty 1996) and neo-Foucauldian subjectivation which is critiqued for, amongst other things, not recognising human agency in its analysis, the Aidland literature puts aid workers, their lives and practices at the heart of inquiry. This body of work builds on Lisa Smirl's (2008) critique that aid workers and their environments are overlooked in most analyses of post-crisis reconstruction and emergency response. This mainly ethnographic and anthropologically-informed body of literature responds to the relative invisibility of aid workers in development studies literature (Hindman and Fetcher 2011:3-5), an anthropological calling to 'study up' (Nader 1972), and the practicalities and reflexivity of scholar-practitioners and practitioner-scholars (Harrison 2013). Emerging from the 'ethnography of aid' or 'aidnography' literature (Crewe and Harrison 1999; Gould and Marcussen 2004; Lewis and Mosse 2006), it is firmly rooted in everyday practices (cf. De Certeau 1988) in its focus on the everyday lives and cultural practices of aid workers.

Aidland was first developed by Raymond Apthorpe (2005:1) who describes it as:

> 'the trail (to use a word that usefully is both verb and noun, and about both process and place) of where foreign aid comes from, where it goes, and what then. Stepping into Aidland is like stepping off one planet into another, a virtual another, not that this means that it is any the less real to those who work in or depend on or are affected by it in other ways.'

Developing this concept with a satirical allegory that draws parallels with Lewis Carroll's (1865) *Alice in Wonderland*, Anthorpe's Aidland (2005) is a fantasy land with its own symbols, rituals and language, a 'bubbleland'. David Mosse (2011:2) describes a 'mysterious world' where there are 'places-that-are-not-places, non-geographical geography, undemographical demography, uneconomics, and a history made from policy design'. This kind of description calls to mind and indeed bears some of its anthropological roots in James Ferguson's seminal *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994) and its post-development critique of the World Bank's discursive construction of Lesotho as a 'Least Development Country'. Despite the wealth of publicly available information and scholarship to the contrary (including, for example, the

Oxford History of South Africa and the entries in the Encyclopaedia Britannica which present a sophisticated and 'developed' economy), the World Bank reported that 1970s Lesotho was a country that 'was, and still is, basically, a traditional subsistence peasant society' (1994:25-73). Only through constructing Lesotho in such a way could the World Bank identify a particular problem that required a particular solution which, for Ferguson, meant the expansion of bureaucratic state power as manifested in development interventions. This 'outlandish' (Ferguson 1990:26) and 'topsy-turvy' world (cf. Carroll [1865]1998) provides the backdrop for Apthorpe's Aidland. John Heathershaw (2016:80) argues that Ferguson provides a compelling analysis of a parallel universe where failure becomes success when seen in terms of the relentless expansion of bureaucratic state power. Indeed, when considering that Ferguson's book was written before the expansion of the aid industry in the 1990s, his work has proven remarkably foresightful.

Two key collected volumes, both published in 2011, have served to address the knowledge gap surrounding the everyday practices of aid workers and, at the same time, establish Aidland as a body of literature. Mosse's edited volume *Adventures in Aidland* (2011) brings together accounts and analyses from scholar-practitioners who look not only at the social lives and cultural practices of development professionals but also at the construction and transmission of knowledge about global poverty. In the book, conflicts between different worlds of knowledge are demonstrated through the use of concepts and categories to justify spending (Green 2011), examination of expat aid workers' lifestyles in capital cities, their limited movement and very narrow social networks (Eyben 2011; Rajak and Sirrat 2011), the limitations of space and movement for Nepali health workers in the UK compared to UK workers in Nepal (Harper 2011), and a comparison of data on professionals in NGOs working nationally and those working internationally that reveals distinctions between different rationalities regarding poverty and society (Lewis 2011). In turn, contributions to Hindman and Fetcher's (2011) edited volume, *Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers*, have an overarching labour-based theme and examine, for example, the typology and diversity of aid workers (Fetcher 2011), colonial continuities (Verma 2011), as well as risk and security (Roth 2011). This material provides valuable concepts and frameworks for understanding the lifeworlds and everyday practices of aid workers, a group which Lisa Smirl describes as 'a closed tribe' (2015:13).

One line of inquiry produced in the Aidland literature concerns a spatial-object approach to humanitarian interventions (Bliesemann de Guevara 2016; Heathershaw 2016a; Kühn 2016; Smirl 2008, 2015, 2016). Pioneering this approach, Lisa Smirl conceptualises the SUV cars (2015), and the compounds and hotels (2015, 2016) used by aid workers in their everyday lives. Drawing on theories and concepts from Bourdieu (1990; Bourdieu and Nice 1977), (Lefebvre 1991), and (De Certeau 1988), she highlights the subjectivity and relativism in the designation and construction of particular physical and social spaces. Her posthumously published book (2015) explores how the physical and institutional underpinnings of providing humanitarian assistance manifest in material and spatial constraints for aid workers at the field level, and how this influences policy, practice and interactions with other actors. Citing theoretical work on the unique spheres created by NGOs and humanitarian agencies (Yacobi 2004; Elden 2006; Hyndman 2000, 2007), Smirl (2008, 2015) examines the 'auxiliary space' produced by humanitarian action through exploring the symbolic politics and cultural capital accrued by objects and spaces of intervention. Understood as the spatial experience and material circumstances of aid shared by a fast turnover of expatriates, Smirl's auxiliary space is a 'bubble' which stands distinct from the local environment yet shapes the way in which the international community influences action and thought. Her case study from Banda Aceh, Indonesia, where the rapid arrival of thousands of humanitarian workers following the 2004 Boxing Day has been described as a second tsunami of aid (Vltchek 2005), demonstrates how the international community's conception of humanitarian aid as a Maussian 'gift' (Mauss 1969) stood at odds with 'local' conceptions of aid as a commodity (Smirl 2015:132-164). Her second case study from Hurricane Katrina in the United States not only transcends North/South or donor/beneficiary binaries but is different to Aceh 'in terms of all independent variables' apart from the large-scale natural disaster and accompanying response (Smirl 2015:14). Keenly aware of problematic taxonomies such as the 'local', her analysis reveals clear epistemological distinctions between the way that aid workers conceive of and act in relation to the spaces and objects of their everyday lives and the way that local people do. I draw on Smirl's 'auxillary space' to conceptualise the 'humanitarian presence' in Chapter 3.

Related to ‘Aidland’ is Büscher et al.’s (2018) concept of ‘aid towns’. Most research on urban dimensions of aid focuses on the humanitarian impacts of urbanisation rather than the urban impacts of humanitarian interventions (Lucchi 2012; Potvin 2013; Büscher et al. 2018). Within this context, at the intersection of humanitarian intervention and urbanisation, is Marianne Potvin’s concept of ‘humanitarian urbanism’ which she defines (2013:3) as ‘the production of urban space through protracted humanitarian action’. Explicitly focusing attention beyond camps and other well-defined enclosures, she argues that while the camp remains the classic spatial embodiment of humanitarian action and spatial production, we should be careful not to overlook ‘the vast (unbounded) landscapes that are increasingly shaped and reshaped by the variegated spatial practices of humanitarianism’ (2013:6). Potvin argues that humanitarian urbanism evolves as a process of intensifying humanitarian agency, from humanitarian actors intervening in the city to humanitarian actors increasingly governing the city (2013:3). Adopting this concept, Büscher et al. (2018) demonstrate how intensive external donor-aid has shaped urbanisation in Gulu, Northern Uganda, with profound effects on urban, material, socio-economic and political landscapes beyond a narrow spatial focus. While noting that there is no strand of academic inquiry that takes ‘aid towns’ (such as: Juba, South Sudan; Kabul, Afghanistan; Banda Aceh, Indonesia; Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo; and Gulu, Uganda) as an analytical unit, they conclude that the notion of the city as an urban ‘aidland’ can be broadened as an analytical concept to study processes that involve several dimensions of urban governance. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis look at the extent to which the Lesvos’ main town can be considered an aid town.

One of the key critiques of the ‘Aidland’ body of literature is that it is too inward looking and narcissistic. Elizabeth Harrison (2013) argues that most of these works do not address the consequences of aid on those who encounter it. A further related critique is that it diverts attention from development outcomes. Katy Gardner and David Lewis (2015:110-111) suggest that, as aid workers/anthropologists study themselves (they claim that the two are often the same), researchers are ‘in danger of missing bigger, more fundamental questions’ such as climate change, global recession, widening inequalities, violent conflict and others which require robust critical inquiry rather than focusing on aid workers, their social lives and everyday practices. A further critique concerns a dated representation of a northern dominated aid industry that does not account for the increased significance of actors in or

from the global south. Indeed, many histories of humanitarian practice and the humanitarian system are centred on Europe and tend to begin with the anti-slavery movement in the early nineteenth-century as marking the origins of the humanitarian system (Calhoun 2008; Barnett 2011), further back with the rise of capitalism (Haskell 1985) or, more commonly, with the tale of Henri Dunant and the founding of the Red Cross.[3] While these histories are important to the study and practice of humanitarianism in and from the global north, their consistent reproduction in the literature runs the risk of neglecting other forms of humanitarianism as theorised and practised elsewhere.[4] Indeed, these last critiques are not only relevant to the study of aid more broadly but could also be applied to the present thesis which, while acknowledging other humanitarianisms, is primarily concerned with a particular form humanitarian practice carried out in the global north, largely by global northerners.

2.4 Humanitarian economies

One way that the humanitarian system can be understood is as an 'industry' (Collinson 2016). There is a significant body of literature that addresses the economic and financial roles of humanitarian actors, particularly those from the northern-dominated sector. Zeynep Sezgin and Dennis Dijkzeul (2015:1) claim that when 'most people' hear the word 'humanitarian', an array of mainly European and North American NGOs, United Nations agencies and Red Cross-related organisations and donor states come to mind whom they describe as 'traditional' or 'old' humanitarian. While their 'most people' may refer mainly to people in the global north, the global presence and operational reach of these actors, emanating primarily from the institutions of the global north, are significant. Commanding a combined annual budget worth more than USD$20 billion in 2020 (FTS UNOCHA 2021) from a needed/requested figure of nearly twice as much, Collinson's suggestion (2016:2) that '[w]hatever the [humanitarian] sector is today and could be in the future is heavily determined and controlled by these actors' remains pertinent today. As humanitarian needs (defined by humanitarian actors' requests

[3] According to this narrative, Dunant was a Swiss businessman who, shocked by the sight and plight of 23,000 wounded soldiers left on a northern Italian battlefield in 1859, wrote about his experiences (1862) and established the Red Cross whose seven humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality) remain key to the theory and practice of humanitarianism in the global north.

[4] See Carpi and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) who highlight the need to learn from multilingual literature in their excellent discussion of the sociology of knowledge on humanitarianism; and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley's (2019) edited volume for anglophone accounts of humanitarian theory and practice in and from the global south.

for funding; Financial Tracking Service UNOCHA 2021) continue to grow year-on-year, an industry approach is essential to understanding the dynamics of humanitarian practice.

Some scholars have framed humanitarian action and practice in terms of a 'marketplace'. For example, Gilles Carbonnier's *Humanitarian Economics* (2015) specifically identifies a 'humanitarian marketplace' and focuses his analysis on supply chains, labour market inequalities and divisions across the humanitarian sector on the one hand, and the economics of and impacts of disaster, conflict and terrorism on the other while also providing examples of how people survive conflict and disaster by engaging in informal, resource-generating activities. Similarly, Thomas Weiss' (2013) *Humanitarian Business* analyses the humanitarian industry as a 'marketplace' with supply and demand chains financed by donors who subcontract aid agencies who, in turn, may or may not subcontract other agencies while, at the same time, external militaries and for-profit groups are increasingly gaining access to this market. Sezgin and Dijkzeul's volume *The New Humanitarians in International Practice* (2015) also contains chapters on 'for-profit humanitarianism' and 'local humanitarianism' but, apart from Tony Vaux's chapter (Vaux 2015:318-337) on local organisations in the context of disaster risk reduction, does not include any material specifically related to the local/humanitarian economic encounter.

The language and logic of business is also applied to humanitarian practice. Ian Simillie and Larry Minnear (2004:11) refer to the 'humanitarian enterprise as a business driven by market forces and by agencies seeking to maintain and expand their market share'. Monika Krause (2014) argues that NGOs and the industry at large are incentivized to continually produce 'good projects' in order to secure funding for future projects while recognising that some suffering must remain in order to justify continued funding. Her second chapter, entitled 'Beneficiaries as a Commodity', frames institutional donors as the consumers and refugees as part of the product that is being packaged and sold by humanitarian organisations. Slim's earlier work, *Marketing Humanitarian Space* (2003), draws a similar comparison between the practice of marketing as typically understood in a business context and the practice of humanitarian persuasion where he refers to customers and consumers, creating demand and various types of marketing practices.

Others take a more relational approach to humanitarian economies. Focusing mainly on displaced people themselves, Amanda Hammar's (2014) edited volume *Displacement Economies* examines the rupture, repositioning and reshaping of economies during processes of displacement and asks what displacement produces in terms of economies. Focussing on displaced people in Africa, contributors reveal 'the paradoxically productive dynamics of displacement' that can dismantle pre-existing capital, networks and expertise yet replace them with a range of new relationships, socio-economic spaces and creative strategies revealing simultaneities of dislocation and confinement, order and disorder, loss and gain, impossibility and opportunity, rupture and chronicity, distance and proximity, nothingness and hope, destruction and creativity. Meanwhile, Estella Carpi (2019) shifts the focus to North-South encounters and imaginations within the Lebanese 'humanitarian economy', a term which she defines as 'the organised systems of assistance provision that address people affected by war and rely on their own repertory of values and norms' (*ibid.*:296). She proposes 'Southism both as a concept and a mode of analysis that indicates a structural *relationship* between different sets of providers and beneficiaries, rather than a mere act of assisting the South with a philanthropic spirit' (*ibid.*; emphasis in original). Adopting this relational approach, she concludes that 'Southism' helps to 'capture the humanitarian lifeworlds and their (actual and imagined) encounters with local and refugee thinking and attitudes' (*ibid.*:306).

Scholarship from peacekeeping studies also provide useful insights into understanding the humanitarian economy. For example, the 'peacekeeping economy' (Jennings 2014, 2015; Jennings and Bøås 2015) also takes a relational approach. Coined by Elizabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf 2002:62) who describe 'peacekeeping economies' as 'industries and services such as bars and hotels that spring up with the arrival of large, foreign, comparatively well-paid peacekeeping personnel', Jennings' (2014:315) 'peacekeeping economy' specifically concerns 'economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence'. With a focus on everyday life and microeconomic arrangements, Jennings and Bøäs (2015:293) argue that these encounters 'are generally the only real contact that most peacekeepers have with "the locals"' and 'influence how peacekeepers and locals think about each other'. In Chapter 6, I adopt and adapt this model to the humanitarian economy of Lesvos. Furthermore, noting that

‘presence’ is rarely defined in the literature, I conceptualise the humanitarian presence in the conclusion of this thesis

Büscher and Vlassenroot (2010) demonstrate some of ways that that these encounters can influence urban transformation processes in Goma, DRC. They note how real estate received ‘a new impulse’ following humanitarian intervention and how a new ‘touristic infrastructure’ of luxurious hotels, restaurants and supermarkets – as well as flourishing trades in drugs, prostitution and sun lotion – emerged that cater specifically for the international humanitarian clientele. They note how the local economy became dollarized and a ‘UNHCR economy’ was created as humanitarian organisations and the people that staff them provided traders and landlords with a new consumer group with considerable purchasing power. Another key finding is related to how humanitarian agencies became the main provider of employment opportunities in the city with various unintended consequences. For example, due to the specific labour needs of the agencies, the humanitarian presence has offered ‘an alternative to unemployment to a small class of young, well-educated people that previously migrated to neighbouring countries in search of jobs’; international staff ‘often entirely unaware of the ethnic composition of their local staff’ stood back from recruitment processes resulting in the exacerbation of existing ethnic tensions (2010:264). Another key consequence was the ‘swell of local NGOs’ whereby, in a context of limited economic opportunities, ‘Goméens increasingly see the creation of NGOs as a means of gaining access to international funding’ (2010:264-265). Such relational and micro-levels approaches support this thesis in unravelling the dynamics of encounters in the humanitarian economy.

As noted above, global humanitarian practice is much broader than the activities of northern institutions. While UNOCHA’s Financial Tracking Service (2021) represents a centralised source of data on global humanitarian funding flows from governments, UN Agencies and those NGOs which engage with the service, many actors’ activities and finances are not included. Sezgin and Dijkzeul’s (2015) edited volume on humanitarian actors identifies a set of ‘new humanitarians’ consisting of ‘emerging’ or ‘non-traditional’ actors. These include donors such as Brazil, India, China (and, more recently, Saudi Arabia), multi-mandate organisations, various actors and networks within armed humanitarianism, for-profit humanitarianism, diaspora humanitarianism, faith-based humanitarianism, and local

humanitarianism and regional humanitarianism. They are regarded as ‘new’ because they are both ‘contemporary’ as the most recent entrants to the humanitarian system, and ‘original’ in their apparent reworking of humanitarian practices and principles (2015:2). While the volume effectively demonstrates that the range of humanitarian actors is much broader that what ‘most people’ think, it also rightly questions just how new or original these new humanitarians really are. As these actors increasingly engage with northern humanitarian institutions, they and their funds are increasingly represented in FTS data. Groups that operate outside or on the margins of the formal aid sector, however, are not represented in these data. Indeed, one key group not mentioned in Sezgin and Dijkzeul’s volume concerns the privately funded and often small-scale initiatives of the phenomenon that has come to be known as “citizen humanitarianism” amongst other terms (see next section). These actors represent a significant part of the humanitarian response in Europe since 2015 yet, due to their relatively small scale and private sources of funding, they are rarely included in FTS data.

2.5 Citizen humanitarianism in Europe since 2015

2.5.1 Definitions

That local communities are usually the first responders in humanitarian crises is well documented (Ager and El Nakib 2015; Twigg and Mosel 2017; UNOCHA 2022b), regardless of the extent to which the more formal agencies of the humanitarian system appropriate the credit. In both conflict and disaster settings, family, friends, neighbours, volunteers, and local civil society usually arrive first on the scene, often long before formal national and international humanitarian actors arrive. Despite this fairly obvious observation, most media attention continues to focus on the work of the formal or traditional humanitarian system described above (which, in turn, produces what ‘most people’ think) with, as Roepstorff (2020:284) argues, ‘local efforts largely ignored in the media [and] also systematically marginalised in the humanitarian sector itself’. The topic of localised humanitarian responses has gained much scholarly attention in recent years, particularly since the heralded beginning “Europe’s refugee crisis” in 2015 and the conclusion of the World Humanitarian Summit the following year. The former witnessed hundreds of thousands of volunteers across Europe providing food, clothes, language classes, solidarity, and other kinds of support to refugee arrivals from the global south and the latter concluded that future of humanitarian aid should

be ‘as local as possible, as international as necessary’ (Grand Bargain 2016). Despite the seemingly obvious links rooted in these localised practices of humanitarianism, scholarship on citizen humanitarianism and the localisation of aid are rarely linked.

The ‘long summer of migration’ (Kasparek and Speer 2015; Oikonomakis 2018) in 2015 and European states’ failure to provide sufficient protection and assistance to the hundreds of thousands of people crossing into Europe from the global south spurred “ordinary citizens” into action and academics into publishing. Numerous studies began to appear about the phenomenon generally (Brković 2017; Dunn 2017; Horstmann 2017; Twigg and Mosel 2017; Fechter and Schwittay 2019) and with regard to Europe in particular including specific work on Greece (Rozakou 2017; Guribye and Mydland 2018), Calais in France (Sandri 2018; McGee and Pelham 2018) as well as edited volumes and special issues covering various countries and related themes in Europe (della Porta 2018; Birey et al. 2019; Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat 2019; Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019). Various names have been provided to describe this phenomenon including ‘citizen aid’ and ‘grassroots humanitarianism’ (Fechter and Schwittay 2019), ‘volunteer humanitarianism’ (Sandri 2018), ‘Ad Hoc Grassroots Organisation’ (Kitching et al. 2016), ‘Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity’ (Schulpen and Huyse 2017; Haaland and Wallevik 2019), ‘Private Development Initiatives’ (Kinsbergen 2019), ‘everyday humanitarianism’ (Horstmann 2017), ‘vernacular humanitarianism’ (Brković 2017, 2020; Dunn 2017), ‘demotic humanitarianism’ (Taithe 2019), my preferred term (see below) ‘citizen humanitarianism’ (Jumbert and Pascucci 2021), and more. While all these terms carry slightly different definitions, all of them have the distinctive feature of being defined in contrast to the formal/conventional/traditional/larger operators of national and international humanitarian systems. In the recently published dictionary of humanitarian concepts (De Lauri 2020), these practices and concepts are filed under the term ‘vernacular humanitarianism’ which Čarna Brković defines as:

> [A]id provided by various local actors in tune with their socio-historically specific ideas of humanness, as a response to an emerging need that cannot be adequately addressed through conventional channels of help. It encompasses practices of helping that follow the universal humanitarian logic, but in a different form to the international humanitarian organizations.

(Brković 2020:224)

Brković's definition is succinct, comprehensive and, like many of the above terms and associated definitions, identifies this kind of aid as being primarily in contradistinction to the 'conventional channels of help' (*ibid.*). While these channels include both national and international bureaucracies, she defines vernacular humanitarianism as 'small scale practices of helping' and identifies three commonalities under this umbrella term (*ibid.:224-225*). First, she argues that 'all instances of vernacular humanitarianism posit a universalising notion of humanity. Just like international humanitarianism, its vernacular counterparts are grounded in the idea that all people deserve help simply because they are human beings, irrespective of their identities' (*ibid.*:225). Second, she argues that this universalising notion is interweaved with socio-historic situated frameworks of giving and cites other scholars' work on, for example, French ideas of how a good citizen should behave (Sandri 2018), Greek notions of hospitality (Rozakou 2017), relational empathy in India (Bornstein 2012), as well as her own work on post-Yugoslav ideas of what a state should provide for its citizens (Brković 2014). Third, she identifies ad-hoc, non-professional, non-bureaucratised forms of help that often ignore legal distinctions between, for example, citizens and non-citizens or framings of deservingness or vulnerabilities.

This definition is challenged in similar ways to definitions of humanitarianism more generally. Despite claims to a universalising notion of humanity on which much of the definition is premised, not all of international humanitarianism's local and small-scale counterparts are grounded in the idea that all people deserve help. For example, Nkwachukwu Orji's (2011) study of faith-based aid to conflict-affected people in Nigeria, which includes the kind of local 'ad hoc relief projects' and 'small-scale' relief operations (2011:483) that define vernacular humanitarianism, found two approaches to aid provision: universalistic and faith-centred. Orji found that practitioners of and contributors to the latter often rejected the universalist approach, prioritised their own denominations over others' and, moreover, preferred not to provide aid to other faith communities at all. With inter-group animosity exacerbated by political conflict, the prioritisation of faith as the primary criterion for aid provision undermines the universalising notion of humanity upon which Brković bases her definition. As such, this type of aid provision may indeed be small-scale, ad hoc, and ignore bureaucratic

framings of vulnerabilities, but it would also be excluded under this definition of 'vernacular humanitarianism'.

The central place of 'local actors' in the definition raises further complications and requires a broad understanding of the term 'local' in order to proceed with some of the examples listed under the definition of vernacular humanitarianism. For example, Elisa Sandri (2018:66) notes that in Calais, France, '[v]olunteers came from all over Europe to provide assistance, but the overwhelming majority of volunteers were from Great Britain'. Similarly, in Lesvos, Greece, the vast majority of non-professionals who make up the humanitarian response, particularly since the 2016 EU-Turkey deal (see Chapter 5), are from outside Greece. With local French people in Calais and local Greeks in Lesvos providing a very small minority of the human and material resources of the humanitarian response in both locations, certain semantic strategies are required to justify the use of the term 'local actors' in these contexts. For example, an understanding of 'local' that begins in the country of origin of the volunteer or citizen providing aid, or a broader (or more regional) understanding of the term as 'European' (i.e. *regionally* local when compared with the rest of the world) would arguably better represent the phenomenon although such a conceptualisation would then exclude non-European volunteers from the definition. Brković's 'local actors' are thus defined much more broadly than actors from the pre-crisis local population and, as per this definition, the international volunteers of Lesvos would be considered as local in Lesvos – an idea that, as this thesis demonstrates, is largely rejected by most of the island's pre-2015 population as well as the international volunteers themselves.

Rather than presenting a reified distinct category in which certain practices are included or excluded, Anne-Meike Fechter and Anke Schwittay (2019) prefer to analyse the phenomenon as a lens or perspective. Their editorial (*ibid.*) to the special issue *Citizen aid: grassroots interventions in development and humanitarianism*, later published as a book (Fechter and Schwittay 2020), recognises an emerging body of research scattered across disciplines, on what they term 'citizen aid and grassroots humanitarianism' (2019:1774). Shared features include 'small-scale projects' distinct from aid provided by formal actors, initiated by 'ordinary people making ethical decisions', who are 'privately funded', 'usually operate on the margins of the formal aid and development sector' and 'are sustained by personal transnational

networks' and connections. Rather than proposing an object category for analysis, however, they draw on Lewis and Schuller's (2017:634) notion of NGOs as a 'productively unstable category' that saddles aspects of both aid and activism and describe citizen aid as an 'unstable category'. As such, Fechter and Schwittay (2019:1770) offer citizen aid as 'a sideways lens, a perspective for recognising forms of intervention and resource distribution which often remain under the radar of established development research and practice', allowing for recognition and theorisation of a wide variety of practices. Noting a multitude of terms, they offer 'citizen aid' with an aim 'not to reduce this variety, but to help counter fragmentation and the reduced theoretical visibility and impact that may result from it'.

Despite the contradistinction with forms of aid 'which are not orchestrated by large donors or aid agencies' (*ibid.*:1769), Fechter and Schwittay's citizen aid and grassroots humanitarianism follow remarkably similar structural parallels to its more formal counterpart. This image becomes clearer when 'grassroots humanitarianism' is introduced in relation to 'citizen aid' whereby the former is defined as 'initiatives [that] revolve around sites of humanitarian emergency and natural disaster' such as the 'refugee crisis' in Europe since 2015, the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines, or the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (2019:1772). While grassroots humanitarianism remains, like citizen aid, 'a diverse and shifting set of mutual support practices funded by private, as opposed to public means' (*ibid.*:1770), it is defined primarily in terms of its location: the site of a humanitarian crisis. Whether considered as a separate concept or sub-concept of citizen aid, grassroots humanitarianism relates specifically to humanitarian contexts, while 'citizen aid' appears to relate more broadly to both humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid contexts. This broad use of the term 'citizen' is strikingly similar to the catch-all term 'development' as used in policy and academic settings (discussed above) although, in the case of citizen aid, funded privately rather than publicly.

While the 'citizen' of citizen aid is well defined, the 'grassroots' in grassroots humanitarianism/humanitarians (Fechter and Schwittay 2019, 2020; Sandri 2018) receives less attention. Recognising that the phenomenon takes place in the global north and south and by people from both global north and south, Fechter and Schwittay use the term 'citizen' to refer to a global rather than national belonging. In doing so, citizen aid recognises the roles of different nationalities in helping others both within and across borders and that '[t]hese

‘borders follow the changing geographies of development’. Meanwhile, the ‘humanitarianism’ of ‘grassroots humanitarianism’ relates to emergencies and disasters but ‘grassroots’ is less defined. Elisa Sandri’s (2018) article on ‘volunteer humanitarianism’ uses the term grassroots in reference to ‘grassroots organisations’ as distinct from ‘governments and aid agencies’ and being ‘run by [mainly international] volunteers’ (*ibid.:*66). Notably avoiding the use of the term ‘local’, Fechter and Schwittay’s use of Sandri’s ‘grassroots humanitarian aid’ through their works on the subject (2019, 2020) recognises the internationalism of its practitioners and initiators yet also speaks to notions of location and geographical proximity when, for example, they argue that ‘both long-distance citizen aid activities and more immediate grassroots humanitarianisms can, and indeed ought to be, considered to occupy places on a continuum of support activities’ (Fechter and Schwittay 2019:1772). Meanwhile, Darragh McGee and Juliette Pelham's (2018) conceptualisation of grassroots humanitarianism emphasises ‘blurred responsibilities between humanitarianism and activism’ reaching ‘beyond apolitical principles in their opposition to state authorities’ (*ibid.*:32), noting that such initiatives tend to be framed as forms of solidarity. With ‘grassroots’ largely undefined yet revealing as at least as much internationalism as Brković’s ‘local’, the term ‘citizen humanitarianism’ would arguably distinguish it from less humanitarian-/more development-oriented activities and also unite it more directly with the catch-all term ‘citizen aid’. Indeed, the term ‘citizen humanitarianism’ has been adopted by scholars elsewhere (Jumbert and Pascucci 2021) and represents my preferred term for the phenomenon although, at risk of pedanticism, such a definition excludes stateless people.

2.5.2 Citizen humanitarianism and solidarity

Much of the research and practice surrounding the phenomenon of citizen humanitarianism in Europe is framed in terms of solidarity. Katerina Rozakou (2017) argues that the ‘overt antagonism of vernacular humanitarianisms to the formal world is best captured through one term in Greek: the *allileggyos [αλληλέγγος]* (solidarian)’. She argues elsewhere (2016, 2018, 2020) that solidarity emphasises lateral, anti-hierarchical sociality and, in contrast to bureaucratic frameworks, endorses political forms of assistance and places coexistence and being with the refugees/asylum-seekers/migrants at its core. In these ways, she argues (2020:199), solidarity humanitarianism has ‘solidarity as its key formative feature, and it poses the question of connectedness under a new egalitarian light’. In doing so, solidarity

practices set out to address the structural violence, repression and hierarchical forms inherent in humanitarian assistance (Malkki 1996; Fassin 2007b, 2012; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Agier 2011). While horizontal approaches to aid provision aim to overcome the hierarchies established by the provider/receiver relationship and horizontal organisational structures emphasise egalitarian rather than top-down decision-making processes, the practice can sometimes reinforce the same hierarchies it seeks to overcome. For example, Vandevoordt (2019a) found that a more personal way of delivering aid in Brussels resulted in providers establishing more favourable relations with individual refugees with whom they could bond (while also leaving others excluded); and, in Greece, Rozakou notes (2018:199) that despite the horizontal essence of the assemblies where solidarians meet, discuss and decide, they 'often had a strongly personalised element and were coordinated by the same stable members'. Nevertheless, despite often engaging in similar activities to formal humanitarian organisations – provision of clothes, food, shelter, informing people of their rights, etc. – a key element in the underlying philosophy is a horizontal effort to "stand in solidarity" rather than a top-down effort to "help" from a position of power.

Scholarship on citizen humanitarianism is more concerned with solidarity, acts of citizenship and social movements than with tourism or travel. With the specific aim of bridging existing research gaps between migration studies and citizenship studies, contributors to della Porta's (2018) edited volume analyse the analyse the transformation of social movements, their organisational structures, strategies, and responses to state actions as well as the role of emotions and affective ties between migrants and their supporters, political discourse and conduct comparative analyses of protest fields. Della Porta's conclusion draws on her previous work that situates protest movements within a 'crisis of neoliberalism' (della Porta 2015, 2017) that has brought about a decline in citizenship rights which, in turn, can be understood as providing some of the motivation for spurring "ordinary citizens" into action. Meanwhile, Vandevoordt (2019b) notes that many of the grassroots responses that have emerged in Europe since 2015 share similar characteristics with social movements which, he suggests, explains why many analyses of the phenomenon have come from students of social movements rather than students of humanitarianism or, indeed, students of tourism and travel.

The notion of 'subversive humanitarianism' is proposed by Vandevoordt (2019) when trying to understand the recent wave of civil initiatives in support of refugees vis-à-vis the work of professional humanitarian actors. Assuming a universalist notion of a shared humanity, he argues that, '[i]n a sense, all humanitarian actions are subversive' by providing aid to anyone irrespective of identities and affiliations. He argues that whereas more modest forms of humanitarian action tend to misrecognise recipients' social and political subjectivities, their more subversive counterparts can be better understood as enacting a particularistic form of solidarity that emphasises precisely those subjectivities' (*ibid.:*245). Noting that, apart from Germany and Sweden, most national governments in Europe have opposed the arrival of refugees since 2015 and discouraged their citizens from providing support, sometimes through drafting and enforcing legislation that specifically targets solidarity initiatives, he argues that some humanitarian actions (and their actors) are more subversive than others. He operationalises his concept by proposing seven dimensions through which humanitarian actions can be compared across time and space. These include acts of civil disobedience; the reconstitution of social subjects; contending symbolic spaces; the creation of social spaces and personal bonds; assuming equality; putting minds into motion; and the transformation of individuals' life worlds. By no means avoiding the humanitarian/solidarity dichotomy (Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat 2019), Vandevoordt (2019:247) notes that the seven dimensions are 'ideal-typical features of a subversive character' and recognises (*ibid.*:264-5) that 'at least some professional humanitarian organisations' also engage in some of the above activities while some of the more solidarity-minded 'socially subversive civil initiatives may politically cooperate with local state authorities'. Indeed, it is precisely along these fault lines where many of the grassroots humanitarian/solidarity initiatives – and the people implementing them – negotiate their identities.

The tendency to centre the actors and institutions of the global north is also apparent in the scholarship on citizen humanitarianism. For example, the edited volumes of della Porta (2018), Birey et al. (2019), Feischmidt et al. (2019) and the special issue of Vandevoordt and Verschraegen (2019) are all focused specifically on practices related to 'Europe's refugee crisis' that take place within Europe (including Turkey) while Fechter and Schwittay's publications (2019, 2020) are mainly the practices of European citizens in the global south (as well as within Europe). Given that most of the contributors are of Western origin and/or

based out of academic institutions in the global north, this bias is perhaps not surprising. I make this point mainly to emphasise that, like humanitarian practice more generally, the literature that specifically references citizen humanitarianism, vernacular humanitarianism, citizen aid, grassroots humanitarianism, etc. is not necessarily representative of the phenomenon as a global practice but more representative of a particular type of humanitarianism located in the global north.

2.6 Locating humanitarianism in the Mediterranean

In this respect, the Mediterranean has proved an important place and field of discussion in the literature. It is and has historically been an area of transnational networks and flows of capital, people, and ideologies, leading Charles Tilly (2008:1469) to argue that it is one of the Western world's most cosmopolitan regions. However, while essentialising it as a region, or a culture area belies its diversity, histories, and complexities (Kousis et al. 2011), several scholars have argued that the Mediterranean has recently resurfaced as 'a locus of international anxiety and academic concern' (Ben-Yehoyada et al. 2020:1). Indeed, drawing on a reference to the three monotheistic religions that spread from the region and with reference to the refugee crisis, Ben-Yehoyada et al. (*ibid.*:10) argue that the Meditteraranean (Sea) has been constructed:

> in the image of a sea of neglected pan-human brotherhood – projecting onto maritime space both an idiom of relatedness (global brotherhood) and a judgement about the state of that relatedness (those perished at sea are Abel, and those of us who allow that to happen are Cain).

Vassiliki Yiakoumaki (2011) suggests that the European Union and its institutions represent a main locus of the Mediterranean discourse today. Indeed, with regard to the contemporary migration context, Saskia Sassen (2006) proved correct in suggesting that 'strengthening control is what the European Union is gearing up to do when it comes to immigration from outside its borders…moving toward the construction of a sort of Berlin wall across the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic.' According to IOM (2017), nearly 2.5 million migrants were recorded to have entered Europe via the Mediterranean Sea without a visa since 1998, nearly 1.4 million of whom entered between 2015-2016, and the Euro-Mediterranean Human

Rights Monitor (2022) records increasing numbers of drowned and missing migrants each year. As Fortress Europe remains quite penetrable, its dangers have inspired a response in the form of a 'humanitarian fleet' (Stierl 2018) of NGOs committed to reducing deaths and suffering in the Mediterranean. Within the Mediterranean context, Maria Kousis et al. (2020:55) cite migration alongside unemployment as key fields exposed to the kinds of 'severe alterations and grievances' that, in turn, produce waves of transnational solidarity. As such, this thesis is also firmly located within the scholarship on the Mediterranean at the intersection migration and solidarity.

2.7 Understanding the "local"

One of the World Humanitarian Summit's key conclusions in 2016 was that future humanitarian aid should be 'as local as possible and as international as necessary' (Grand Bargain 2016) which has since become known as the localisation of aid agenda. Sultan Barakat and Sansom Milton (2020) cite various works to argue that this conclusion can be understood at least in part as a response to critiques that the humanitarian system is top-down and dominated by the global north (Gingerich and Cohen 2015), centralised and bureaucratic (Spiegel 2017), slow and risk averse (Healy and Tiller 2014), ignoring local knowledge (Macrae 2008) and denying local and national ownership (Telford and Cosgrave 2007) (. During the Summit, participants agreed to transfer at least 25% of international humanitarian funding directly to local actors by 2020, an objective which remains increasingly elusive, with one report suggesting that direct funding to local and national actors dropped from 3.5% in 2018 to 2.1% in 2019 (Development Initiatives 2020). Meanwhile, beyond the practical objective of transferring resources from "international" to "local" and following on from the above discussion, there remains the conceptual challenge of understanding what exactly is meant by the term "local".

In her review of local and micro-level studies on international peacekeeping, Séverine Autesserre (2014:492) suggests that the macro-level approach of researchers pervasive of the pre-2000s is still dominant today. She notes that "local" means "national" in most analyses. Her point raises the question of relativity: the "national" may appear to be "local" from a global or international perspective and, on the other hand, the "global" may appear to be "local" from an "inter-planetary" perspective as, indeed, the "household" appears "local" to

the “national”. Amongst the complications in defining this concept, a key question to ask, particularly in contexts of differentiated power structures, is not only what is the definition of ‘local’, but *who* is defining the concept.

Often preceded by a definite article, “the” local community is frequently homogenised in development and forced migration literature. In development, this process is critiqued by several scholars including contributors to Andrea Rigon and Vanesa Castán Broto's (2021) volume which outlines how contemporary thinking on diversity and intersectionality challenge existing practices of development which remain attached to a concept of a homogenous community. In forced migration, Malkki describes the discursive representation of ‘the refugee’ as a ‘generic and essentialised figure’ (Malkki 1992:33) despite the plurality of their (and everybody’s) lived experiences and identities. Indeed, research has examined the intersectionality of race and gender (cf. Crenshaw 1991) in refugee situations (Pittaway and Bartolomei 2001), age (Bolzman 2014; Hart 2014), sexuality (Lee and Brotman 2011) and other identities and experiences as well as the ‘refugee’ label (Zetter 1991, 2007). Defining the “local” vis-à-vis the “refugee” becomes even more complex in contexts of overlapping displacements where, for example, Palestinians displaced to Jordan and Lebanon seventy years ago, along with their descendants, provide humanitarian support to more recent arrivals of refugees (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 2016) while “hosting” (another complex term) both them and the humanitarian actors who come to support them. Defining “local” actors vis-à-vis “humanitarian” actors becomes even less clear when considering relationships with humanitarian actors from neighbouring localities (who is more local than who?) and the extent to which a “local” actor’s identity (real, imagined or imposed) becomes “humanitarian” when, for example, recruited by a humanitarian organisation.

The local/international binary that seems so clear in policy and operations discourse throughout the aid world is much less clear upon examination. For example, building on David Lewis’ (2011) exploration of the ‘complexities of professional identities’ in a UK-based NGO operating in both the domestic sector and in the parallel world of international aid work, John Heathershaw (2016) explores the ‘liminal subjectivity’ of these identities through tracing the careers of two local/national women development professionals and one expatriate/international man in Tajikistan. Noting that the international community tends to

be approached 'in terms of what it does for its purported objects of assistance rather than what it confers to the aid agents of aid themselves' (2016:79), Heathershaw describes liminality as 'an in-between space and time, both between countries and phases of life-career' (2016:81). His findings reveal that, while all three self-identified as professional and via their citizenship, the term 'local' was used in quite different ways by the participants with the nationals distancing themselves in various ways from the national and the expat seeking to increase his distance from fellow expatriates and, in doing so, evoking Redfield's (2012) question of proximity and the problem of 'expat disconnect'. Heathershaw (2016:77) argues that his findings bear witness to the liminal subjectivity of development where aid workers are, vocationally, socially, culturally and politically, neither 'local' nor 'international'. This, in turn, raises further questions of who defines the 'local' and how such identities are variously imposed, negotiated and contested.

2.8 Labelling practices in forced migration and humanitarian studies

A key focus of this thesis concerns the labelling practices related to interpellation and identity formation in humanitarian practice. Specifically, it focuses on labelling practices conducted by individual humanitarian actors rather than institutions. Previous research on labelling in displacement contexts has mainly focused on the "top-down" classificatory framing and labelling practices of state and non-state development and humanitarian actors who form and reproduce labels in order to manage their subjects. The figure of the "refugee" and the intended and unintended consequences of bureaucratic labelling processes feature centrally in this body of research (see, for example: Wood 1985; 2007; Zetter 1991; 2007; Stevens 2013; Janmyr and Mourad 2018).

Research on labelling practices in forced migration studies took off in the 1990s. Roger Zetter's (1991) seminal work on how and with what consequences people become labelled as refugees within the context of public policy practices focused on identity formation within institutionalised regulatory practices and became one of the most widely cited works in displacement studies. Building on the work of Geof Wood who argued (1985:1) that 'policy agendas…and the way in which people conceived as subjects of policy are defined in convenient images', Zetter argued (1991:41) that 'bureaucratic interests and procedures [of humanitarian agencies] are themselves crucial determinants in the definition of labels like

refugee' and create forms of dependency on their subjects. Moreover, he argued that these labels do not simply describe those being labelled, but they can also condition their identity and behaviour. He later (2007) re-evaluated his paper arguing, amongst other things, that his conceptual apparatus remained solid – that labelling forms, transforms, and politicises identities – and also that (mainly northern) governments rather than NGOs have become the primary actors in (then) contemporary processes of transforming the refugee label. Since its first publication, Zetter's work has been key to much research on identity formation and labelling practices in displacement contexts with the vast majority focused on the figure of the refugee.[5] Related research on labelling practices has included the 'migrant' label, although almost exclusively for those from the global south and usually in relation to the 'refugee' label (Polzer Ngwato 2012; Crawley and Skleparis 2018); 'the poor' (Cornwall and Fujita 2007), 'oustees' (Gupte and Mehta 2007), 'street children' (Moncrieffe 2007b), 'Muslims' (Balchin 2007) and others.

There is also significant research that demonstrate the ways in which people accept, reject, resist, seek and oppose these labels. Examples include Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2016) research on Palestinians in Europe which highlights her participants' ambiguity towards the label, status, and condition, of statelessness while demonstrating how even those who have citizenship (in a third country) remain on the 'threshold of statelessness' (*ibid.*:310). Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) show how refugees in Kenya negotiate and actively seek labels of vulnerability in to order to access international resettlement programmes. Based on personal experience as a refugee-cum-Canadian citizen as well as her doctoral research on young Oromo refugees in Toronto, Matha Kuwee Kumsa's (2006) research suggests notes how some people embrace the refugee label while others reject it and suggests that such processes are related to 'a project of selfhood that is both fixed and constantly shifting' (*ibid*.:230). The vast majority of research on the labelling practices in forced migration and humanitarian studies focus on the ways in which the 'more powerful actors' (Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007:2) of state and non-state development and humanitarian bureaucracies label their subjects, usually for the purposes of providing (or withholding) protection or assistance for those deemed in need

[5] Perhaps oddly, however, neither Zetter nor his work appear in any of the references in Moncrieffe and Eyben's (2007) and only as a footnote in Wood's chapter.

(or not). Meanwhile, there is relatively little research on the ways in which humanitarian actors are labelled by others, a research gap that is specifically addressed by this thesis.

2.9 Continuities between Humanitarianism, Tourism, Pilgrimage and Volunteer Tourism

2.9.1 Introduction and Definitions

Interest in tourism as a field of knowledge began to gain momentum in the 1970s. Carla Guerrón Montero (2019) argues that the study of tourism began in Europe in the 1930s and in the United States with a publication about 'weekendismo' (Nunez 1963) which examined the growing practice of rural tourism by urban Mexicans. However, it was not until Erik Cohen's studies on typologies of tourists (1974) and experiences (1979), as well as Valene Smith's (1977) edited volume, *Hosts and Guests*, and MacCannell's (1976) seminal book, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, that tourism increasingly began to draw the attention of social scientists (anthropologists and sociologists in particular). During this period, scholars also increasingly began to construct tourism as a modern form of pilgrimage (Turner 1973; Graburn 1977). This section begins with a brief history of the links between tourism and pilgrimage studies, with particular reference to concepts of liminality, communitas, and the quest for authenticity, before going on to analyse some of the key debates in volunteer tourism. It concludes by analysing the links between citizen humanitarianism (see above) and volunteer tourism which I develop further in the following chapters and conclusion as a key contribution of this thesis.

Tourism and tourists have been conceptualised in various ways. In his seminal book, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class,* Dean MacCannell (1976) defined 'tourist' in two ways. First as 'actual tourists: sightseers, mainly middle-class, who are at this moment deployed throughout the entire world in search of experience' (Iibid.:1). While this 1970s description of the generic tourist could equally apply to many of the mobile professionals of "Aidland" or the grassroots humanitarians of citizen aid, MacCannell's second definition was aimed at something more metasociological: a 'model' for 'modern-man-in-general'. He argued (1976:1) that '[o]ur first apprehension of modern civilization, it seems to me, emerges in the mind of the tourist'. Naomi Leite and Nelson Graburn (2009:43) summarise his

argument as a ‘radical modification of Marx’s concept of alienation’ whereby ‘tourists, alienated from the shallowness of urban life, travel in search of “authenticity” seeking wholeness and meaning in nature, in history, or in the supposedly simpler lives of other peoples’. While MacCannell’s thesis is subject to various critiques, he is recognised as one of the first social scientists to take tourism seriously as an analytical concept, with much previous work presenting a negative image of ‘mass hordes’ of tourists in pursuit of inauthentic pseudo-events (Boorstin 1961) or ‘*turistas vulgaris’* (Löfgren 1999).

Tourists are sometimes conceptualised as modern-day pilgrims, and tourism as a modern-day form of pilgrimage. Richard Hoggart (1992:236) defines a pilgrimage as ‘travel to sacred places undertaken in order to gain spiritual merit or healing or as an act of penance or thanksgiving’. These include ‘the start of the journey; the journey itself; the stay at the shrine or site where the sacred is encountered; and the return home’. From this definition, Peter Burns (1999:95) notes key similarities: a stepping aside from normal rules life and of society; limited duration; unique social relations (including mixing of classes, rapid making of ‘friends’); and feelings of intensity. They are also both dependant on three key operative elements: discretionary income, leisure time, and social sanctions permissive of travel (Smith 1989). With structural and experiential similarities to pilgrimage in earlier times that combine a break from everyday routine with purposeful travel toward an often highly anticipated destination, Nelson Graburn has argued that tourism is both a ‘sacred journey’ (1977) and a ‘secular ritual’ (2001). Noting these links, Daniel Olsen and Dallen Timothy (2006:7-8) argue that ‘most researchers today do not distinguish between pilgrims and tourists or between pilgrimage and tourism’ while, at the same time, cautioning that various religious organisations tend to oppose to this view arguing that travellers motivated by deep spiritual or religious convictions are different. Indeed, as the following chapters in this thesis demonstrate, humanitarian organisations and their practitioners also tend to oppose the linking of their activities with tourism, for similar reasons. The next section looks at the theoretical links between tourism and pilgrimage through exploring three key concepts (liminality, communitas, and the quest for authenticity) while analysing the extent to which they have been applied to humanitarian practice and where there is scope for more analytical development.

2.9.2 Theoretical links

2.9.2.1 Liminality

Key theoretical links between tourism, pilgrimage and, I argue, humanitarian practice, can be found in the concept of liminality and the related concept of communitas. Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1909) and his work on rites of passage identified "liminal" or transitional events in life that include pregnancy and childbirth, puberty, marriage and funerals, or physical transition from one place to another. These, he argues, constitute a tripartite structure: preliminal rites (or rites of separation); liminal rites (or transition rites); and postliminal rites (or rites of incorporation). Based on Durkheim's (1915) thesis that rituals play a key cohesive role in society, Victor Turner later applied this idea to rituals in north-western Zambia and western 'hippies' (1969) before focusing his work on pilgrimage. In their co-publication, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, he and his wife Edith (Turner and Turner 1978:2) conceptualise liminality as the space 'betwixt and between all familiar lines of classification' which constitutes a state of anti-structure, separate from the structure of ordinary everyday life whence it came, and to which it will return transformed by the process. This Durkheimian understanding of society is based on the idea that humans need time to separate from their usual social affairs in order to maintain social cohesion over time. Arguing that a 'tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist' (*ibid.*:20), the Turnerian view holds that what applies to the pilgrim also applies the tourist, and vice-versa. Developing this idea, Nelson Graburn (1977, 1983) proceeded to map tourism to Turner's structure while situating the tourist's quest as a pursuit of the "sacred" (non-ordinary) as separate from the "profane" (ordinary).

While the concept of liminality has been applied widely in displacement studies, it is mainly used in reference to the situations and subjectivities of the displaced (see: Howarth and Ibrahim 2012; Ball and Moselle 2016; Arvanitis et al. 2019), and rarely applied to humanitarian workers. Lisa Smirl (2015:20-46) applied the model to her analysis of aid workers' memoirs (Olson 1999; Cain et al. 2004; Minion 2004). She notes that the term 'liminal' had previously been applied to international development and humanitarian work by a handful of theorists and mainly in the context of postcolonial analyses (Khan 1998; Bhabha 2004; Barlow 2007). These analyses, she argues, focus on the emancipatory potential of a hybrid third space where boundaries and divisions blur and new and potentially emancipatory subjectivities and

relationships can emerge. Smirl challenges this reading and adopts the lens of Van Gannep to interpret the process instead as 'a highly structured, codified and predictable "rite of passage"' (2015:20). For example, in her analysis of three published memoirs of aid workers, she notes how all authors talk of coming from their country of origin, moving to the field, and returning home irrevocably transformed in the process; and that, while the space of the field may be transformative, 'it is only so for the perspective of the visiting aid worker, rather than the beneficiary' (*ibid:*25). There is a certain irony in this finding given that a key objective of development and humanitarian interventions is to affect change on local or refugee communities. Indeed, most studies on liminality in displacement studies tend to focus on the displaced with much less applied to aid workers with exceptions including Heathershaw (2016; see above), and the work of Silke Roth (2015) who points to transitions from one life-stage to another while identifying liminality as a unifying element in the otherwise diverse careers and biographies of people who work in aid. This point is explored throughout the thesis with regard to international volunteers in Lesvos and in conjunction with ethnographic materials from fieldwork, particularly in Chapter 8.

2.9.2.2 Communitas

The concept of *communitas* receives relatively much less attention in forced migration studies (cf. Human and Robins 2011; Andersson 2013; Smith 2013) than liminality. Widely applied in tourism and pilgrimage studies, communitas is understood as the shared experience of a heightened sense of unity and emotion that takes place during the liminal/sacred/out-of-the-ordinary period; it is both a product of liminality and inextricably linked to it (Turner 1969, 1974). Di Giovine summarises communitas as 'a fleeting sensation' (2011:251) and 'a strong sense of unity among ritual participants that transcends the daily differences of their social life, a spontaneous and "sympathetic" sensation of mutual fellow-feeling"' (*ibid.*:247-8). Arguing that this sensation is often a key motivation for pilgrims, Turner (1969:131-140) identified three forms of communitas: *existential* as the spontaneous feeling of mutual communion; *normative* as an institutionalised form that is the by-product of co-option by groups within the social structure (such as, for example, Catholic Mass and more structured pilgrimages); and *ideological* which, he argues, is a label that can be applied 'to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential communitas' (132). Fostering the sensation of communitas is recognised as an important concern for religious site managers in their

desire to actualise their religious claims to universalism (Eade and Sallnow 2000:4) and also for tour operators looking to enhance customer experience, commitment and return (Sharpe 2005; Wang 1999; Di Giovine 2011; Curran and Taheri 2019). Turner suggests (1977) that the ties of friendship formed and experienced through communitas often endure through life while Hyounggon Kim and Tazim Jamal (2007) note that this sense is heightened in the cases of 'highly committed tourists'.

While the concept of communitas is rarely named in studies of humanitarian practice, variations on the phenomenon are well noted. For example, united by compassion for refugees, a 'need to be there' and to 'do something' (Malkki 2015; Carpi 2019), aid workers have been noted to form strong bonds of friendship as they face the challenges and tests of humanitarian work. Without referring explicitly to the concept of communitas, Mark Doidge and Elisa Sandri (2019) came to a similar conclusion in their research in the 'Jungle' in Calais where they argue that humanitarian volunteering creates new spaces for sociability and community and note that a 'very high level of mutual trust and affection between volunteers even though their relationships are relatively new' (*ibid.*:478). Smirl also refers to communitas in this way and also with regard to the authors of the memoirs who, by writing about what it is *really* like to be an international aid worker, 'break the unwritten code of the field, they separate themselves out from its communitas, from its liminal state. Such an act is the ultimate rite of separation and can only be performed by someone who, at least temporarily, feels that the [rite of] passage is complete' (2015:38). Scholars of voluntourism – as a subsection of tourism – have also noted the special bonds experienced by volunteers during their tours (Dalwai and Donegan 2012; Mostafanezhad 2014). Meanwhile, scholars of aid in the Aidland genre have written about phenomena similar to communitas although not named it as such. Key amongst them include Harper's (2011) use of the idea of cosmopolitanism to discuss the shared spaces of health workers, Eyben's (2011) work on the sociality of aid that explores, amongst other things, the shared social life, picnics, and parties of aid workers, and Dinah Rajak and Jock Stirrat's (2011) work which engages the concept of cosmopolitanism to examine the parochialism of development expat communities. As the following chapters reveal, similar such relationships, bonds and activities are also found amongst humanitarian actors in Lesvos.

2.9.2.3 The quest for authenticity

Since MacCannell (1976) introduced the concept of 'authenticity' in response to Daniel Boorstin's (1961) claim that tourists are in pursuit of the inauthentic, it has become central in the study of tourism. Ning Wang (1999) distinguishes between two types of approaches to authenticity in tourist experiences in the literature: Object-Related Authenticity; and Activity-Related Authenticity. Object-Related Authenticity is further divided into two: *objectivist authenticity* or 'museum authenticity' whereby the authenticity or originality of an object can be confirmed or measured by 'an absolute and objective criterion' (351) with experiences corresponding to recognition that the object is 'in fact' authentic; and *constructive authenticity* as a 'symbolic authenticity' which is 'projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc' (352). Wang further adds a postmodern lens here which, for her, is not a single, unified and well-integrated approach but 'seem[s] to be characterized by deconstruction of authenticity' (356) whereby, via concepts of 'hyperreality' and 'simulacra', tourists actually seek out the inauthentic because it offers a better, more stimulating experience. Meanwhile, Steiner and Reisinger (2006) argue that object authenticity is no longer useful in explaining tourist motivations and that attention should be focused primarily on *existential authenticity* which Wang places under Activity-based Authenticity. While this view is opposed by others (Belhassen and Caton 2006; Pearce 2012; Kontogeorgopoulos 2017b), Wang describes *existential authenticity* as involving 'personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities', where 'people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life…because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities' (351-352). He identifies four types of existential authenticity: bodily feelings (including sensory perceptions); self-making; family ties (including ethnicity); and touristic *communitas*. These types of authenticity are explored with regard to humanitarian practice in Lesvos throughout this thesis, and particularly in Chapter 8.

Meanwhile, a growing body of research focuses on existential authenticity. For example, Jillian Rickly-Boyd (2013) points to research that identifies the relational qualities of existential authenticity. For example, researching *Lord of the Rings* film tourists in New Zealand, Buchmann et al. (2010) demonstrated that existential authenticity was framed by shared experiences with fellow fans and noted the significance of lived experience of being

present in the various landscapes where scenes were shot. Similarly, for participants in the Texas Renaissance Festival, Kim and Jamal (2007) argue that it is the 'liminality' of the event – the period costumes, the carnival atmosphere, and spatial separation from the everyday – that allows for 'the attainment of authentic selfhood and unmediated intersubjective experience'. And Rickly-Boyd's (2012) own research on rock climbing found that existential authenticity was experienced by life on the road, community gatherings at campgrounds and time spent in nature. In working with her argument (2013:683) that 'place matters in existential authenticity', it is interesting to note comparisons with the humanitarian experience in Lesvos. For example, it could be argued that simply being in Lesvos, at both Greece and the European Union's border with Turkey, sets the conditions for experiencing existential authenticity for politically and socially minded people who travel to Lesvos because of the refugee situation. Similarly, spending long days and/or nights in a refugee camp or on a beach while volunteering with a team of likeminded people who often wear the same NGO T-Shirts, live together, and socialise together during their usually short-term stay can also be considered as contributing to this experience.

This section has examined the role of three key concepts that link tourism and pilgrimage, and how they have been and can be applied to humanitarian practice, a theme which is developed throughout this thesis. Although more than forty years have passed since the Turners penned their oft-cited adage that a 'tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist' (Turner and Turner 1978:20), significant inter- and intra-disciplinary divides remain between the academic study of tourism and pilgrimage. Noel Salazar (2014:261) notes that some scholars suggest that tourism evolved out of pilgrimage (a notion sometimes criticized by scholars of religion) while Di Giovine (2013) argues that pilgrimage could more readily be understood as a subset of tourism. At the same time, pointing to research suggesting that the difference between tourism and pilgrimage can only really be gauged in terms of context and experience, Leite and Graburn (2009:49) suggest that it is neither possible nor advisable to draw an abstract distinction between the two. Just as Graburn (1977, 1983) mapped tourism to Turner's structure, this thesis looks at the extent to which humanitarianism can be mapped to tourism and pilgrimage and concludes by calling for greater dialogue between the study and practice of all three. Indeed, one key area of overlap can be easily identified (and often ignored) in the study of volunteer tourism.

2.10 Linking tourism and humanitarianism through volunteer tourism

2.10.1 Background

If Emily Eddins (2013:23) called volunteer tourists the 'unsung heroes of development' a decade ago, today they are the somewhat loudly sung heroes of humanitarianism. Since the 1970s, research interest in tourism has grown in parallel with the growth in the industry itself. Volunteer tourism is now one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism industry with an estimated 10 million voluntourist trips made each year representing a USD$2 billion industry (Popham 2015). It is often promoted as a genuinely beneficial, altruistic form of tourism that benefits the volunteers/tourists, their host communities and the locals' environment. One such contemporary promoter (volunteerthailand.org) advertises trips to Thailand where volunteers can 'teach Buddhist monks, work with orphans, volunteer with elephants and even scrub-up for a medical internship' while having 'the opportunity to go beyond the usual tourist attractions – forging meaningful connections with others and experience the culture like a local person would'. Focusing less on the volunteer and more on those in destination countries, another (givi.co.uk) offers opportunities on conservation projects in Peru, Costa Rica, Seychelles and South Africa and community development in Fiji that 'ensure that you'll achieve maximum positive impact' and 'guarantee that our volunteers will be contributing to solving critical global issues' while highlighting its commitment to United Nations' development goals. Meanwhile, particularly since the onset of "Europe's refugee crisis" in 2015, volunteering in humanitarian contexts has witnessed significant recent growth with, as one company states (Indigovolunteers.org), an aim to achieve its 'overall mission of ensuring that grassroots humanitarians have the resources and connections to provide vital assistance to refugees and displaced peoples'. Despite the clear practical relationship between volunteer tourism and the humanitarian response, however, the links between tourism and humanitarianism are rarely made in scholarship.

2.10.2 Definitions of volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is a term that covers a wide range of activities and has taken on different forms and definitions while associated research has engaged scholars from a wide range of disciplines, mainly within the social sciences. While some scholars emphasise tourism in their

definitions, other emphasise volunteering. One of the early and most prominent authors on volunteer tourism, Stephen Wearing, defines (2001:1) the generic term 'volunteer tourism' as applying to 'those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment'. Key words in this definition include 'tourists' and 'holidays' that 'might' help aid or alleviate material poverty whereby tourism appears to be the key focus and the possibility of making a difference on other people's live appears secondary. Meanwhile, Sally Brown (2005) defines it as 'a type of tourism experience where a tour operator offers travellers an opportunity to participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component, as well as a cultural exchange with local people' which, not least due to the optionality, places even greater emphasis on tourism than volunteering.

Other authors put less emphasis on holiday aspect. Nancy McGehee and Carla Santos (2005:760) define it as 'utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need'. While this definition does not explicitly mention holidays or tourism and implies a more purposeful commitment to humanitarianism's key principle of assisting others in need than the 'might involve' of Wearing's definition, the 'discretionary time and income' (plus social sanctions permissive of travel) represent the key elements of Valene Smith's definition of tourism (1989:1). Another definition commonly cited in the literature, particularly during the early-to-mid 2010s is that of David Clemmons, founder of Voluntourism.org (n.d.), a website that provided news, research and other resources on volunteer tourism: 'the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best, traditional elements of travel – arts, culture, geography, history and recreation – in that destination'. In a jointly written review of volunteer tourism, Wearing and McGehee note (2013:121) that Clemmons was 'one of the first to define voluntourism in the mainstream media in a way that gives equal credence to both the volunteer and the travel experience'. Meanwhile, McGehee (2014:848) identifies volunteer tourism as an increasingly broad continuum where she places Clemmons' definition of voluntourism, which she argues 'has the greatest emphasis on tourism', at one end, and 'international volunteering', which she argues 'places the lion's share of the focus on the volunteering component' in an international context, at the other. These terms are not always

used in these ways and Wanda Vrasti (2015), for example, considers 'voluntourism' as a shorthand form of 'volunteer tourism' and, like many others, uses 'volunteer tourism', 'voluntourism', 'international volunteering' and 'volunteering' interchangeably to describe the same activities. Meanwhile, others call for clearer distinctions between the labels and groups (see: Benson and Henderson 2011; Lyons and Wearing 2012; Stainton 2016).

2.10.3 Overlapping debates in volunteer tourism and humanitarianism

One of the key debates surrounding volunteer tourism is whether it is "a good thing", a debate which is, of course, value-laden. Wearing and McGehee (2013) note that many early academic studies (Wearing 2001; McGehee 2002; Broad 2003; McGehee and Santos 2005) were mainly advocacy-oriented and focused on its benefits as a niche sustainable alternative to "mass-tourism" with little emphasis on its less positive attributes. Critical analysis was rare during this period (cf. Brown 2003; Callanan and Thomas 2005; Raymond and Hall 2008) but steadily began to rise over the following decade. In his edited volume, *Critical Debates in Tourism*, Tej Vir Singh (2012) nods to the principle of "do no harm" and poses the question 'is it benign?'. In response, Jim Butcher (2012) argues that 'it may not be as good as it seems' due to the short-term nature of such projects and the dependency model that such projects often produce. Daniel Guttentag (2012) responds by reviewing volunteer tourists' activities, the personal changes they experience, and the encountered cross-cultural exchanges, and concludes that it is too early to pass judgement. On a practical note, Eliza Raymond (2012) advocates for a bottom-up approach that emphasises the needs of the receiving community and matching volunteers' specific skillsets to the project rather than simply 'dumping them on the a project' (*ibid*.:162).

Some of the debates in research on volunteer tourism are similar to those in humanitarianism. For example, the altruism Vs self-interest debate concerning motivations is rarely applied to mainstream tourism yet regularly applied to both volunteer tourism and humanitarianism. In volunteer tourism, Brown (2005) and Callanan and Thomas (2005) generally found four motivations: cultural emersion, making a difference, seeking camaraderie, and family bonding, with similar findings in other studies (Benson and Siebert 2009). Colleen McGloin and Nichole Georgeou (2016) note how, under the banner of 'making a difference', Australian university students are encouraged to enjoy the tastes and sights of

a distant and exotic other while doing something that 'looks good on your CV' (see Chapter 6 on the humanitarian labour market). While not completely denying the motivation to make a difference, altruism does not feature prominently in these findings.

Another debate concerns the link with notions of global citizenship. One view holds that volunteer tourism builds long-term relationships that promote activism in social movements (McGehee and Santos 2005) through promoting understanding of other cultures (see also: Crabtree 2008; McGehee 2012). On the other hand, Jim Butcher (2017) argues that volunteer tourism effectively outsources citizenship responsibilities and practices from the global north to the global south while Ruth Cheung Judge (2017) suggests that, in the UK, popular ideals of 'global cosmopolitan citizenship' are being drawn into longer-standing projects of reform of the national citizen. Baillie Smith et al. (2013) explore how contemporary imaginings of 'good works' in the global south are constitutive of subjectivities and exert a political force in the global north and, later with another team (2021), uses assemblage thinking to argue that existing approaches to volunteering, cosmopolitanism and development 'remain contained by established development imaginaries and their ascription of agency, authority and expertise to actors from the global North' (*ibid*.:1353). As discussed in the above section on citizen humanitarianism, similar conversations also take place in debates on citizenship and social movements.

There is a further, important, argument that volunteer tourism represents a continuation of colonial and neo-liberal processes. Wanda Vrasti (2015) did not want to treat voluntourism as a subsection of tourism nor provide a technical assessment of voluntourism – approaches which she holds responsible for 'most of the lifeless sociological analyses that currently dominate the field of tourism studies' (*ibid.*:3) – and instead places volunteer tourism at the intersection between subjectivity, biopolitics and capital in neoliberal governmentality. Meanwhile, Mary (formerly Conran) Mostafanezhad examines role of structural inequalities through an exploration of intimacy between in the volunteer tourism encounter (Conran 2011). As with one of the main critiques of humanitarianism generally, both Mostafanezhad (2011) and Vrasti (2015) argue that volunteer tourism has the effect of reinforcing the narrative of victim/receiver Vs saviour/provider which denies agency to the former while ignoring the historical context of inequalities. At the same time, Ranjan Bandyopadhyay and

Vrushali Patil (2017) argue that the depoliticised logic of "saving" and "helping" inherent in volunteer tourism must be understood within the broader histories of colonial thought, and that colonial logics and discourses have shifted from the 'civilising mission' of yesteryear to the mandate for development. Given the similar patterns of north-south mobility and motivations for travel associated with volunteer tourism and international humanitarianism, these links cannot be ignored.

2.11 Linking tourism and humanitarianism through travel

If humanitarianism can be located in the theory and practice of tourism, it can also be located in the broader field of travel. In terms of motivations for travel, contributors to Matthew Niblett and Kris Beuret's (2021) edited volume *Why Travel?* attempt to answer the question of the book's title through drawing on a range of disciplines and fields of study. Charles Pasternak (2021) provides biological evidence that links human movement to the evolution of our brains while Tony Hiss (2021) explores the psychology of travel and links it to our mental wellbeing. Meanwhile, Matthew Dillon and Alexander Jan (2021) challenge the traditional economic perspective of travel as derived demand and argue that framing travel as both pleasurable and having intrinsic utility allows us to proceed to new understandings of travel. Key themes in this book, and also in the literature on tourism, concern travel as exploration and as a means to discover ourselves. Analysis includes a sociological examination of how travel affects social structures and identities (Beuret and Hall 2021), an examination of the links between travel, art, and literature, and what they tell us about the relationship between travel, self-expression, and cultural identity and how travel has affected language and human creativity (Kuznets and Niblett 2021), and an investigation into why travel as so key to many world religions and spiritual practices that frames travel as a religious practice (Kuznets 2021). Meanwhile, Emily Thomas (2021) shows how the human need to travel for discovery led to the development of travel for scientific exploration. While the volume does not contain a chapter on international humanitarian practice, the analysis contained in this thesis speaks to similar themes, not least in questioning why people travel.

Locating humanitarianism beyond tourism and within the broader context of travel produces further insights on social processes. The work of Tom Selwyn, located firmly in the field of anthropology, is particularly useful in drawing out some of the key themes. Through building

his analyses on examples from ethnography, myth, and travel writings that include Homer's *The Odyssey*, Ibn Battuta's travels, the kula of the Trobriand Islands, Mediterranean shepherds, and more, Selwyn (2021:174) identifies a 'rich seam of interwoven thematic threads that help us assemble a set of ideas about why people travel'. Such themes include those that are at the heart of this thesis: hospitality; hostility, danger and death; home; identity (of the self, group, and nation); external cultural, economic and political drivers of travel; and knowledge and beauty. Elsewhere in his writings (2013; 2018), and through the structure of the Masters degree in Anthropology of Travel, Tourism, and Pilgrimage he founded at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, Selywn draws on the recorded of experiences of two iconic historical travellers, the medieval pilgrim Ibn Battuta and the nineteenth century writer and journalist Mark Twain, to identify theoretical bearings and historical insights. While the former '*was made to feel at home* throughout much of the vast area he travelled' (*Ibid.*:108), the latter perceived 'many of those he encounter[ed] as unfriendly and unwelcoming' (2018:4). Selwyn (2013:108) argues that their accounts tell us not only tell us 'a great deal about themselves as individual travellers *and* about the world in which they travel' but also, importantly, provide insights on 'the external and internal relationships between *the self in the world and the world in the self*' (*ibid*.:110). Pushing this further, he (2021:182) argues that 'the reason people travel (from an anthropological point of view) is that they are driven to explore how they are shaped by the world and how the world is shaped by them.' Indeed, issues such as the ways in which cultural identities and values (including humanitarian values) emerge from relations between selves and others experienced by travellers, the quest by travellers for knowledge of the other, and other such themes have been constant threads underlying social thought from the earliest days. As explored in more depth in Chapters 8 and 9 with particular regard to tourism and pilgrimage, understanding the reasons why people travel is key to understanding why people engage and wish to engage in humanitarian travel specifically.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the contours of the key debates that this thesis contributes to. The chapter situates my research firmly within the growing ethnographies of aid that focus on the relatively under researched displacement-affected populations of humanitarians and locals/host communities. While much previous research in this body has focused on the

lifeworlds of professional humanitarians, this chapter's identification of the gaps in the literature between the study and practice of citizen humanitarianism and of volunteer tourism adds to existing debates by shifting the focus towards this emerging group of 'new humanitarians' (Sezgin and Dijkzeul 2015b). In doing so, it highlights a significant portion of the global humanitarian economy that remains largely unquantified in official statistics (cf. FTS UNOCHA 2021) yet whose role has important implications both for displacement-affected populations and the study and practice of humanitarian action. Identifying the overlaps between these groups sets up Chapter 7's analysis of the labelling practices between and amongst displacement-affected populations which, in studies of forced displacement, overwhelmingly focused on the displaced. Furthermore, through drawing on literature from peacekeeping studies and the 'peacekeeping economy' (Jennings 2015; Jennings and Bøås 2015), this chapter has identified a key gap in understandings of the humanitarian economies which I develop further in Chapters 6 and 9 through taking a relational approach to the conceptualisation of displacement economies (Hammar 2014; Carpi 2019). Situated within the broader field of travel, the thesis draws on tourism and pilgrimage studies' key concepts of liminality, communitas, and the quest for authenticity to reveal similarities with the study and practice of humanitarianism which are further explored in the core chapters of this thesis. Before doing so, however, the next chapter introduces the humanitarian arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010) and the actor-oriented approach (Long 2001) as the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

CHAPTER 3 – Theoretical Framework: Expanding the Scope of the Humanitarian Arena

3.1 Introduction

The overarching theoretical framework of this thesis is that of the 'humanitarian arena' (Fernando and Hilhorst 2006; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Hilhorst and Serrano 2010; Hilhorst 2018; Roepstorff 2020, 2021). The humanitarian arena is 'actor-oriented' (Long 2001) and starts from the assumption that social actors have agency, recognising both structure and agency. Methodologically, it is grounded in the ethnographic study of humanitarian practice. Its constructionist underpinnings resonate with my own philosophical disposition and I am particularly attracted to its recognition of and commitment to 'multiple realities', an epistemological concept that emerges repeatedly throughout the pages of this thesis. A key reason that I initially adopted the humanitarian arena as a theoretical framework was because of the comparatively little theoretical work that had been conducted on it since its initial conception. While previous applications of the framework have mostly been applied to analysing the projects, programmes and policies of humanitarian institutions, my application shifts the focus towards a micro-level analysis of individuals, their everyday practices, and their interactions amongst themselves and with others. In doing so, my research contributes to this expanding field of study by allowing for an interrogation of the subjectivities and processes of identity formation that are so important in the humanitarian encounter yet remain marginalised in the literature (see Chapter 2; and Section 3.3.1 below). A further contribution lies in my use of the actor-oriented approach's interface analysis (Long 2001) in understanding the somewhat understudied humanitarian/local relationship in humanitarian action. These contributions are further supported by a conceptualisation of the humanitarian presence in the thesis' conclusion.

As described by Hilhorst and Serrano (2010:199):

> The humanitarian arena framework focuses on multiple actors rather than international agencies, analyses processes rather than projects, and premises the analysis on social negotiation rather than planned interventions. This offers a different

way of seeing crisis response and helps in assessing the scope and political ramifications of service delivery.

When I first encountered this framework, it immediately appealed to me for the above reasons. It marked a distinct departure from my previous academic and professional readings and writings on humanitarian action. My background in international relations (I completed a Masters in 2003) had an overwhelming focus on states and their various agents/agencies as the primary unit of analysis and much of my post-MA/pre-PhD readings proceeded from this point. During my career in the humanitarian sector, the 'project' was the main focus of my professional reading and writing (Krause 2014) and while logframe-related activities were meticulously documented, analysed and (re)presented externally, the equally (if not more) important social processes and relationships amongst the actors connected to the project rarely (if ever) received such analytical scrutiny. My experience as a practitioner made me realise the importance of such processes and relationships beyond the discourse, not least in terms of the social negotiations that are inescapably a part of planned interventions. Indeed, projects and humanitarian action more generally are implemented by *people* and understanding those people's everyday practices and encounters is crucial to understanding humanitarian action. Furthermore, on beginning my PhD journey, much of the literature I encountered on humanitarian action had focused on humanitarian principles, their relationships with politics, and the difficulties of adhering to such principles in light of the practical challenges of humanitarian work. Although these issues were important in my experience of everyday practice as an aid worker, they were not the key issues or processes that I viewed to govern social relations and everyday activities in the humanitarian encounter. Hence when I found the humanitarian arena and Fernando and Hilhorst's (2006:292) earlier call to shift 'discussions on humanitarian aid [that] usually start from the level of theoretical principles' to 'detailed analysis of everyday practice as the starting point for understanding humanitarian aid', I was immediately interested in adopting this lens to pursue a more holistic understanding of humanitarian practice.

This chapter begins by examining the actor-oriented approach and its key concepts of actors, agency, and arenas (Long 2001). It then presents the humanitarian arena, its origins as a critique of the concept of humanitarian space, and examines some of the existing work that

adopts it as a theoretical framework. I then move on to demonstrating how and why the framework is well-suited to the humanitarian context in Lesvos. The following section introduces the actor-oriented tool of 'interface analysis' as a key component of the framework and how I apply it to the local/humanitarian dynamic in my research. I then present my key contributions to the framework before concluding with some final remarks and comments on its potential limitations.

3.2 Actor-oriented roots

The idea of an arena is rooted in the actor-oriented approach as developed by Norman Long with support from his wife Ann (Long and Long 1992; Long 2001) who applied this approach to the ethnographic study of development practice. Noting the close links between the study and practice of development and humanitarianism (see Chapter 2), this section provides an overview of the actor-oriented approach, its key principles, and ontological and epistemological assumptions before introducing Long's concept of the 'arena' and how it has been applied to humanitarian contexts.

Norman Long trained as a social anthropologist in Max Gluckman's 'Manchester School' and gained his PhD in 1967 based on fieldwork in Zambia, the same year that Victor Turner, also a student of Gluckman (and whose work on liminality and *communitas* feature in Chapters 2 and 8), published *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (V. Turner 1967) based on fieldwork in Zambia. Despite his anthropological background and training, Long more readily describes himself as a sociologist, a sociologist of development and, more specifically, a sociologist of rural development yet, at the same time, while rejecting disciplinary boundaries. He spent the majority and latter part of career at Wageningen University in the Netherlands where, as Professor of Sociology and later Professor of Sociology of Development, he built a group and network of scholars working on understanding how development processes affect society. In 2001, he published *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives* which was written with the support of his wife and represents his most comprehensive formulation of what is now known as the actor-oriented approach. He retired in the same year, became Professor Emeritus at Wageningen and continues to take a keen interest in all things actor-oriented.

3.2.1 Social Actors

The actor-oriented approach starts with the simple premise that *social actors* have *agency*. For Long (2001:241), social actors are:

> [A]ll those social entities that can be said to have agency in that they possess the knowledgeability and capacity to assess problematic situations and organise 'appropriate' responses. Social actors appear in a variety of forms: individual persons, informal groups or interpersonal networks, organisations, collective groupings, and what are sometimes called 'macro' actors (e.g. a particular national government, church or international organisation). But care must always be taken to avoid reification; that is, one should not assume that organisations or collectivities such as social movements act in unison or with one voice. In fact, 'collective' and 'organisational' endeavours are better depicted in terms of 'coalitions of actors', 'interlocking actor projects' and 'the interplay of discourses'.

At its broadest level, collective groupings of actors in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos include locals, humanitarians, and refugees (Figure 1; and see Chapter 4) and it is the interface of humanitarians and locals to which this PhD pays particular attention. At the same time, as Long rightly notes, these groups of actors rarely act in unison amongst themselves and there are clear differences between them. For example, organisations and groups as diverse as UNHCR, independent volunteers, and solidarity networks such as the No Borders movement may be grouped together as 'humanitarian' actors, but there are significant ideological differences between them at both organisational and individual levels. Similarly, while national, legal, linguistic, and gender differences between 'refugee' groups are highlighted in humanitarian discourse, these categorisations overshadow differences and similarities on other levels such as secular/religious, political, financial, sexuality, and many, many others. With regard to 'locals', the majority of the island's populations, all of the above distinctions apply regardless of the extent to which some of the humanitarian and refugee populations may wish to homogenise them simply as 'Greek'. Furthermore, national, regional and municipal government actors are linked with EU and UNHCR actors as well as with less formal networks, demonstrating further overlap at institutional and individual levels. It is important to note here that such categories and categorisations over-simplify the heterogenous lives

people live and blur the overlap between and within identities from which friendship and cooperative relations emerge in addition to conflicting relations.

3.2.2 Agency

Social actors have agency. They are active stakeholders in their social worlds. While structures may serve to constrain, actors are not and do not have to be powerless against these structures. While structures can be overwhelming, social actors nevertheless can and do reflect on and respond to events and the environment around them. Long (2012:np) defines agency as:

> [T]he knowledgeability, capability and social embeddedness associated with acts of doing (and reflecting) that impact upon or shape one's own and others' actions and interpretations. Agency is usually recognised ex post facto through its acknowledged or presumed effects. Persons or networks of persons have agency. In addition, they may attribute agency to various objects and ideas, which, in turn, can shape actors' perceptions of what is possible. Agency is composed, therefore, of a complex mix of social, cultural and material elements. Strategic agency signifies the enrolment of many actors in the 'project' of some other person or persons.

Agency is an important part of the actor-oriented approach and, indeed, to understanding processes of development and humanitarian action. While the actor-oriented approach was developed by Long in and around the 1980s in response to the overly structural analyses of the recent period, structure nevertheless remains an important part of the framework although not to the extent that agency is completely subordinate. Particularly important, and often overlooked, is the rather simple point that individuals have agency. Fechter (2012:1388) agrees with this point and argues that although this 'may seem commonsensical rather than contentious', it is not well reflected in much of the development studies literature which tends to focus on 'aid institutions and programmes, policy making and knowledge construction'. For example, studies of refugee status determination procedures tend to look at state level analyses, comparing polices between countries and bureaucracies (Edwards 2006; Hamlin 2012) with very little, if any, focus on the crucial role of the agency of the individuals involved in the process (cf. Kagan 2003). More broadly, the discourse analyses of

post-development literature (Sachs 1992; Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995) place an overwhelming emphasis on the role of structure and the power of discourse in trying to understand social and development processes. These analyses almost completely ignore the key role of human agency. Consequently, they miss out micro-level acts of resistance and cooperation as well as the more mundane everyday activities of everyday people which contribute to a holistic understanding of social processes. As Long rightly notes (Edwards 2006; Hamlin 2012), 'the texture of social structures, which both limit and enable social behaviour, cannot be understood without considering human actions'. At the same time, Oliver Bakewell, whose work initially adopted an actor-oriented approach (2000a; 2000b) but later moved towards critical realism, warns against placing too much emphasis on agency. In what he describes (2010) as the 'hyperactivity of agency', he critiques his own previous work on refugees in Zambia (2000a), arguing that he may have overplayed the agency of refugees and their room for manoeuvre in suggesting they had more autonomy that they really did.

With regard to the present thesis, however, the roles of both structure and agency are key. For example, Fortress Europe, northern European political and economic dominance over Greece, Athens' dominance over Lesvos or, indeed, neoliberal governmentality more generally, may well explain the EU-Turkey deal that resulted in the effective containment of refugees on Lesvos, the building of a new EU-funded/government administered reception centre for refugees, and even the organised resistance from the municipality. They do not, however, account for the diverse ways that different actors interpreted and responded to these processes. In Lesvos, some locals happily engaged with the emerging humanitarian market on the island, and others not-so-happily, while others avoided engagement altogether (Chapters 5 & 6). Various practices of micro-level resistance emerged including overcharging humanitarians for goods and services or simply ignoring them (Chapters 6 & 7), as well as vernacular labelling practices distinct from institutional labelling practices (Chapter 7). While structure is indeed important, these activities and processes are better understood when recognising and accounting for human agency. As Long argues (2001:62), '[t]he point is simply that such [structural] factors should not be seen as determinants that entail self-evident limits beyond which action is judged to be inconceivable, but rather as boundary markers that become targets for negotiation, reconsideration, sabotage and/or change'. While much more work is necessary to unravel the complex dynamics between structure and agency, it is not

the objective of this thesis to do so. A key contribution of the actor-oriented approach, however, is its recognition of the important role of agency in understanding the social processes and relationships that constitute humanitarian action in practice. As Oliver Bakewell argues, '[a]id, in this perspective, is the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and at times guessing to further their interests' (Bakewell 2000b:108-9).

3.2.3 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

An actor-oriented approach is philosophically grounded in a *social constructionist* view of change and continuity. For Long (2001:2), it is a 'constructionist perspective [that] focuses upon the making and remaking of society through the ongoing and transforming actions and perceptions of a diverse and interlocked world of actors'. As such, actors reflect on their experiences and the environment around them while using their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond accordingly. Recognising the multiple realities of multifaceted actors and that no permanent, unvarying criteria exist for establishing whether knowledge can be regarded as 'true', this view holds that everyday knowledge is the outcome of people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people (Blaikie 2010:95). Its ontological assumptions lie in *idealism* which holds that reality consists of representations that are the creation of the human mind and made up of shared interpretations that social actors produce and reproduce as they go about their everyday lives (Blaikie 2010:93-4). As these interpretations are accepted, rejected or renegotiated, Long (2001) argues that by acknowledging the existence of 'multiple social realities' (i.e. the co-existence of different understandings and interpretations of experience), the ontological realism of positivist science (i.e. of a 'real world' that is simply 'out there' to be discovered) is called into question.

This approach has appealed to me ever since I heard about the Japanese soldier, Hiroo Onoda (and others like him), who went into hiding at the end of the Second World War for nearly three decades because he did not believe the war was over (BBC News 2014). In his mind, in his reality, the war was still raging, and the enemy was still out there (he killed 30 people whilst in hiding), even if this was not the case for the soldiers, generals and peoples of the rest of the world. The constructionist starting point of the actor-oriented approach recognises

that it is the social world of social actors under investigation and, accordingly, it is their construction of reality, their ways of conceptualising and giving meaning to their social world that defines their reality. As such, it is their words and actions that are analysed in this thesis. As per the abductive approach to this research (see Chapter 4), while some concepts were pre-identified from the literature before fieldwork began, the key concepts at its heart emerged primarily from social actors' language and behaviours. The former includes, amongst others, citizen humanitarianism, humanitarianism more generally and (to some extent) humanitarian economics while the latter includes labelling processes, tourism, and pilgrimage, and – to an extent I had not predicted prior to fieldwork – humanitarian economics.

Before delving deeper into the humanitarian arena as a theoretical framework, some further discussion of my own ontological position and worldview is necessary to frame this thesis. Like many of the people in this thesis who have crossed borders to help refugees in one way or another, a key motivation and driving force in my life has been to "make the world a better place". This represents a different form of idealism to the one discussed above. While I have never really had a clear picture of what I think a better world would look like, I nevertheless believed and continue to believe that it involves more social equality and equity on a global level. Not long after finishing my degree in International Relations, I left my country for "the Middle East" with an aim to work towards this goal and without a clue how to do it. I was, at the time, no doubt more motivated than I otherwise would have cared to admit by the constructs, imaginaries, and narratives of 'distant victims' (Höijer 2004:513) who needed "saving" by a 'white saviour' (Spivak 1988; Abu-Lughod 2002; Cole 2012; Bandyopadhyay 2019; Anderson et al. 2021) such as myself. Like the many of the people who travelled to Lesvos to help refugees, I was also motivated by other myriad, complex, overlapping, and personal reasons but "making the world a better place" was nevertheless the dominant narrative I used to justify my reasons for travel, both to myself and to others. While my ability to self-reflect and my understandings of the machinations of the international system continue to change and nuance, it remains clear to me that a world without forced displacement would indeed be a better world. While achieving this often appears beyond my control, I have a responsibility as a researcher and humanitarianism practitioner to analyse and reflect on the ways people interpret and respond to situations of forced displacement. In

doing so, I can at least contribute to making a better humanitarian system, if not a better world.

3.3 Arenas

Long locates the concept of an 'arena' in a framework with 'field' and 'domains'. For Long (2001:58), the idea of a social field first appeared in the early writings of the Manchester School (Barnes 1954; Epstein 1958) which emphasised the complex sets of overlapping social relationships between distinct areas of social life. He takes issue with Pierre Boudieu's (Bourdieu [1977]2010; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:94-115) development of the concept which Long (2001:58) claims is 'impressive' but 'a more structural view than the one I wish to advance'. In contrast, Long (*ibid.*) argues for the elaboration to two additional concepts – 'social domain' and 'arena' which, he argues, allows for the 'analysis of the processes of ordering, regulating and contesting social values, relations, resource utilisation, authority and power'. He uses 'domains' to identify areas of social life that are organised by a reference to a 'central core or cluster of values' which, even if not perceived in the same way by all parties, 'are nevertheless recognised as a locus of norms and values implying a degree of social commitment such as family, market, state, community, production and consumption' (*ibid*.:58-59). Domains, Long argues, 'become especially visible and defined at points where domains are seen to impinge on each other or come into conflict' and should not be conceptualised *a priori* as cultural givens but as produced and transformed through the shared experiences and struggles' between various actors (2001:59). Thus domains, together with the notion of arena, enable analysis of the constraints and enabling elements that shape actors' choices and room for manoeuvre.

He defines 'arenas' as social locations of situations in which contests over issues, resources, values, and representations take place:

> 'social and spatial locations where actors confront each other, mobilise social relations and deploy discursive and other cultural means for the attainment of specific ends, including that of perhaps simply remaining in the game. In the process, actors may draw on particular domains to support their interests, aims and dispositions. Arenas therefore are either spaces in which contestation associated with different practices

> and values of different domains takes place or they are spaces within a single domain where attempts are made to resolve discrepancies in value interpretations and incompatibilities between actor interests.' (59)

For Long, the concept of an arena is particularly useful for mapping out issues, resources, and discourses in development projects and programmes given that they consist of a complex set of interlocking arenas of struggle, each characterised by specific constraints and possibilities of manoeuvre. Lesvos provides a fertile social and spatial location for analysis using an arena perspective. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the various violent and non-violent confrontations between locals on the one hand, and humanitarians and/or refugees on the other shine light on contests over issues, resources, values and representations, as well as similar such contests within these broadly defined groups. Other examples include the ways in which certain actors employ the language and discourse of humanitarianism to advance their own economic and political interests (Chapters 5, 6 & 7), locals' labelling of humanitarians as 'tourists' which I argue is an identity-building practice in opposition the island's newcomers (Chapter 7), and discrepancies in value interpretations understandings of the island's identity (Chapters 5 & 8). Before focusing more closely on the Lesvian context, the next section of this chapter looks at how the arena perspective has been applied to humanitarian (rather than development) contexts.

3.3.1 The Humanitarian Arena

While Long's work focused mainly on development contexts, Dorothea Hilhorst and others have extensively applied the arena perspective to humanitarian contexts in her single authored and joint publications. In a similar vein to Long, she argues that an arena perspective 'focuses on the everyday practices of policy and implementation and highlights how different actors develop their own understanding and strategies around shared vocabularies, ambitions and realities of aid, and how this leads to frictions and contradictions in aid delivery' (Hilhorst 2018:4). Accordingly, the humanitarian arena has been used to analyse diverse case studies in conflict and disaster contexts. These include the everyday politics of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaption in Mozambique (Artur 2011; Artur and Hilhorst 2012), of aid and institutions in Angola (Hilhorst and Serrano 2010; Serrano 2012), of community-driven reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kyamusugulwa 2014;

Kyamusugulwa and Hilhorst 2015), of humanitarian governance in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Jansen 2011), the tsunami response in Sri Lanka (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010), a review of the processes surrounding responses to socio-environmental disasters in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict (Mena 2019), an examination of aid-state-society power relations in disaster response in post-conflict Burundi (Melis 2019). All of the above papers were written or co-authored by PhD students under the supervision of Dorothea Hilhorst who herself studied at Wageningen University with Norman Long. Other Hilhorst work includes an analysis of 'multi-mandate organisations' in a global-level humanitarian arena (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2015) and an analysis of humanitarian advocacy practices in three settings including Lesvos (Hilhorst, et al. 2021).

Other studies, less explicitly linked to the Hilhorst camp, have also engaged with the humanitarian arena. These include an analysis of ethical and political negotiations of material and symbolic resources in the global political-humanitarian arena since the end of the Cold War (Weissman 2014), a Colombia case study that analyses how and why a humanitarian response should be locally led, particularly in conflict affected contexts (Kuipers et al. 2019), a discussion of the practices and paradigms of local and expatriate workers in 'Aidland' (van Voorst 2019), a study of rights-based approaches to humanitarian action in Pakistan (Borchgrevink 2021), and an examination of social vulnerability and disaster response in Pakistan which situates humanitarian actors as part of the politics of a humanitarian arena (Arifeen and Nyborg 2021). Roanne van Voorst (2019:4-5) further suggests that several other scholars have also engaged in an actor-oriented approach, if not an arena approach, without explicitly labelling their work as such. These works take into account both individual practices and paradigms as well as the structures in which aid actors operate and include an analysis of the practices of managers in large (western) humanitarian agencies (Krause 2014), and of the complex relationship between 'altruists', 'beneficiaries' and 'brokers' in the AIDS-industry (Swidler and Watkins 2017).

Meanwhile, Kristina Roepstorff has written three papers that reference the humanitarian arena. The first (2020) is a call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action which makes several references to actors and their relationships in the humanitarian arena although does not specifically engage with the humanitarian arena or actor-oriented

approach at a theoretical level. The second (2021) analyses the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and conducts an 'interface analysis' (a key analytical tool of the actor-oriented approach, see below) revealing competition, contestation and sometimes convergence between international and local humanitarians over the meaning of 'localisation' and how to implement it. The third is unpublished. Prior to these publications, Roepstroff was the lead on a project entitled *Migration and the Shrinking Humanitarian Space in Europe* (Roepstorff 2019) and although she did not specifically engage with humanitarian arena in its written outputs, she is quoted separately as stating that '[t]he Humanitarian Space is a contested space, and a complex political, military and legal arena' (Centre for Humanitarian Action n.d.). This is worth discussing as the origins of Hilhorst and Jansen's (2010) humanitarian arena can be found in a dissatisfaction with the concept of humanitarian space as discussed in the following section.

3.3.2 Emerging from humanitarian space

The humanitarian arena approach was developed as an alternative analytical framework to the dominant paradigm of 'humanitarian space'. Working with Christopher Spearin's definition (2001:22) of humanitarian space as 'an environment where humanitarians can work without hindrance and follow the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity', Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) were unsatisfied with the concept's aspirational character and Dunantist origins (see Chapter 2). They argue that the framework has limited effectiveness in practice as demonstrated by countless cases of, for example, the militarisation of safe havens and refugee camps and the abuse and politicisation of humanitarian aid in aid contexts around the world. Instead, they argue that humanitarian space is better understood as a humanitarian arena.

The term '*espace humanitaire*' ('humanitarian space') was originally coined in the mid-1990s by the then president of Médicins San Frontières (MSF), Rony Brauman, who described it as 'a space of freedom in which we are free to evaluate needs, free to monitor the distribution and use of relief goods, and free to have a dialogue with the people'. The idea of space refers to both the physical and metaphorical space that allow humanitarians room for manoeuvre without fear of attack and, since its conception, has been adopted by members of the humanitarian system including, for example, UNOCHA and UNHCR (the two United Nations

agencies for providing leadership and coordination in displacement situations), Oxfam, and many others. ReliefWeb/OCHA (2003:29) recognises humanitarian space as a synonym for 'Humanitarian Operating Environment' which is defined as a 'key element for humanitarian agencies and organisations when they deploy [and which] consists of establishing and maintaining a conducive humanitarian operating environment, sometimes referred to as "humanitarian space"'. Meanwhile, UNHCR defines it as 'a social, political and security environment which allows access to protection, including assistance for populations of concern to UNHCR, facilitates the exercise of UNHCR's non-political and humanitarian mandate, and within which the prospect of achieving solutions to displacement is optimised' (UNHCR 2009). And Oxfam defines it as 'an operating environment in which the right of populations to receive protection and assistance is upheld, and aid agencies can carry out effective humanitarian action by responding to their needs in an impartial and independent way' which 'allows humanitarian agencies to work independently and impartially to assist populations in need, without fear of attack or obstruction by political or physical barriers to their work. For this to be the case, humanitarian agencies need to be free to make their own choices, based solely on the criteria or need' (Oxfam International 2008). However, as various studies have demonstrated, independence and impartiality remain aspirations rather than realities as indeed do the other core principles of humanitarian action (M. N. Barnett 2011; S. Gordon and Donini 2015; Kraft 2015; Lockyear and Cunningham 2017; Hart 2021).

Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) thus question why humanitarian space remains a core concept of humanitarian assistance despite its limitations in practice. They suggest (2010:1118) that one reason is because many humanitarian and surrounding actors sincerely believe in its power to protect and assist and thereby maintain the ideal to uphold the standards embedded in the concept. They further point to research from twelve humanitarian contexts (Donini et al. 2008) where aid recipients and providers acknowledge and appreciate the universal character of the principles that underpin the humanitarian space. They also note Kleinfeld's observation (2007:174) that much academic criticism of the politicisation of humanitarian space is 'undergirded by the taken-for-granted assumption that humanitarian spaces and relations can and must be separated from politics'. In an effort to reconcile these limitations, Hilhorst and Jansen offer the humanitarian arena as an alternative analytical framework. As in the contexts of Long's analyses of development interventions, the humanitarian arena reveals a

multitude of actors who socially negotiate the humanitarian presence in their respective localities and, in doing so, shape and coproduce the everyday realities of humanitarian action.

Dorothea Hilhorst and Maliana Serrano (2010:184) offer the below table to distinguish between the two approaches:

	Humanitarian Space	Humanitarian Arena
Status	Dominant Paradigm	Proposed analytical framework
Definition	Operating environment for humanitarian action in which humanitarians work according to the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity.	Arena in which actors socially negotiate the policy and practices of aid.
Scope	Only aid labelled as humanitarian	Encompasses all forms of service delivery during a crisis.
Humanitarian crisis	State of exception, separated from normality.	Acknowledges continuities and discontinuities between crisis and normality.
Actors and aid deliverers	International humanitarian agencies central in determining aid.	No *a priori* distinction between different deliverers of services. All stakeholders shape humanitarian action.
Humanitarian action	Projects defined according to humanitarian principles.	Policy and practice shaped in process. Principles acquire meaning in practice.
Local institutions	Either spoilers and causes of crises or in need of capacity building by international community.	Social actors with different values, politics, and institutional interests.
International humanitarians	Driven by their principles, although evaluations observe they deviate in practice.	Multifaceted actors driven by different values, politics, and institutional interests.
Analytical time frame	Period in which international humanitarian action is dominant.	Longer time frame that covers the entire crisis as well as the prelude and aftermath.

Table 2: Adapted from Dorothea Hilhorst and Maliana Serrano's (2010:184) table comparing humanitarian space vs humanitarian arena approaches

It is worth noting that Hilhorst (2018) updated her conceptualisation of the humanitarian arena in a paper where she replaces ‘humanitarian space’ with ‘classical humanitarianism’, and ‘humanitarian arena’ with ‘resilience humanitarianism’. Apart from these labels, the contents of the table remain largely the same a few minor differences in terminology including greater reference to ‘resilience’ and ‘localisation’. Meanwhile, Hilhorst discusses the ‘arena perspective’ but does not reference Norman Long and the actor-oriented approach. While this approach speaks to contemporary debates in humanitarian studies, I prefer to build on the original framework, its contradistinction with humanitarian space and its focus on the

humanitarian arena as a social and spatial location where various actors interface with each other. The next section shows how the framework applies to the context of Lesvos.

3.3.3 The humanitarian arena in Lesvos

The island of Lesvos provides a productive location for analysis when applying a humanitarian arena framework. It is a social and spatial location where a wide range of actors with different stakes in the crisis interface with each other, socially negotiate and the policies and practices of aid, mobilise social relations and deploy discursive and other means to attain their goals. To take a few key examples from the above table, rather than limiting analysis to aid labelled as humanitarian, the **scope** of this thesis includes accommodation, entertainment, and tourism services. Rather than positioning the **humanitarian crisis** as a state of exception that began in 2015 when humanitarian actors arrived *en masse*, the arena perspective identifies and acknowledges continuities that include the constant arrival of refugees and migrants since at least the mid-2000s, northern European political and economic dominance of southern Europe, the pre-existing presence of local and international networks that support refugees and, indeed, the summer holidaying of northern Europeans in Greece. While international humanitarian agencies had traditionally been the main focus of policy and academic analyses of humanitarian **actors and aid deliverers**, events in Lesvos (and Europe more broadly) from 2015 exploded this myth and an avalanche of research on local responses, citizen aid/vernacular humanitarianism and small-scale solidarity initiatives followed (see Chapter 2). Continuing the analysis, **local institutions** in Lesvos could easily be presented as spoilers, causers of crises or in need of capacity building. For example, the municipality of Lesvos had been opposed to the national government (and sometimes UNHCR) on several occasions including its opposition to the creation of an additional EU-funded closed camp and the 2015 opening of Kara Tepe as a municipality-run (rather than central government-run) hospitality site/camp; and local solidarity networks have also been opposed to national government, local authority, UNHCR and INGO projects and perceived objectives and, furthermore, have rejected or resisted training and supervision (see Chapter 5; and Kitching et al. 2016; Rozakou 2017; Guribye and Mydland 2018). Rather than being understood as spoilers or causing crises, these actors are better understood as having differentiated stakes in the crisis and acting accordingly. Furthermore, as Hilhorst and Jansen rightly note (2010:1121), an important feature of the arena approach is its recognition that 'humanitarian

action is based on a range of driving forces besides the humanitarian desire to alleviate "life threatening suffering wherever it may be found"'. As such, rather than presenting **international humanitarians** as being driven primarily by their principles, the analysis in this thesis reveals a wide range of multifaceted actors driven by an even wider range of interests that (without excluding their principles) include, amongst others, alienation from society 'back home', career advancement and tourism (see Chapters 6, 7 & 8). Finally, in terms of **analytical time frame**, while humanitarian action on the island remains ongoing, this thesis situates current events within the historical context of at least a century (Chapter 5).

Even the etymology of 'arena' is suited to Lesvos. The word derives from the Latin *harena* which has four meanings including 'arena, place of contest', 'sand, grains of sand', and 'seashore'.[6] While sand was used to cover the floor of ancient Roman amphitheatres such as the Colosseum to, amongst other reasons, absorb the blood spilt during face-to-face combat, the role of the seashore in Lesvos is inescapably one of the main spatial sites where different actors interface with each other and where, tragically, many have lost their lives. Refugees arrive there, humanitarians welcome them there, the Turkish government allegedly tries to facilitate their departure from the their seashore to Lesvos' shores while search-and-rescue actors try to deliver people safely there, the Greek coastguard and Frontex allegedly try to push them back before arriving there, and locals and tourists (as well as humanitarians and refugees) like to swim and relax there. At the same time, Long notes (2001:59) that even though the idea of an arena conjures up the picture of a face-to-face fight or a struggle in a clearly demarcated local setting, 'external and geographically distant actors, contexts and institutional frames shape the social processes, strategies and actions' that take place in these settlings. Indeed, sand and seashores aside, arenas are rarely self-contained and separated from other arenas and areas of social life and, as this thesis demonstrates, the humanitarian arena of Lesvos is no exception.

3.3.4 Interface Analysis

The actor-oriented approach offers the notion of *social interface* to explore issues of diversity and conflict inherent in processes of external intervention (Long 2001; Long and Liu 2009;

[6] https://latin-dictionary.net/search/latin/harena

Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Gerharz 2018; Roepstorff 2021). Focussing specifically on the study of interactions and negotiated outcomes that emerged between local and external actors in development interventions, Long first introduced (Long 1984:179) the idea of social interface for analysing 'the often large gap between the rhetoric of national planning and policy and what happens "on the ground"'. Recognising that the 'social life of development' (and not just development processes or intervention) is highly diverse and replete with multiple realities, he later described (2001:243) a social interface as 'a critical point of intersection between different lifeworlds, social fields or levels of social organisation, where social discontinuities based upon discrepancies in values, interests, knowledges and power, are most likely to be located'. As such, interfaces occur within arenas where interactions become oriented around problems of bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, evaluative and cognitive standpoints. While Long applied this tool to development practice, it is equally applicable to the 'social life of humanitarianism'.

As discussed in Chapter 2, most research in humanitarian studies and forced migration focuses on the displaced and/or processes and relationships between humanitarian actors and the displaced. I argue that central role of the displaced in humanitarian scholarship and practice, as the object of both analysis and intervention, has rendered the dynamics and relationships between intervening humanitarians and local communities relatively unexplored. Furthermore, where it is explored, it is usually done so at the institutional level and/or is related to humanitarian projects, programmes and policies rather than the individual or micro-level everyday activities that take place outside of the project world and which are the focus of this PhD. While Hilhorst et al. (2012) view the humanitarian encounter as 'an interface where aid providers and aid recipients meet each other', this thesis instead analyses the interface where aid providers and members of local communities meet. Figure 1 below provides a visualisation of the key actors with the blue dots representing their interfaces.

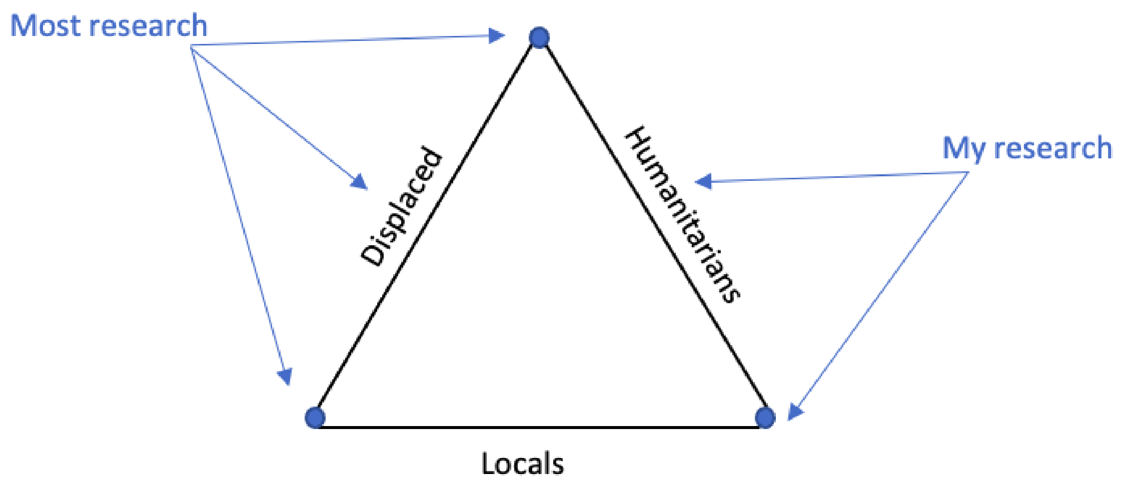

Figure 2: Interface analysis in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos

While the humanitarian arena framework has been applied to the analysis of various humanitarian contexts described above, explicit engagement with 'interface analysis' is less common. A key example includes Hilhorst and Jansen's (2010) case studies on the humanitarian arenas of Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya and the post-2004 tsunami humanitarian response in Sri Lanka. In Kenya, the main focus was on the interfaces between refugees and humanitarian agencies whereby the former engaged in various strategies to access UNHCR and donor resettlement programmes; they also briefly examined the interface between UNHCR and the host state where, they argue, the former institution effectively replaced the latter as the main governing authority in the camp. In Sri Lanka, analysis of the interface between humanitarian agencies and the authorities revealed a deep distrust particularly over finances and control, while interfaces within the humanitarian community revealed intense competition between and amongst formal and non-formal actors, and analysis of the interface between agencies and tsunami-affected people revealed the marginalisation of local organisations and local fatigue with agency assessments and their lack of follow up. Other key works include Jon Harald and Sande Lie's (2020) interface analysis of humanitarian action and development assistance as two distinct discursive and institutional segments of the international system and the challenges in their juxtaposition in light of the 'humanitarian-development nexus'; and also Roepstroff's (2021) above-mentioned work on localisation.

My research adopts an interface analysis to understanding humanitarian action in Lesvos. In particular, it analyses the interfaces between local and humanitarian actors. These include various interfaces between the tourism and humanitarian sectors of the island's economy while exploring the dynamics, relationships and intersecting lifeworlds of their various actors. While deliberately marginalising analysis of and interfaces with displaced actors as a methodological choice or choice of focus, my research also examines various interfaces and interactions within the humanitarian community. These include, for example, their accommodation and socialising practices, interactions and relations with locals, and everyday activities and processes that are not directly related to 'life-saving' activities. The resulting analysis reveals competition, contestation and rarely convergence over the meaning of both 'humanitarianism' and of 'tourism'. In doing so, it fills an important gap identified regarding Lisa Smirl's still relevant observation (Smirl 2008:237) that the 'highly visible bodies and physical environments of aid workers are almost completely overlooked in any analysis of post-crisis reconstruction or emergency response' while, at the same time, making an important contribution to theoretical work on the humanitarian arena.

3.4 My contribution to the humanitarian arena

A key contribution of the humanitarian arena is to shift 'discussions on humanitarian aid [that] usually start from the level of theoretical principles' towards 'detailed analysis of everyday practice as the starting point for understanding humanitarian aid' (Fernando and Hilhorst 2006:292). However, while most analyses that adopt the humanitarian arena as a framework have focused on the projects, programmes and policies of humanitarian actors at the institutional or organisational level, this PhD is more concerned with the everyday activities of humanitarian actors outside of the projects they implement. This marks a departure from previous applications of the humanitarian arena, as well as Long's approach, to 'planned intervention' and, as such, my thesis contributes to the theoretical development of the humanitarian arena framework in three key ways.

First, I apply the humanitarian arena approach to understanding the processes that underlie the *presence* of humanitarian actors rather than the projects they implement. Specifically, I analyse the humanitarian encounter and how the presence of humanitarian actors enters the lifeworlds of the pre-2015 population of Lesvos and comes to form part of the resources and

constraints of the social strategies they engage with. In order to conceptualise this presence, I have drafted a framework that consists of spatial, economic, and psychological dimensions which is elaborated on in the conclusion of this thesis. A second contribution is to shift the focus of the humanitarian arena away from institutions (such as the state, UN agencies, NGOs, the humanitarian community, the local community, etc) and toward a more micro-level analysis of the people who constitute these institutions. This allows for an interrogation of the subjectivities and processes of identity formation that are so important in the humanitarian encounter yet remain somewhat underexplored in the literature (see Chapter 2). Third, building on the last point and engaging with 'interface analysis' as a tool of the actor-oriented approach, a key focus of this thesis is on the humanitarian/local micro-dynamic in Lesvos. This focus not only explores the relatively under researched axis of the refugee/humanitarian/local triangle (see Figure 1) but also interrogates the local/international and north/south binaries that are prevalent in development, humanitarian, postcolonial, geography and anthropology discourses.

3.5 Conclusion

With its roots in the actor-oriented approach (Long 2001), the humanitarian arena framework allows us to take a more holistic look at humanitarian action than the humanitarian principle-oriented dominant paradigm of humanitarian space. Rodrigo Mena (2019:55-56) argues, and I agree, that the notion of the humanitarian arena strengthens the actor-oriented perspective by centring the analysis on the interaction of aid-society actors, their negotiations, and the processes that shape responses rather than on the physical space where the response occurs. Furthermore, my application of the framework shifts focus away from macro-level analysis of institutions and their projects, programmes and policies and towards a micro-level analysis of individuals, their everyday practices and their interactions amongst themselves and with others. As such, my application contributes to a holistic understanding of humanitarian action which is supported by my conceptualisation on the humanitarian presence (see Chapter 9). It could be argued that a limitation of the humanitarian arena, and indeed the actor-oriented approach more generally, is related to its particular focus on conflict, divergences, and discrepancies in value interpretations rather than cooperation, convergence and similarities. At the same time, however, I argue that there is plenty of scope within the approach to focus on cooperation rather than conflict, only that most researchers (including myself) place

particular emphasis on the latter as a way of understanding the boundaries of social life. Having set out the humanitarian arena approach as the overarching theoretical framework, the next chapter demonstrates the links between the framework and the ethnographic methodology chosen for this thesis.

CHAPTER 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter set out the humanitarian arena as the overarching theoretical framework for this research project, this chapter explains the design and methodology of my research. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) argue that the analytical framework provided by the humanitarian arena is grounded in the ethnographic study of humanitarian practices. They argue (2010:1122) that ethnographic inquiry is 'particularly suited' to unravel the dynamics uncovered by the study of everyday practices and the ways that actors shape the reality of aid in a given context. Indeed, Norman Long (2012:8) stresses the 'added value' of detailed ethnography in light of the complexities, nuances and fluidity of the social life of development (or, in our case, humanitarian practice). Following their arguments, as well as my own methodological preferences, the overarching methodology for this research project is ethnography. During my 10 months of fieldwork, I conducted 68 in-depth semi-structured interviews, 245 informal interviews, and recorded several notebooks worth of digital fieldnotes from participant observation in various spaces of the humanitarian presence on the island.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the project's research design, followed by a discussion of the processes that led to my decisions on what to study (research questions), where to study (fieldsite), who to study (research participants), how I accessed the field, data generation methods (participant observation and interviews), data analysis, ethics, and positionality. It contributes to the increased attention to the use of ethnography in the study of aid and humanitarian practice and highlights some of the challenges of negotiating informed consent in the context of multiple positionalities.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 An Abductive strategy….

This research employs an abductive strategy in the design of the research which, according to Norman Blaikie (2000:10), 'generates social scientific accounts from everyday accounts'. It is the social world of social actors under investigation which means that it is their construction

of reality, their ways of conceptualising and giving meaning to their social world, and their actions under analysis, and this can only be discovered from the accounts that social actors provide (*ibid.*:25). As such, this abductive strategy is firmly rooted in the project's ontological and epistemological assumptions (Chapter 3) and the categories and concepts at the heart of the research are derived from social actors' language, meaning, accounts and activities to provide an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Blaikie 2010:89).

4.2.2 …for an Ethnographic Framework

With its roots in anthropology, ethnography as a research method is increasingly used by disciplines that include human geography and development/humanitarian studies. Literally meaning the 'writing of culture', ethnography can be understood as both a research method and a text consisting of two key processes: *doing* ethnography; and *writing* ethnography. Ethnographies of aid have been widely used to study development and humanitarian aid since at least the 1980s (Harrell-Bond 1986; De Waal 1989) with most focussing on refugees and their perspectives. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, an objective of my research is to 'study up' the cultures of the powerful rather than 'down' on the powerless (Nader 1972; Farah 2020) and, in the context of Lesvos, I shift the focus to humanitarian actors who freely cross borders to help or stand in solidarity with the displaced rather than the forcibly displaced who face significant financial, bureaucratic, and often military, hurdles to cross borders. In Chapter 2, I noted that it is only relatively recently that ethnographers of aid have begun shift their focus to the everyday lives, cultural practices, personalities and motivations of aid workers as objects of inquiry in their own right, rather than as vehicles for the creation and implementation of policy. Following in this tradition, I have adopted an ethnographic approach to the study of humanitarian practice in Lesvos with a particular focus on the everyday practices of aid workers (professionals and volunteers) outside of the projects they implement as well as the relatively under researched dynamics and relationships with locals. Elizabeth Harrison (2013) argues that the Aidland body of literature (to which this thesis contributes) is essentially a body of ethnographic writing, and while the humanitarian arena provides an actor-oriented analytical framework for my study of humanitarian practice in Lesvos (Chapter 3), ethnography provides the methodological framework.

According to Palpmo Gay y Blasco and Huon Wardle (2007:3), the basic concerns in all ethnographies are:

> ‘(i) the concern with understanding different cultural or social life worlds by reference to each other, that is to say, through comparison;
> (ii) the need, which follows from the comparative outlook, to contextualise; to show how the differences thrown up through comparison have meaning within a relevant mutual framing of context and detail
> (iii) the objective of showing that the life world in question displays elements of pattern or logic that helps explain why people might act in this way, or speak in that. This is a deepening of the process of contextualisation.’

Throughout this research project, I make comparisons: between humanitarian practice in Lesvos and other contexts; global humanitarian labour markets; humanitarianism and tourism; humanitarian studies and tourism studies; and more. I highlight similarities and differences in practices and meanings as well as the multiple realities that frame these contexts for different actors at different times. I shed light on patterns of logic in and between the lifeworlds of diverse humanitarian and host community actors, particularly with regard to the relationships between humanitarianism and tourism, that help explain everyday practices, acceptance and resistance, and labelling practices within and amongst different actors. In doing so, my study addresses these key concerns.

4.3 Research Questions – what to study?

The primary research question for this thesis is:

> *What everyday practices have emerged from the encounter between international humanitarian and host community actors in Lesvos?*

The below set of sub-questions contribute to answering the above overarching research question:

a) Who are the key actors in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos?

b) How is the humanitarian presence conceptualised by humanitarian and host community actors in the humanitarian arena?
c) How do host community actors respond to the presence of humanitarian actors?

4.4 Choice of fieldsite – where to study?

Just as my personal and professional experiences in the humanitarian sector led me to my chosen topic, they also played a key role in choosing Lesvos as a site for fieldwork. I was already quite familiar with the island having spent most summers and other periods of time there since 2007 due it being the home of my son's mother's family. I was also deployed there as a professional humanitarian worker between 2015-2016 as part of the emergency response to the increasing numbers of people arriving in Lesvos from Turkey on their way to Europe. By the time of my fieldwork, the island's humanitarian infrastructure had expanded massively in just a short period of time and, importantly for me, my then 10-year-old son had relocated there from Athens. My personal and professional histories on the island meant that my choice of Lesvos for fieldwork would also address Heath Cabot's[7] (2019:4) criticisms of 'crisis chasing', an 'aspect of the business of anthropology' involving 'graduate students and postdoctoral scholars seeking to conduct research on refugees in Greece with little to no knowledge of either Greek or the languages of border crossers, and only a little familiarity with the context before 2015'. Although I was not strictly an anthropologist[8] and was conducting research around the refugee situation rather than on refugees, I did have relevant language skills and more than a little familiarity with the island and its peoples before 2015, as well as with humanitarian practice on and off the island. For these reasons, Lesvos presented an ideal social and spatial location for me to study the everyday practices that have emerged from the encounter between the recently arriving humanitarian actors and the island's pre-2015 population.

Not long after beginning fieldwork I realised that focusing on the whole of the island would be challenging so I limited the scope to the south-east corner where much of the

[7] 'Anthropologist of Greece, refugee related issues, displacements, and solidarity work. Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh' from her Twitter profile [accessed 12 January 2022].
[8] Although I had taken various classes in Masters' classes in Anthropology at UCL including the Anthropology of Development and Method in Ethnography.

humanitarian presence is concentrated. This area included the main town of Mytilene and the surrounding villages close to the camps/hospitality sites and which provided a wealth of 'critical point[s] of intersection between different lifeworlds' (Long 2001:243) of my interlocutors. I bought a car at the beginning of fieldwork (and sold it when I had finished) which allowed me to conduct 'field visits' to other parts of the island as well as regular trips to/from the refugee/hospitality sites where I volunteered, school, nursery, shopping, the beach, and other activities.

4.5 Research Participants – who to study?

Despite the passing of half a century since Laura Nader's (1972) call for researchers (specifically anthropologists) to 'study up' power hierarchies rather than 'study down' them, much work remains to do be done. Noel Salazar (2019:15) notes that migration studies' has 'strong bias towards so-called lowly skilled migrants' while Sarah Kunz (2016) argues that research on migrants privileged by citizenship, class or race is largely absent from mainstream migration research and theory. As I argued in the previous two chapters, this is particularly the case in forced migration studies which overwhelmingly focuses on the displaced. As such this thesis inverts forced migration studies' 'gaze from refugees to the transnational power structure of the humanitarian industry that governs them' (Farah 2020:131). At the same time, Ryuko Kubota (2017) would argue that my background in humanitarian practice and the volunteering activities I conducted for this research project would mean that I am 'studying across' rather than 'studying up'. However this is constructed, a key aim of my research has been to shift the focus away from well-researched forcibly displaced populations towards to those who voluntarily cross borders to help or stand in solidarity with them. In particular, I focus on the humanitarians of Lesvos and the everyday practices that emerge from their dynamics and relationships with the island's pre-2015 population.

In order to do so, with the authoritative power invested in me as a researcher and the epistemic violence I may cause notwithstanding, I have categorised the island's population into three groups and broadly defined them as:

i) Humanitarians - people who have travelled to the island by 'regular' means since 2015 to help or stand in solidarity with refugees

ii) Locals – people who were present on the island before 2015

iii) Refugees – people who have travelled to the island by 'irregular' means to seek asylum in Europe

These categories are, of course, over-simplifications of the heterogenous lives people live and there exists significant overlap between and within identities and I describe some of the issues that arose in this categorisation process below in the section on Interviews.

Meanwhile, I was keen to include as many different people and social groups as possible. Long (2012:n.p.) notes the crucial importance of 'exploring not only the effects of planned intervention on "target groups" and other so-called "stakeholders" but also the strategies and actions of what one might call "hinterland" actors [or] "bystanders" […] who remain on the periphery of the formal intervention process'. With a specific focus on the activities of humanitarians outside of the 'planned intervention' and associated project activities, I purposefully engaged with a wide range of actors including farmers, retirees, the unemployed, civil servants, university students, a priest, Greeks born or raised on the island and visit regularly for extended periods, Greeks born or raised off the island but come regularly for extended periods, as well as humanitarians, refugees, and the various non-Greeks who were resident on the island prior to 2015. One group I was keen to include but ultimately did not was 'European neo-Nazis' who are also drawn to the island because of the refugee situation, albeit with very different motivations from helping or standing in solidarity with refugees. While I encountered many people on the island with fairly strong anti-immigrant views, they were almost exclusively from the pre-2015 population rather than people who had come to the island since then. However, I did not actively pursue members of this group following discussions with various people including a global northern volunteer-cum-NGO director (H,F,28,II:20/09/19) who had experienced death threats, stalking and highly abusive trolling on social media and physical attacks from members of the pre-2015 population) warned me in very clear terms 'Forgive me when I say this, but that is hands-down the most stupid idea you have ever had – they will come after you and your family'. So I did not follow this line of inquiry and, as a result, the perceptions and responses examined in this thesis do not cover the full range of political and ideological positions held across the

island. Indeed, this thesis, like ethnographies more generally, is the outcome of a partial representation (Clifford 1986) of actors in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos.

4.6 Accessing the Field

My first trip to Lesvos was in 2007 when I was introduced to my future in-laws and conducted some fieldwork at a refugee site on behalf of the Athens office of an international NGO. From 2007-2015, I spent varying periods in Athens or Lesvos, depending on where my son was located. Between 2015-16, I was deployed to Lesvos as a professional humanitarian in the emergency response where I developed new sets of relations with new sets of actors. After moving to Jordan with my family in late 2016, I continued visiting my son in Lesvos and, in November 2018, I conducted a scoping study and began the process of reconstructing myself in Lesvos as researcher. In January 2019, I began fieldwork initially through engaging with the contacts and networks I had developed through previous experiences on the island. With this level of familiarity with the island, I had 'to make the familiar strange' (Geertz 1973) in order to allow myself to be surprised in the field. Having been more exposed to humanitarian action from the perspective of international humanitarians in the preceding years, I was able to do this in part through actively positioning myself amongst members of the pre-2015 population during fieldwork and focusing on their everyday lives (see Participant Observation below). I began by building on my existing networks and contacts which provided a solid foundation to begin research and a broad base from which to begin snowball sampling, a strategy that I complemented with opportunistic, judgement and stratified sampling methods (Agar 1996). This purposeful positioning combined with my multiple positionalities (see below) helped me gain access to a broad spectrum of actors at the core and periphery of the island's humanitarian arena.

Largely due to these contacts and networks, the bureaucratic aspect of accessing the field proceeded relatively smoothly. My new supervisor at the municipality (and former colleague/old friend from my 2015-16 professional deployment in Lesvos) arranged the necessary signed permissions for conducting research both on the island and in the camp that were requested by UCL's Ethics Committee. Meeting other researchers in Greece made me realise how fortunate I was in the respect. For example, I met several researchers who were unable or thought they were unable to obtain the appropriate letters of consent from the

relevant partners, particularly from camp/hospitality site authorities, and felt the need to hide their researcher role to some degree. Comments like 'The organisation I am volunteering with knows I am doing research here, but I don't think that [the organisation which hosts my organisation] knows that I am – they probably wouldn't approve' were not uncommon. While some of my fellow volunteering researchers/researchers volunteering in Greece came from institutions that demanded such letters of consent, others did not, and many were unwilling to risk asking the authorities in fear that their research would be compromised in some way, or they might be asked to leave the camp/hospitality. Another (perhaps more worrying) example concerning access/consent was revealed by a professional aid worker who informed me (H,M,47,SI:29/9/19), 'I am the gatekeeper for lots of people's research projects. I have a friend who works for [an international donor agency] and he gets lots of requests for access, so he sends them my way. But he only sends the pretty ones [laughs] cos he says I deserve it' with the implication that less pretty (and less female) researchers might find gaining access to certain people and spaces more challenging. While I recognise that my personal and professional connections significantly facilitated my access to the field, the above examples highlight some important questions surrounding the expectations of university institutions' bureaucratic processes as well as the challenges and ethics associated with conducting research in refugee sites.

Even though I was not investigating humanitarian policies and projects and their effects on refugees in Lesvos, I knew before entering the field that I had to be careful in my approach to humanitarian practitioners. Apart from a concern that my critique of the humanitarian response might damage the relationships that I had built with individual practitioners prior to beginning this research, I was also keenly aware of some of the challenges that my researching humanitarian practice might entail. As noted by the late aid worker-cum-academic Lisa Smirl (2015:13-14):

> Any insinuation that the project of humanitarian aid is flawed, not working or corrupt will be met, in the main, with a complete closing down of information provision. Conversations regarding the living conditions, expat lifestyles or the existence of a local-national divide are not topics to be discussed with 'outsiders'. This fact, of which I was aware from my own experience as a 'tribesman' with the United Nations, greatly

> influences my choice of methodology for the case studies: an ethnomethodological approach which combined structured, indepth interviews with participant observation. The insular and paranoid nature of the aid work circles under investigation also meant that if my informants were to speak freely, it was necessary to code my interviews and guarantee anonymity in the case of publication.

I was not interested in asking questions that might lead to such insinuations. Nor in putting people in a position where they might feel uncomfortable discussing such topics. Hence my research did not ask any questions that were directly or indirectly related to policies and project-related practices of the aid workers and the humanitarian community. This approach yielded some interesting results. On the one hand, ironically, participants would often share with me what they thought was sensitive information regarding their policies, programmes, problems and politics, most of which does not explicitly concern my research. On the other hand, I encountered several instances where I sensed that participants did not fully believe that I was not interested in their policies and programmes, and perhaps thought that my research strategy was to deliberately not ask about such matters in order to gain such information. As is clear from the contents of this thesis, this was not my objective nor was it ever my intention. It is important to note here that, as promised to all participants throughout fieldwork, where such information was revealed, none has been included in this thesis. Indeed, many elements of Smirl's approach made sense to me and have informed parts of the methodology, the choice of methods, and the research topic itself.

4.7 Methods

The key methods employed for this research are:

- Participant observation.
- Interviews (informal; and in-depth semi-structured).

4.7.1 Participant observation

Participant observation offers an in-depth view of responses attending to the complexities of local contexts, structural frameworks and multiple realities within which the different actors

operate. Various guides on participant observation are available (James P. Spradley 1980; Danny L. Jorgensen 1989; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011), and H. Russell Bernard describes it as a 'strategic method' which allows the researcher to collect any kind of data, narrative or numbers, and has been used for generations by positivists and interpretivists alike (2011:257). In their guide for fieldworkers on participant observation, wife and husband anthropologist team Kathleen and Billie DeWalt (2011) argue that participant observation as both a data collection method and an analytical tool that provides three key advantages to research. First, it enhances the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork; second, it enhances the quality of the interpretation of data (whether collected through participant observation or other methods); and, third, it encourages the formulation of new research questions and hypotheses grounded in on-the-scene observation. Alpa Shah (2017:45) goes further to argue that participant observation is a 'potentially revolutionary praxis' because it forces us to question our theoretical presuppositions about the world and 'produce knowledge that is new, was confined to the margins, or was silenced'.

My two main participant observation activities involved just 'being there', and volunteering. As a direct result of these activities, I was able to position myself in different situations while forming and building on different types of old and new relationships (social, professional, transactional, etc.) which not only provided the context for informal interviews and observations recorded in my fieldnotes, but also led to in-depth semi-structured interviews. Meanwhile, I discuss some of the ethical issues associated with my volunteering in the Ethics section below.

4.7.1.1 'Being there'

My primary participant observation activity was simply just 'being there' (Geertz 1988; Watson 1999). For Leite et al. (2019:2), participant observation involves 'living, travelling, eating, shopping, working, and generally participating in the day-to-day life of the people we study', and I did exactly this. I rented an apartment on the bottom floor of a house in a village located between two of the main camps/hospitality sites just a few kilometres outside the main town of Mytilene; I chatted daily with my neighbours, our kids played with theirs in the local park and in our and their houses; I drank, ate and hung out in various cafés, restaurants and bars; I shopped in small family-owned businesses as well as in an international

supermarket chain; I swam in the sea, soaked up the heat at the beaches in the summer and suffered the damp and rain during the winter; I queued for hours at various public offices as I tried (and failed) to arrange documentation concerning my residency and car; I spent mornings driving around the main town of Mytilene for extended periods looking for somewhere to park, took my younger son to nursery and my elder son to football practice/matches, school competitions and national celebrations; I attended conferences and a seminar series at the local university; and generally just lived there engaging in the everyday life of the island. Just 'being there' for 10 months, variously with and without my family, allowed me to conduct observations of different peoples' everyday practices, become a familiar fixture in people's lives, allowing them to abandon impression management and allowing me to learn more about the grey area between ideals and practices (Seligmann 2011).

4.7.1.2 Volunteering

In March, I began a seven-month volunteering stint with the municipality-run refugee/hospitality site situated between Mytilene and my house. Based on my professional background, I joined the team as a 'Special Advisor' but, in reality, I did whatever jobs the camp management needed doing. I began by working/volunteering with the camp management's nightshifts for seven weeks while my family were in the UK. I typically worked/volunteered with two or three other colleagues, three or four days/nights per week, mainly from 5pm-1am, but also from 1am-9am. Taking on these late shifts had several benefits for my research. It allowed me to: form and build up relationships with my mainly Lesvian born-and-bred colleagues, some of whom I knew from my pre-PhD experiences on the island, and thus avoid the Euro-American/non-Greek bubble (see Chapters 5 & 7) that often characterises the experiences of visiting Euro-American humanitarians and researchers; improve my Greek language skills (and Lesvian accent); and demonstrate 'solidarity' (Geertz 1972:4) with my colleagues by voluntarily taking on the less popular shifts. It is worth noting that, apart from a group of north American university students who volunteered with the municipality for two weeks in the summer, I was the only non-Greek who was not a refugee to volunteer with the municipality, and was only able to gain this opportunity due to my previous work experience on the island.

My activities mainly involved meeting and greeting people coming and going at reception, monitoring for any camp management or protection issues in on the site, supporting distributions, responding to requests (for information, directions, translation or other kinds), and a lot of late night/early morning chatting and joking with my colleagues after volunteer and refugee activities (food distributions, movies, football, 'ladies' night' discos, etc.) had finished for the evening and most people were sleeping. From May, I joined the day shifts when there were a lot more comings and goings of peoples including local contractors and suppliers as well as refugees, humanitarians, donors, government officials, and others. From August (when my family again travelled to the UK), I engaged in a combination of day and night shifts. While there was less to do in the evening/night shifts, there was not a great deal to do during the day either. This suited my research objectives well as, based at the entrance to the camp and able to walk around freely, I was able to observe and engage with almost everybody who entered and exited the site which provided fruitful ground for data generation.

From September to October, I also volunteered as an English teacher and teacher trainer at a different refugee/hospitality site run by a northern European-registered NGO. Based on my background and experience as a qualified TEFL instructor, I taught a few lessons to refugee classes but soon realised, along with the school's nominally horizontal management team that my involvement would have greater value through training the other teachers for whom, for the most part, Lesvos was their first-time teaching. While not a qualified teacher trainer myself (which forced me to question my own positionality and ethics), I designed and implemented a training plan targeting key areas that needed improvement thereby bringing reciprocal benefits to volunteer teachers and refugee participants (Mackenzie et al. 2007). Regarding access to potential participants of 'locals, humanitarians, and refugees', it is worth noting that of the thousands of people who passed through the centre each day, I encountered only two Greeks who worked/volunteered-on-a-stipend there, neither of whom were from the island's pre-2015 population (see Chapters 5, 6 & 9 for discussions of the limited interactions between many of the pre-2015 population and the post-2015 international humanitarian population beyond the economic; and Chapter 6 for a discussion of the island's humanitarian labour market).

4.7.1.3 Fieldnotes

DeWalt and DeWalt (2011:157) advise the maxim that 'If you didn't write it down in your field notes, then it didn't happen'. I initially recorded my observations by writing them down in an exercise book, and later on my mobile phone, making detailed notes and writing up with 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) at home. However, I soon became aware of and downloaded an app on my mobile phone that transcribes my voice recordings and eventually I used this as my primary medium, particularly for my more verbose and detailed observations. I still continued the practice of typing them up more fully on my laptop as soon as possible after initially recording them. I then uploaded them on to NVivo, a qualitative software programme, and coded them (along with interview transcripts) using grounded theory (see Data Analysis below). By the end of fieldwork, I had abandoned the exercise book altogether and only used my phone, which I carried with me at all times, as the primary tool both for writing notes and voice-recording them. In this thesis, notes and observations from my fieldnotes are written up in the following format: (FN:7/7/19).

4.7.2 Interviews – Informal and semi-structured

Participants were selected through a combination of snowball, opportunistic, judgement and stratified sampling methods (Agar 1996). My volunteering and 'hanging out' were key in recruiting participants for interviews. They provided *fora* for building relationships, conducting informal interviews, and recruitment of participants for semi-structured interviews. Informal interviews took place almost every day in any kind of setting, while semi-structured interviews were conducted in separate, neutral, and quiet spaces where we could speak comfortably. I recorded quotes and notes from informal interviews by manual entry in my fieldnotes usually after the conversation took place and, occasionally during the conversation, while I recorded semi-structured interviews on a voice recorder my mobile phone. Steinar Kvale (1996:xvii) describes interviews as 'conversations where the outcome is a coproduction of the interviewer and the subject', and further describes the research interview as 'an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (*ibid.*:5-6). In this respect, research interviews proved particularly well suited for my research project which explicitly seeks to analyse the 'critical point[s] of intersection between different lifeworlds' (Long 2001:243) of my interlocutors. Indeed, every conversation I had in Lesvos

informed my research to some degree and, although I did not document every conversation and based on DeWalt and DeWalt's above maxim, I conducted: informal interviews with 245 participants (96 humanitarians; 119 locals; 26 refugees; 4 tourists);[9] and semi-structured interviews with 68 participants (25 humanitarians, 32 locals, and 11 refugees). All semi-structured interviews were preceded by informal interviews.

Categorising participants based on 'humanitarian', 'local', and 'refugee' markers raised some methodological and conceptual issues. In addition to highlighting processes surrounding identity formation, labelling and interpellation that ultimately became central to my thesis (see Chapter 7), it also highlighted debates on emic/etic approaches to conducting research (Pike 1967; Headland et al. 1990), and led me to adapt my methodology accordingly. For example, at the beginning of semi-structured interviews, I explained in line with my approved Interview Guidelines that 'You have been chosen because you are a local/humanitarian/refugee'. However, some participants were not content with the category I had assigned because they either did not fit neatly into one of these categories, objected to their assigned category, or did not agree with the terminology or assumptions of the categories themselves. Examples include a Greek of Lesvian origin, born and raised in the southern hemisphere and who identified as a 'local', while another of a similar profile identified neither with 'local' nor the other categories, 'I suppose I will have to be local in that case' was the response in this case and often in other such similar circumstances. How to categorise the Syrian with a Greek passport and an extended family history on the island who came to Lesvos in 2015 to try to help out during the initial response and has since found employment in the humanitarian sector while his family remained in Syria? One particular case that highlighted the difference between the two approaches involved an Athens-based Greek mother in her late 30s who visited her Lesvos-based family most Easter and summer breaks throughout her life, had often considered moving to the island but never been able find a way of managing the move. After 2015 she was able to secure a job in her field that is funded by the humanitarian sector. Adopting an etic approach, she could be categorised as 'local' due to her regular stays and family ties on the island; and she could also be considered

[9] Most of whom were individuals but, on several occasions, I spoke to groups of people but recorded them as a single participant (e.g. Dutch family in X restaurant, etc).

‘humanitarian’ as her relocation and ongoing presence in Lesvos is only possible due to the availability of humanitarian funding. However, she considers herself ‘local’ first and foremost, makes an effort to distance herself from the term ‘humanitarian’ and the sector in general, and prefers to identify more with her occupational technical field than with the humanitarian industry that pays her salary. Around halfway through my fieldwork, I decided to adapt my methodology and take a more emic approach.

I proceeded by presenting the categories and asking participants to decide ‘Which one or more of these groups do you identify with? Or something else?’. While the vast majority of cases were in line with my expectations (with a few differences following the patterns outlined above), I found my latter approach more in line with the constructivist underpinnings of an actor-oriented approach, more ethically sound, and easier than grouping participants myself. With discussions on multiple, overlapping and/or rejection of identity markers taking place mainly in semi-structured interviews, I was not able to gain such insights with all of my interlocutors and, as such, most of my informal interviewees’ groups were assigned by me based on my understanding at the time of who they were and what they were doing in Lesvos. This, of course, raises significant questions surrounding labelling processes which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7.

In terms of in-text referencing, I settled on the following format after experimenting with different options: (social group, gender, age, method: date of data collection).

Social groups:	Local (L); Humanitarian (H); Refugee (R);
Gender:	Male (M); and Female (F);
Methods:	Semi-structured interview (SI); informal interview (II);
Date of data collection:	dd/mm/yy (e.g. 23/7/19)

In practice, this looks like: (L,F,39,SI:5/5/2019) whereby all are joined without spaces to reduce wordage. In the cases where interlocutors identified with more than one social group, I recorded them in accordance with their own prioritisation. For example, members of the pre-2015 population who work for humanitarian organisations and identified primarily as local and secondarily as humanitarian are recorded as (L/H,….). Regarding gender, I did not

ask specifically how people identify themselves and proceeded normatively within a binary framework. In the case of a transgender woman I interviewed, I would have recorded her as female if I had used her data in the final version of the thesis. Regarding age, there were a few contexts where I either felt impolite asking or I forgot to ask. In these cases I guessed/estimated a decade and recorded it as, for example, (…, 30s,…), hopefully without causing any harm.

4.7.3 Language

While informal interviews were conducted variously in English, Greek, and Arabic, all semi-structured interviews were conducted in English apart from three in Greek and two in Arabic. My Greek and Arabic, while not fluent, are passable but I struggled to keep up during interviews, and translation and transcription also provided significant challenges. During fieldwork, I met a Greek anthropologist who advised me against conducting interviews in Greek arguing that I would most likely miss the nuances and subtleties of what is being said and how it is being said; indeed there is much research that supports this view (Welch and Piekkari 2006). Upon further consideration and reluctant to use interpreters or research assistants[10] due to the potential for ambiguities, assumptions of community familiarity and other issues (Berman and Tyyskä 2011), I heeded the advice and continued the rest of the semi-structured interviews in English. At the same time, however, my Greek and Arabic skills combined with my identity as the father of a Greek son and the husband of an Arab woman to facilitate access to different people and spaces that I would otherwise not been able to access.

4.7.4 Transcription

I transcribed all of the interviews myself. Initially I was both surprised and frustrated at how long transcription takes. While the process became easier and shorter the more transcriptions I completed, I still found that, as Nicky Britten (1995) notes, one hour of interview data corresponded to around 6-7 hours of transcription work. I began to look into external services but the costs of manual transcription services were significantly beyond my budget and a

[10] Upon return from fieldwork, I engaged two undergraduates through UCL's Mentor programme to assist in locating data on Lesvos' GDP (rather than GVA) for Chapter 5.

disappointing experiment with automated services resulted in spending just as much time correcting mistakes. By the time I realised this, however, I had also come to realise and appreciate the value of transcribing one's own interviews. Most importantly, the process made me more familiar with the data and I heard information, intonations, nuances of narratives and other points that I had not picked up on before. I would think and indeed analyse as I was listening and typing. I also found that the amount of time spent on listening, rewinding, listening again, correcting and editing helped me not only to familiarise with the data but also with the interlocutors themselves by virtue of 'spending more time' with them via the recordings. Like Handoyo Widodo (2014), I found transcribing to be a 'useful tool for representing, analysing, and interpreting'. I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim and, while early chapter drafts included 'err's, 'umm's, etc., I opted to eliminate these from the final version of the thesis amid concerns that interlocutors might appear incoherent (Kvale 1996:27) to the reader.

4.8 Data analysis

LeCompte and Schensul (1999:3) argue that data analysis essentially does three things: it brings order to the piles of data; it turns big piles of data into smaller piles of crunched or summarized data; and permits the researcher to discover patterns and themes in the data to link with other patterns and themes. I did this with the support of NVivo and grounded theory.

Grounded theory was used to analyse data as it focuses on generating theory from the data rather than having a theory specified beforehand as per the abductive research design of this project. While grounded theory founder Barney Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998) suggests avoiding conducting an early literature review so that the researcher does not approach the study with preconceived ideas, "pet" codes and biases based on other researchers' results, Robert Thornberg (2012) has a different view. He agrees with Dunne (2011) that this is an extreme position that underestimates the researchers' ability to reflect on links between extant theories and their gathering and analysis of new data. He supports Urquhart's (2007) claim that researchers are able to appreciate extant theories and concepts without imposing them on the data. Thornberg (2012:254) argues that 'instead of denying prior knowledge, perspectives and privileges, and pretending to be without preconceptions and theoretical

influences', a researcher should acknowledge and engage in constant reflexivity. Indeed, in my case where I entered the field with significant experience of humanitarian practice in Lesvos, I found Thornberg's 'informed grounded theory' (*ibid.*:243) approach to fieldwork preparation a more suitable and realistic approach to my research project.

In terms of analysing collected data, I engaged with Kathy Charmaz's (2014) constructivist approach to grounded theory. Having experimented with different approaches and finding, for example, Anslem Strauss and Juliet Corbin's (1998) 'open, axial, and selective' approach a little rigid, I began to work with Charmaz's constructivist approach which I found more manageable and better suited to my project's ontological and epistemological assumptions. Indeed, I found her description of grounded theory as 'a decidedly emergent process of learning about and interpreting research participants' views of their experience' (Charmaz 2014:92) particularly suited to my ethnographic framework. As such, I followed her guidelines (*ibid.:*109-191) which involved (after data collection), initial coding, focused coding, relationship and concept mapping, theory building, while constantly running and rerunning the process through a comparison process.

With all fieldnotes and many interview transcripts written up in the field, data analysis began early on as an iterative process. I uploaded fieldnotes and transcriptions to NVivo, and, following (Charmaz 1995:36) advice that the 'most important rule for a grounded theorist is: study your emerging data', began to identify themes and code accordingly. Some concepts were pre-identified both from the literature and from my previous experiences with people on the island. These included citizen humanitarianism, humanitarianism more generally, NGOisation, relationships, economic change, and others. Meanwhile, a huge number of other themes and patterns began to emerge with varying frequencies which I coded accordingly. These ranged from perceptions of humanitarians' preferred treatment of refugees over locals, jealously, political polarisation, racism, religion, a sense of loss of control, and many others. Constantly interviewing, observing, transcribing, analysing and coding, I moved on to more focused coding which, in turn, allowed me to map concepts and relationships to the repeated patterns that emerged from the data. Constantly organising, reorganising and comparing the data, certain concepts emerged more prominently than others from my analysis of participants' language and behaviours. Noting their potential for

making a significant contribution to knowledge, it is these that provided the foundations for theory building and ultimately provided the findings that became the core chapters of this thesis.

4.9 Ethics

My research received approval from UCL's Ethics Committee prior to fieldwork and I submitted a final report of my findings to the Committee on 25/1/2022. While 'studying up' cultures of the powerful rather than 'down' on the powerless (Nader 1972; Reem Farah 2020) can be considered an ethical approach to overall research design, I have also taken various steps to ensure my responsibilities to participants have been adhered to. Various scholars have proposed sets of ethical principles regarding participant involvement including, for example, Earl Babbie (2016:62-69) on research in social science generally, and Lynne Brydon (2006:25-33) regarding development practice in particular. Four of the most significant principles include preparation, obtaining informed consent, the right to confidentiality and anonymity, and avoiding harm to participants. This section discusses each with a particular focus on informed consent.

4.9.1 Preparation

Regarding preparation, Brydon (2006:29) argues that researchers should develop a solid understanding of their fieldsite before entering, including the history, religion, economy and gender relations. As such, I purposefully engaged in extensive reading about the history and culture of Lesvos prior to fieldwork in order to complement my previous experience on Lesvos and in Greece.

4.9.2 Informed consent

I took multiple steps to obtain the informed consent of research participants. These steps included constantly (re)introducing myself as a researcher, obtaining consent letters/documentation from relevant partners and authorities and making them available, providing participants with information sheets and informed consent sheets in the appropriate language, providing information verbally, reminding people in public and private places during activities and meetings.

During fieldwork, I constantly reminded people of my identity as a researcher. At least for some participants, this identity was one that succeeded and co-existed with my various other identities on the island including my roles as a father, and as a professional aid worker. These different roles allowed me access to different spaces and groups of actors during fieldwork both on and off the island (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997). It was not long, however, before I encountered resistance to this presentation of myself as a researcher, not unlike Anita Hausermann Fábos' (2015) challenges in negotiating her multiple roles as a European anthropologist and wife of a Sudanese man in Cairo. One interlocutor just laughed at me – she had seen me on the island each year for the past twelve years and, as far as she was concerned, I was there mainly because of my son (L,F,40s,II:9/2/19). I reported to my supervisory team that 'I feel a little disingenuous saying that I am here primarily for research when [my son] is indeed a key motivation and, in fact, I wouldn't be here if he wasn't here' (FN:19/2/19). In response, I formulated an alternative, slightly long-winded, introduction: 'Firstly I am here as a father to my son. Secondly, I am here as a researcher for my PhD' and, during the periods that I was volunteering with the municipality or with the school, 'Thirdly, I am volunteering', while following up with where I was volunteering. People usually asked me what I was researching and, on the occasions when they did not, I would explain my research goals. I found this to be a more accurate and ethical way of introducing myself. Furthermore, by repeatedly highlighting my role as a researcher, it also lay the groundwork for further conversations on informed consent.

I received different reactions as I informed people of my role as a researcher. Some wanted to know more and I would tell them about the research goals, listen to whatever thoughts they may want to share on the subject while appropriately stating my methods and sponsorship. Some humanitarians appeared worried that I might be prying into their programmes in order to expose the humanitarian response or an issue related to their programme or people – I was not, and I often explained or reminded them of my research goals. I sometimes felt the moral judgement of volunteers who implied directly or indirectly that research was not a good enough reason to justify my presence in Lesvos. On one occasion, a recently arrived volunteer in her mid-twenties listed all the activities she does each day to improve the situation of refugees and asked me what I do in Lesvos. She seemed

visibly unimpressed that I was not prioritising my time by volunteering with refugees. She left the island six weeks later but often asked me 'Are you still here?' when we passed each other and would call me 'The professor' in reference to my university background. On another occasion when I re-introduced myself as a researcher to the head of an international NGO, she asked me, 'Is that all you do here?' (H,F,20s,II:5/5/19). On other occasions, people who knew exactly what I was doing as a researcher would seem to try to cover up my role as a researcher. For example, I asked the chair of a set of coordination meetings if I could join the meetings as part of my research to which they kindly agreed. The chair was well aware of who I was, what I was researching, and why I wanted to attend the meeting, but instead introduced me in terms of my work as a former Lesvos-based aid worker, my then current volunteering role, and my family connections. He did not, however, mention my role as a researcher. Later in the meeting, when responding to a question, I was able to clarify my role to the meeting participants (FN:18/4/19). On another occasion, the day after a recorded interview with a refugee participant, we went fishing with some of their friends and they introduced me as a volunteer. I asked privately why they hadn't introduced me as a researcher and the reply was 'Its better like this' (R,M,36,II:15/9/19). This presented a dilemma as I was not sure whether to inform the rest of the group of my more relevant identity or to stay quiet and avoid any potential breach of confidentiality and anonymity pertaining to my interlocutor. In order not to cause a problem for my interlocutor, I chose to stay quiet on this occasion. While these examples demonstrate some of the challenges in obtaining the fully informed consent of research participants, particularly peripheral participants, they also bring home Fábos' (2015:295) point that the 'full disclosure of the position of the researcher vis-à-vis the research community continues to be a vital tool of analysis for the anthropologist interested in how her own subjectivity influences the production of knowledge'.

4.9.3 Anonymisation and Pseudonymisation

In addition to the measures discussed above in the informed consent section, all data was anonymised in the first instance and pseudonymised where a more detailed character portrait was required. Even in cases where participants insisted that I use their real name, I anonymised and pseudonymised. In cases where somebody has spoken on record and is found, for example, through a simple google search, I have referenced them accordingly.

4.9.4 'Do no harm'

The principle of doing no harm is one of the most important ethical principles. While anonymity protects the identity of participants after research, I took care during interviews to be sensitive to participants' responses and never pursue lines of conversation or pressurise people to discuss issues that caused distress (Valentine 2013). Adhering to the principle while volunteering at the municipality was a little more complex. I tried as much as possible to be more participant observer than observant participator (cf. Sufrin 2015). I kept away from authority roles and did not engage in disputes between and amongst the camp/hospitality site's residents, staff and/or volunteers. On a few occasions I was requested by to interpret into/from Arabic/Greek/English which I did as neutrally as possible. I avoided giving advice despite my nominal role as a special advisor. Meanwhile, as much as I wanted to avoid it, I could not feeling that I was contributing to the 'border spectacle' (De Genova 2013) in terms of my role as a volunteer and through my research itself. At the same time, I also couldn't help but be aware that many of the site's residents, and indeed some of the volunteers, might have considered my role as part of the border management 'industry' (Andersson 2014:15), either through my volunteering or as a researcher.

4.10 Positionality

Scholars have long called 'greater attention to issues of reflexivity, positionality and power relations in the field' (Sultana 2007:374). In Lesvos, I had (and have) multiple identities and positionalities which I have discussed directly and indirectly throughout this chapter, particularly in the section on informed consent, and in a publication (Manoussaki-Adamopoulou et al. 2022). I was known by different people in different ways: in addition to being a visibly white global northerner/European, I was known as a father to my son, as the father of a daughter and other son, as a husband of an Arab, an ex-husband of a Greek, as a former professional aid worker, as a current volunteer, and – through continuous clarification during fieldwork – in my "official" capacity as a researcher. I was able to use these different identities to my advantage as researcher: locals I had known for years were quick to tell me why they were unhappy with the refugee and humanitarian presence while an international journalist/volunteer explained that she could only find local Greeks who were positive about

the refugee situation (H,F,27,II:31/3/19);[11] Arabs appreciated my Arabic language skills and my Arab spouse; Greeks appreciated my Greek language skills and Greek son; I had easy access to the few remaining professional international humanitarians on the island; and more. Several people (locals and international humanitarians) were surprised to learn that I was not a born and raised abroad Greek. On the other hand, there were also some challenges: one local café owner (L,M,57,SI:1/6/2019) I had known for ten years walked off angrily when he understood that I was doing work with refugees even though I made it explicitly clear that refugees were not the focus of my research, and our relationship has not been the same since; in the process of overcharging me for a bill, a hotel owner became very aggressive with me upon seeing my (non-European) wife, stating 'I don't know what kind of fucking Pakistanis you are used to dealing with' (L,M,60s,II:12/7/19); a formerly friendly ex-in-law allegedly began referring to me as a 'foreigner' rather than by my name as he had done for the previous 12 years; and more. Meanwhile, I believe that my position at the municipality (perhaps combined with my previous experience as a professional aid worker) may have inhibited my access to some of the self-identifying anarchist solidarity groups. While I was somewhat aware of the roles that my multiple identities and positionalities might play (cf. Fábos 2015) before I began fieldwork, these encounters forced me to adopt an 'interpretive reflexivity' approach to continuously assess 'the social positions within ongoing circuits of communication between researcher and researched' (Lichterman 2017:35).

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented research design and ethnographic framework that underpins this study. It has discussed the rationale for my methods and demonstrated some of the challenges that I faced while implementing the methodology, particularly with regard to obtaining informed consent and navigating my multiple positionalities. The next chapter sets the scene for the following core chapters by providing some background on Lesvos' geography, economy, and politics in light of the 2015 "refugee crisis", while examining the local/humanitarian encounter with regard to processes of continuity, resistance and acceptance and its history of migrations.

[11] In this particular case, the journalist was volunteering with a "multinational" solidarity network whose Greek members were mainly born-and-bred off of the island and, while the journalist may have considered them as "local", most born-and-bred Lesvians I interviewed certainly did not (see next chapter).

MAPS OF LESVOS

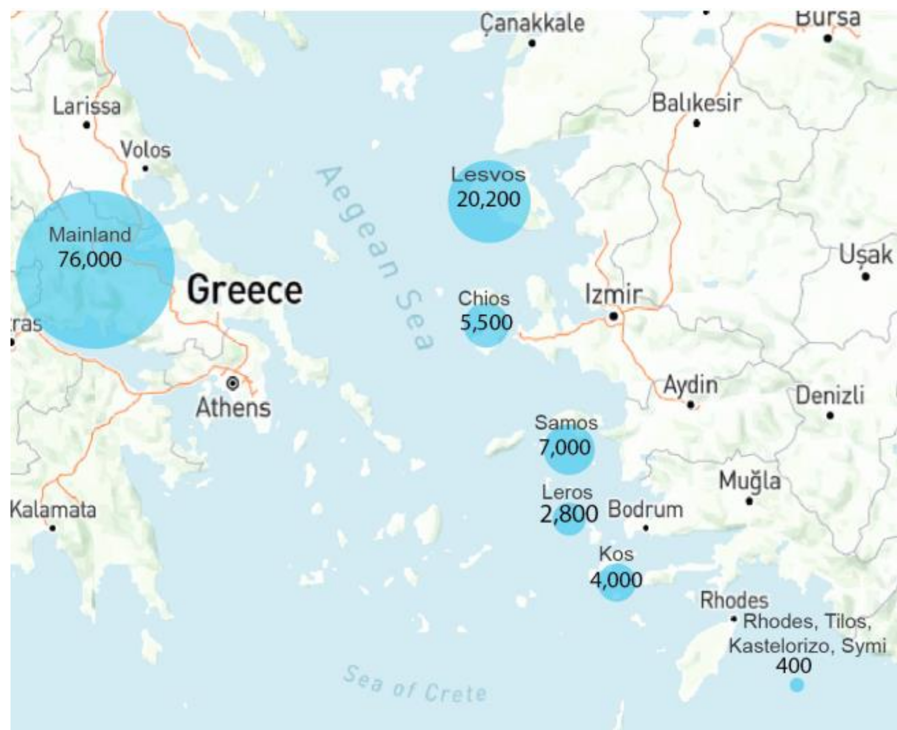

Figure 2: Refugee/asylum-seeker populations in the Aegean islands and mainland as of 22 March 2020 (UNHCR 2020)

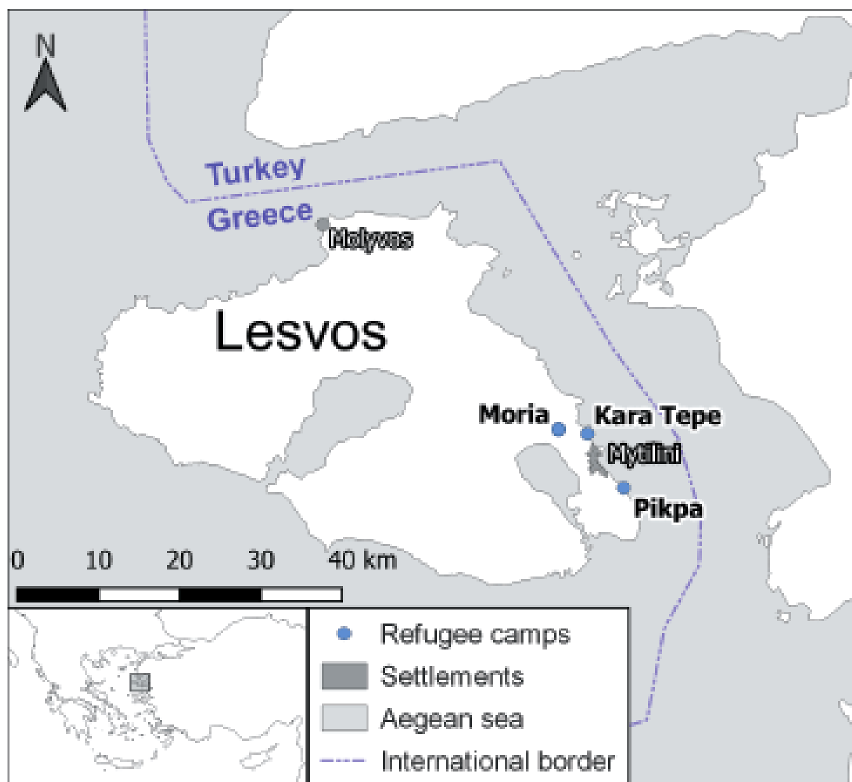

Figure 3: Lesvos and its main reception centres for asylum-related migrants (Jauhiainen and Vorobeva 2020)

Figure 4: Map of Lesvos (in2greece n.d.)

CHAPTER 5 – Setting the scene: A humanitarian occupation?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter combines a literature-based background of the island with ethnographic material that sets the scene for the following core chapters. It begins by presenting some of the names Lesvos has been known by over the years before providing a brief background on the island's key geographical and demographic features and a more detailed discussion of its economy. The following section provides a brief history of migration to/from the island followed by a more detailed analysis of the 1922 refugee situation at the end of the Greco-Turkish war which, in turn, provides a basis for comparison with the current refugee context. I then provide an overview of the humanitarian infrastructure during the time of my fieldwork before moving into an analysis of the three phases of the refugee and humanitarian context since 2015. The third of these phases ('Violent Resistance') contains a discussion of the less violent forms of micro-resistance that locals engage in towards humanitarians, and a small case study that demonstrates how even a long-term sympathiser of refugee and humanitarian objectives on the island had changed. The penultimate section suggests some possible causes of the local/humanitarian disconnect with a particular focus on the role of conspiracy theories and the lack of social interactions between the locals and international humanitarians beyond the transactional. With the humanitarian arena approach acknowledging historical continuities and discontinuities (Chapter 3), the chapter concludes by highlighting such patterns in Lesvos' history of migration while suggesting scope for both acceptance and resistance to the island's newcomers in the future.

5.2 Labelling Lesvos

Lesvos has gathered various reputations over the years. It is often referred to as the 'Olive Island' due the landscape's monoculture of olive trees and having the largest number of olive trees per capita in the world (Loumou et al. 2000; Hellenic Agricultural Enterprises N.D). The Ottomans used to call it the 'golden isle' due to the vast amounts of olive oil and soap it produced as well as the tax income it contributed (Mandamadiotou 2013:17). They also used to call it the 'garden of the Aegean' due to its wealth of orchards, aromatic herbs and rich floral composition that contrasts with the relative dryness of neighbouring islands (Hellenic

Agricultural Enterprises N.D). Indeed, it was in Lesvos where Aristotle, together with his Lesvos-born close friend and life-long collaborator, Theophrastus, developed his zoological and botanical studies that became central to biological thought for the next 2,300 years (Thanos 1994). The island also hosts a UNESCO Global Geopark that includes the Petrified Forest formed by intense volcanic activity around 15-20 million years ago (UNESCO N.D.). Home to the largest producers of the anise-flavoured aperitif popular throughout Greece and beyond Lesvos, it is also known as the 'ouzo island' (named after the popular alcoholic drink that is produced in Lesvos). Politically, it is often referred to as the 'red island' due to its strong history of leftist sympathies and voting traditions over the decades since the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). Mantamados, a village in the north-east of the island, is known as 'small Moscow' due to the Communist Party's high electoral percentages there (Kovras and Stefatos 2015); and, in 2021, the 30th Anti-Imperial Camp was held on the island by the Greek and Turkish communist parties (IDC 2021). It is also known as the 'Island of Poets' as it is the birthplace of Sappho, Alkaios, and many others including the family of Nobel laureate Odysseas Elytis.

The island is also known as a place of pilgrimage. Seemingly contradictory to the typically non-religious tendencies of the political left, it has a rich religious tradition with no fewer than 14 sites of religious pilgrimage (Polyzos 2010) whereby 'the Greek Orthodox faith and religious beliefs seem to peacefully coexist with the leftist and Communist political beliefs' (Kovras and Stefatos 2015;11). It has also become a site of pilgrimage for gay women. With Skala Eressos in the north-west of the island considered the birthplace of the poet(ess) Sappho who wrote an erotic poem about women around 2,600 years ago, the island is also known nationally and internationally as the 'lesbian island'. Despite bringing in an estimated (pre-pandemic) 3000-4,000 'pink' tourists annually (The Economist 2018), some islanders have been unhappy with this name and, in 2008, unsuccessfully demanded that Greek courts ban the use of the word 'lesbian' to describe gay women (Reuters 2008). Internationally (or at least in the global north), Lesvos was mainly known as a holiday destination (Cederquist 2019). This began to change during the 'long summer of migration' in 2015 when large numbers of people from the global south passed through Lesvos on their way to northern Europe. Featuring prominently on worldwide media, the island increasingly became known as the epicentre of "Europe's refugee crisis". Local people responded by providing food, accommodation,

rescuing people from the sea, and much more, leading to the "Greek islanders" – symbolically represented by a Lesvian grandmother and a Lesvian fisherman – being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for their 'empathy and self-sacrifice'. Combined with its recent status as a destination for international humanitarian volunteering, it has also gained a reputation as an island of solidarity (Serntedakis 2017:83). At the same time, it has also developed a reputation for racism (InfoMigrants 2018; Fallon 2020).

5.3 Background on Lesvos

5.3.1 Place and People

Lesvos is the third largest (1630km^2) of Greece's 227 inhabited islands and estimated 6,000 total islands, after Crete and Evia. Along with Samos and Chios, two other islands at the frontline of the refugee situation since 2015, Lesvos is located in the North Aegean Region, an administrative unit which has the smallest population of Greece's thirteen regions, while the town of Mytilene serves as capital to both the island and the region. Sitting at the borders of both Greece and the European Union, it is surrounded by Turkey to the north and the east, just 10km at the shortest crossing point in the north-east. Lesvos was also a municipality until 2019 when it was split into two units: Mytilene and West Lesvos, each with its own Mayor.

According to the 2011 national census, Lesvos had a recorded population of 86,436 people (ELSTAT 2011). Around a third of the island's population (29,656) reside in Mytilene, around a third of whom are aged over 65 years old (*ibid.*). The Hellenic Statistical Authority estimated the island's population in 2019 at 83,669[12] reflecting a trend of overall population decline since the 1920s characterised by (national and local) emigration and a declining birth rate. The 2019 estimate does not, however, account for the island's fluctuating population of between 5,000-20,000 refugees in 2019 according to UNHCR estimates,[13] nor the fluctuating population of between 800-1,500 international humanitarians according to my estimates,[14] and it is unclear how many of the professional Greek staff of NGOs are registered as island residents.

[12] On file.
[13] UNHCR, Inter-Agency Consultation Forum – Lesvos Meeting Minutes, (January 2019 – Jan 2020; on file)
[14] Based on discussions with NGO coordinators who provided me with their estimates of the numbers of volunteers who volunteer with their respective organisations and with others throughout the year; numbers tend to be much lower in the winter than the summer.

5.3.2 Economy

Greece has famously been at the frontline of the global economic crisis that began in 2007. The economic downturn and subsequent austerity measures of the 'troika' (a coalition of the IMF, European Commission and the European Central Bank) led to falling wages, rising taxes and a painful slashing of public services including pensions and health services. By 2013, debate over whether to leave the Euro currency mechanism was rife and Greece's unemployment rate had peaked at over 27% with unemployment amongst youth at 59.1%. In the same year, the IMF admitted that it had made mistakes in handling the Greek debt crisis and had not realised the extent of the damage that austerity measure would cause to Greece (Guardian 2013a, 2013b). The crisis led to the rapid impoverishment and violent decline of the middle classes and the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises estimates that between 2008-2017, a total of 467,765 Greek citizens (4.6% of the population) left Greece in search of a better life elsewhere.[15]

Like the rest of the country, Lesvos and the North Aegean Region were heavily impacted by the crisis. The Observatory of Economic and Social Developments (in Tsampra 2018) identifies top five employment sectors in the North Aegean before the crisis as Public Administration, Agriculture, Retail trade, Education and Construction. With public sector and pensions constituting around 50% of household incomes (Monastiriotis 2011), the cuts and wage freezes were widely felt. With the lowest share of employment in the private sector and the weakest industrial base in the country (Caraveli and Tsionas 2012), the North Aegean's structural economic problems have secured its place it at the very bottom of the EU's Regional Competitiveness Index (2019) of Europe's 268 regions. On the other hand, less dependent on the private sector than other regions, Gialis and Tsampra (2015:185) note that the North Aegean had the lowest employment reduction in the country in the early years of the crisis compared to, for example, the more 'resilient' South Aegean which depends on agriculture, construction and tourism. Even so, the effects of the economic crisis were widely felt throughout the region and on the island itself.

[15] Original source in Greek; quoted from Panagiotakopoulos (2020:210-211).

5.3.2.1 Public sector first

The economy of Lesvos is primarily dependant on public services. It is sometimes presented in various literatures as a tourist island (IRC 2016; Cederquist 2019) or an agricultural island (UNESCO N.D.) although it is primarily dependent on public services with the remainder of economic activity fairly equally divided between agriculture and tourism (ELSTAT 2021; see Table 2 below).[16]

Gross Value Added (GVA) - 2017	*Lesvos*		North Aegean		Greece	
	%	*million €*	*%*	*million €*	*%*	*million €*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6.9	79	5.7	123	4.2	6,673
Mining and quarrying-Manufacturing-Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	6.1	71	6.4	139	13.3	21,027
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1.5	17	1.3	28	1.5	2,375
Construction	3.0	35	3.1	68	2.3	3,699
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	8.5	97	8.4	181	10.5	16,542
Transportation and storage	5.6	65	6.3	137	7.0	10,994
Accommodation and food service activities	8.1	94	9.0	196	6.8	10,710
Information and communication	2.4	27	1.9	41	3.5	5,447
Financial and insurance services	2.5	29	2.9	63	4.1	6,466
Real estate activities	15.2	176	16.2	350	17.1	26,987
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2.9	34	2.5	54	3.4	5,393
Administrative and support service activities	0.6	7	0.8	17	1.8	2,810
Public administration and defence - Compulsory social securtiy	21.7	250	21.0	454	10.2	16,069
Education	6.2	72	6.1	132	5.7	8,974
Human health and social work activities	4.6	53	4.9	105	4.4	6,898
Arts, entertainment and recreation-Other service activities-Activities of households as employers, undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of households for own use	4.2	48	3.6	79	4.1	6,462
Totals	**100**	**1,154**	**100**	**2,167**	**100**	**157,526**

Table 2. Gross Value Added – 2017 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021)

While much of this is spent on the civil service, it is also worth commenting on military expenditure which, in Greece, represents the second highest in Europe after Estonia and around twice EU average. With its neighbour and traditional enemy Turkey situated within

[16] The data is also supported by statements from interviews with two Professors at the University of the Aegean: Thanasis Kizos, Geography (specialises in rural development), 23/2/2021; and Ioannis Spilanis, Social and Humanistic Environmental Sciences (specialises in tourism), 26/2/2021.

sight from the north and east of the island, there is a significant military presence in the North Aegean and Lesvos hosts the 98th National Guard Higher Command 'Archipelago' (98 ADTE) which is responsible for the defence of the island. In Lesvos, it is common to hear the sound of shooting and explosions coming from areas where its bases are located and to witness military aircraft flying over the island, particularly during times of political tension with Turkey. Meanwhile, public sector spending on education and health is on similar level to regional and national averages.

5.3.2.2 Agriculture

UNESCO states that the 'local economy of the island is based on agriculture with an emphasis on olive oil, cattle-raising and fishing (UNESCO N.D.). The Encyclopaedia Britannica comments on Lesvos's fertile plains and valleys that produce grapes, cereals, and its principal product and export of olives while noting that hides, soap, and tobacco are also produced and sardine fishery is important. Analysis from Thanasis Kizos and Maria Koulouri's (2006) suggests that Lesvos has an economic and landscape history typical of many Mediterranean cases whereby economic development has been based on agriculture and food processing. Agriculture accounts for 18% of the island's population's primary source of income (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021) with the olive industry playing a particularly critical role. Kizos and Koulouri (2010:452) note that 14,375 registered olive groves account for 95% of total farms on the island, covering 45% of utilised agricultural land and around 30% of the whole island. In an interview with Thanasis Kizos, a Geography professor at the University of Aegean who focuses on rural development, he explained that around 45,000 people or 60% of the island's population are involved in agriculture in one way or another although it is not the main source of income for most and usually supplements another occupation or source of income.[17] In addition, Kizos and Vakoufaris (2011:705) note that olive oil can also be a part of the local identity for those outside the supply chain as indeed it is in the case of Lesvos, both historically and presently.

[17] Interview with Professor Thanasis Kizos on 23/4/2021.

5.3.2.3 Tourism

Tourism, while small compared to some of the other islands in Greece, also represents an important part of the economy. Kostas Rontos et al. (2012) note that tourism on Greek islands has helped halt population decline and economic problems through offsetting job losses in agriculture and manufacturing. Compared with the rest of Greece, however, the North Aegean is described as ‘lagging touristic region’ (Christofakis, Gaki, and Lagos 2019:9). While the Observatory of Economic and Social Developments (see Tsampra 2018:17) identified tourism as the main employment sector in the South Aegean, it is not mentioned at all in the top five sectors of the North Aegean. According to Bank of Greece data cited in the Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory's (2021) report on the situation on tourism in the Aegean, total tourism expenditure in the North Aegean between 2016-2019 was just €165 million compared with €5.17 billion in the South Aegean Region which represents around thirty times as much the South Aegean’s population being only around 1.5 times larger (309,015 Vs 199,231 people; ELSTAT 2011). There are a few limitations to the Bank of Greece’s data: while it provides data at the regional level, it unfortunately does not provide at the island level; also, the data apply only to international tourists, not domestic tourists.

The data in Table 3 below, extracted from the Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory's (2021) report, provide some indication of the Lesvos’ tourism situation in relation to other islands. It is, however, only an indication as there are a number of limitations including, importantly, the lack of data on non-commercial beds (private houses, bed and breakfasts and Airbnbs). The most recent data come from the housing census of 2011 and, moreover, are deemed insufficient and unreliable for decision making (*ibid.*). Regarding the present thesis, this is an important gap as non-commercial beds are the main form of accommodation for incoming members of the humanitarian community in Lesvos. They also represent 80% of the accommodation used by Greek tourists (nationally).[18] Furthermore, Table 3 below includes only hotels which are typically more expensive than other forms of commercial accommodation and, as noted in the case of Lesvos, are not necessarily representative of domestic and international tourist practices. Nevertheless, the table is a good indication of

[18] Interview with Professor Spilanis 9/7/2021.

the situation of tourism in Lesvos in relation to other islands in the Aegean and provides a starting point for some general observations.

I have selected 12 of the 48 islands included in the report: six islands that have been key arrival points in the refugee crisis (Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Kos, Leros, and Rhodes) and the remaining six are selected from islands known locally and internationally as tourist destinations.

Islands	Surface Area	Population 2011	Population 2019 (est.)	All Commercial Beds 2019	Greek Arrivals (hotels only)	Foreign Arrivals (hotels only)
Lesvos	1630	86,436	83,669	12,697	50,514	68,706
Samos	476	32,977	32,031	14,517	32,223	143,498
Chios	842	51,390	50,353	5,538	29,840	29,692
Kos	290	33,388	34,834	61,327	66,445	1,228,718
Leros	53	7,917	7,732	2,042	6,066	15,262
Rhodes	1398	115,490	118,726	115,152	176,730	2,221,386
Andros	380	9,221	8,885	5,668	19,924	9,556
Santorini	76	15,231	16,793	40,704	63,679	571,059
Mykonos	85	10,134	10,821	29,858	43,141	573,126
Naxos	428	17,930	18,087	18,245	3,535	119,414
Paros	195	13,715	13,882	23,971	35,514	119,414
Tinos	194	8,636	8,323	7,356	55,715	8,077

*Table 3. Comparative tourism indicators in the Aegean (*Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory 2021)

The table shows that, when compared to other islands, Lesvos' tourist infrastructure is relatively underdeveloped. It shows that despite its relative size, Lesvos has just 12,697 commercial beds which is a rather small figure generally, and particularly so when compared with the smaller island of Rhodes which has nearly ten times as many commercial beds, more than three times as many Greek tourist arrivals, and more than thirty times as many foreign tourists. The scale is similar to Kos which, although a sixth of Lesvos' size with a third of its population, has around five times as many beds, 30% more Greek arrivals, and nearly twenty times as many foreign arrivals. As per the figures in Table 3, Lesvos does not appear to be a key destination for international tourism. However, as this thesis demonstrates, these figures do not tell whole story.

The table also shows that Lesvos is relatively popular with domestic tourists compared with figures for international tourists. This popularity is explained largely by the island's status as a site of religious pilgrimage. Home to monasteries famous for their miracles as well as key churches and chapels including one in Agiasos where, every August, thousands of people travel from all over Greece to walk 26km up the hill from Mytilene to light a candle in the small town's church. Lesvos is also a particularly popular religious tourism destination at Christmas and Easter and, of the 210 participants surveyed by Irene Kamenidou and Rafaela Vourou (2015), 97% were on return visits with 40% having visited more than three times. Their stated reasons were primarily 'to worship' and because 'I have made a vow', and secondarily '[i]n order to get well (health reasons)', with other reasons including 'psychological balance', 'an act of repentance' and 'cultural reasons'. According to the owner of a restaurant (L,M,32,II:23/6/2019) just off the road to Aigasos, '[religious tourists] will come whatever the situation on the island', suggesting that the refugee presence does not really deter religious tourists, a view confirmed by Shalini Singh (1998) who argues that pilgrimage is largely resistant to economic and political instability. In addition to religious tourism, the island also attracts people who are interested in agrotourism and lesbian tourism.

While tourism is an important part of the economy, it is not as important some international humanitarian and media organisations sometimes suggest. Lesvos is often labelled as a 'tourist island' (O'Donnell/RTÉ 2019), or a 'tourist haven' (The Guardian 2016) with a 'tourist-dependent economy' (*ibid.*), or 'a small European island, the economy of which is based largely on tourism' (IRC 2016:9), with no mention of other sectors. Herzfeld (1987a, 1987b) might argue that this is because the authors of the above sources are from northern Europe who view Greek islands primarily in the context of tourism. Such a framing would be reinforced by the everyday practices and experiences of global northern humanitarians and journalists who, during this period, tended to stay in hotels or other rented accommodation, drink in cafés and hire vehicles from companies which themselves were established for the purposes of tourism and staffed by tourist professionals. Regardless of these representations, it should be emphasised that the island is equally dependent on agriculture and significantly more dependent on public services.

5.4 A brief history of migration to/from Lesvos

5.4.1 Pre-1922

Lesvos has a long history of migration to and from the island. Historically, Lesvos was inhabited by the Pelasgians in around 3,300 B.C. From the 6th century B.C., it was invaded, conquered, occupied, governed and traded by various external forces including at different times the Persians, the Athenians, the Samians, the Spartans, Alexander the Great and the Macedonians, the Romans, the Slavs, the Saracens, the Venetians, Catalan pirates, and the Franks. In 1335, the Byzantine Roman Emperor Ioannis (John) V Palaiologos ceded Lesvos to his Genoese brother-in-law Francisco Gateluzo where it remained under his family's control until 1462 when the Ottomans invaded and occupied the island for the subsequent 450 years. Traces of Byzantine and Genoese rule can be found in the main town of Mytilene and elsewhere on the island. While Greece celebrates its Independence Day on 25th March each year marking the beginning of the War of Independence in 1821, Lesvos remained under Ottoman rule until 22nd November 1912 when it was captured by the Kingdom of Greece during the First Balkan War. Following a disastrous military campaign in Turkey in 1922 and the closing of the borders with Asia Minor, the ensuing economic crisis was accompanied by a long period of emigration from the island. After the German occupation (1941-44) during the Second World War, almost one in six of the Greek population left the country between 1945-74 (Fakiolas and King 1996:172). Later, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, and Albania precipitated a new round of foreign arrivals in Greece from the 1990s, the vast majority of whom came from Albania. Well before the events of 2015, Michael Herzfeld (2011) amongst others, pointed out how Greece (and southern Europe more generally) used to be a place of emigration but, since the 1990s, became the somewhat unwilling host to increasing numbers of immigrants.

This vast history of external interventions on the island is characterised by processes of both cooperation and resistance from the island's population. Examples include various uprisings against the Persians and Athenians with differing degrees of success, a successful cooperation with Alexander the Great against the Persians in the fourth century B.C. and a less successful cooperation with the Romans that resulted in the demolition of Mytilene, the then (and now) main town of the island. The final 70 years of Ottoman rule also witnessed very close levels of economic and political cooperation between the islanders and their rulers, leading to 'a

prosperity without precedent or continuation' (Mandamadiotou 2013:6) with Mytilene serving as one of the most important ports in the Ottoman Empire after Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Smyrna, Beirut and Trepizond (*ibid.:*23). The history of Lesvos, however, like any history, is subject to interpretation which, as per Edward Said's (1991:55) comment on historical knowledge, 'depend[s] very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place'. For example, Maria Mandamadiotou (2013:5-6) notes that, after 1912, most local historians' works on Mytilene's pre-1912 Greek Orthodox population 'resort to generalisations and distortions' that retrospectively assign 'a clear orientation towards the Greek state and a desire for union with it' and 'uniformly condemn every Ottoman government as hostile to non-Muslims and to the Greek Orthodox in particular'. This interpretation, she argues, foregrounds the '"rebirth" of a race – the Greeks – who were ready "to shine again after centuries of repression"' while neglecting the specific socioeconomic and political conditions of the time. Characterised by a contradictory past of coexistence, intense conflict and tension, Greece's relationship with its neighbour remains complex and the pattern of framing Turkey as Greece's significant 'other' through negative stereotypes and religious contradistinctions continue in the media and national discourses (Kostrella 2007).

5.4.2 The 1922 Refugee Crisis

Lesvos played a central role in the largest compulsory population exchange in history. At the end of the First World War, with Allied naval support, the Greek army landed in the port of Smyrna in 1919 and embarked on a military campaign that took it to the heart of Anatolia. Spurred on by a vision the of restoration of Greater Greece known as 'the Big Idea' as well as Allied promises of territorial gains in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, the Greek-Turkish War ended in 1922 in disastrous defeat for the Greeks. The Turkish army and militias destroyed the Christian parts of Smyrna and those soldiers and civilians who could flee fled while Allied navies looked on just offshore. With Greece's irredentist dream over, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923 and thus began the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations. Around 80% were Greeks coming from Turkey: about 1.2 million people, which Renée Hirschon (2007:171) notes was 'enormous in both absolute and relative terms' representing roughly a quarter of the Greek population. Due to the proximity of the island to

the mainland, Lesvos received vast numbers of the displaced, most of whom transited *en route* to elsewhere in Greece and some of whom settled on the island. It is unclear how many of today's Lesvians are descended from this group. Émile Kolodny's analysis (2007) shows that 47,382 people arrived on the island from Asia Minor in April 1923, over 22% of the island's population was constituted by refugees and exchanged people in 1928, and still in 1969, 25% of adults were born in Asia Minor. Meanwhile, my interlocutors estimated various contemporary figures between 50% and 90% of the island's population are descended from these refugees. Spiros Galinos, mayor of Lesvos in 2015, is counted amongst this group and said of the more recent refugee arrivals for Syria and elsewhere that 'Seeing the people arrive on the beaches, it reminded us of our forefathers' (in Guribye and Mydland 2018:350).

There was no humanitarian infrastructure in place in Lesvos in 1922 and international volunteers did not come to help or stand in solidarity. Aid agencies such as the Near East Fund, the Red Cross, Save the Children and other US philanthropic organisations were responding to the crisis in Greece (Hirschon 2003:5-7) although I was unable to find evidence that they operated in Lesvos. Of tens of thousands of people who passed through Lesvos, twenty-five families settled on uninhabited land in Skala Loutron in the south-east of the island where the Museum of Refugee Memory is located. The Museum is community-run and does not depend on state or municipal funding.[19] Housed in a former school building purchased by an Athens-based philanthropic refugee from Smyrna, the museum is packed with artefacts, clothing, cooking utensils, manuscripts and all sorts of personal items donated over the years by Asia Minor refugees. There, I met with the curator and her mother, the daughter of a family who fled from Turkey a century earlier. They were very clear as to who helped them on arrival: no one. Following efforts to elicit more specifics, the curator (L,F,40s,II:4/9/19) expanded: 'The sea. The fish. Most of the men from the families were fishermen so they were able to fish and provide for their families'. According to them, there were no groups of northern Europeans to help them disembark at the shore, no representatives of aid agencies and certainly no Scandinavian clowns with slapstick routines

[19] See Hutchison and Witcomb (2014) for an excellent discussion of national narratives and representation in museums.

designed to put smiles on children's faces (see Chapter 1). Indeed, there is no memory of an international humanitarian presence at the Museum of Refugee Memory in Skala Loutron.

According to the curator and her mother, there was not much in the way of a local humanitarian response either. The government did not provide any land or housing materials until 1931, nearly a decade after the beginning of the crisis. Furthermore, the mother explained, the people from the main village of Loutra up the hill were not very welcoming: 'We did not have a great relationship when they arrived, it took many years for it to improve', the mother explained, implying that much more than just a few kilometres of road continues to divide the villages today. Indeed, even though they were Greek, they were not made to feel welcome in their new 'homeland'. Various derogatory expressions and names to describe Asia Minor refugees and their descendants can still be heard today including, 's/he was baptised in yogurt' in reference to the Turkish fondness for yogurt, and '*Turkospori'*, roughly translated as 'Turkish seeds'. Indeed, the latter was used by riot police from Athens in February 2020 during a conflict with Lesvians who opposed the construction of a new facility for asylum seekers/migrants in the north of the island, causing damage to 'the honour and reputation of every Lesvian'.[20]

It was not uncommon for my local interlocutors to point out that the refugees of contemporary Lesvos receive more services and benefits than the Greek refugees of Asia Minor did a century ago. 'And they were Greek!' was an indignation often heard in such conversations. While I did not ask the curator to compare the contemporary refugee situation with the events of 1922, she, like many of my local interlocutors, also disapproved of the comparison. On the day of the museum visit, I was accompanied by a friend who knew that I was curious about the comparison and, without warning me, proceeded to explain this to the curator. Her reaction was strong and immediate: 'You cannot compare. They [Asia Minor refugees] are Greek. They are Christians. These people [today's refugees] are Muslims, they are illegal immigrants'. Indeed, her response, and those of many others who I informally interviewed on the subject, challenges the thesis that descendants of Asia Minor refugees are

[20] According to an open letter to the Prosecutor's Office regarding the 'incidents of unprecedented police violence…in the past three days', signed by 19 lawyers from Mytilene, 27th February 2020.

more likely to express empathetic attitudes and behaviour towards today's refugees of Lesvos (cf. Anastasopoulou 2020).

Before moving into a discussion of Lesvos' 21st century refugee context, the next section provides an overview of the humanitarian infrastructure on the island during the period of my fieldwork.

5.5 The Humanitarian Infrastructure

In 2019, a volunteer with a background in design who had been on the island since 2016 developed a training package for newly arriving volunteers (Humanitarian Designers n.d.). Used by several of the volunteer-dependent organisations, it engaged an average of 83 new subscribers per month during the period before the pandemic and provides an excellent overview of the island's humanitarian infrastructure. It identifies four different types of NGOs while recognising the thin line and overlap between the descriptions that speak to debates on citizen humanitarianism discussed in Chapter 2. These four groups provide the bulk of Lesvos' incoming humanitarian population with the first two typically dependant on a high turnover of international volunteers, and the second two on a more permanent, yet still turning over, professional staff:

> **Grassroots NGOs.** Described as 'an NGO which has been directly created next to the operational area, generally by a former volunteer or a local who wanted to continue its work in a more structured way or found a gap on the humanitarian system'. These NGOs are characterised by having 'no professionals', their own fundraising and support 'community', 'no money', being subject to 'time and evolution' whereby volunteers bring diverse skills and resources.
>
> **NGOs**. These include 'non-Greek NGOs with no international visibility' and, overlapping slightly with the former, 'grassroots NGOs which have been on the island long enough to grow and become more financially sustainable'. This group is characterised by 'having a proper project with paid staff (generally not a salary but paid)', a 'longer period' of presence and staff which generates experience and development, 'partnerships' and relationships with other NGOs on the island, and

‘having two teams – good and bad’ in reference to the communication problems and tensions between the coordination team on the ground and board members working remotely.

Greek NGOs which have ‘a more professional approach: grants over fundraising, employees over volunteers, hierarchy and single expertise over organic development’ and tend to include ‘teams of lawyers, teachers, doctors employed with a contract and working full time’. Noting the overlap with the previous categories, this group is characterised by consisting of ‘another community’ whereby being Greek employees may have their family with them on the island, may be unfamiliar with FB Infopoint group [a Facebook group] and other (international) volunteer networks; ‘more developed than grassroots’ due to being established earlier than 2015 and supported by government funds; and ‘volunteering vs being employed’ which contrasts the working hours of paid employees against the flexibility of volunteers.

International NGOs, many of whom ‘left the island: because they don’t want to be associated to this deal and because the situation of emergency changed to a more manageable situation’. This group is characterised by having a greater quantity and quality of ‘manpower’, more ‘structure’, engaging in ‘advocacy’ at higher levels than the previous categories, and governed by time and budget bound ‘programs’ and a paid staff.

In addition to NGOs, the training also identifies:

Authorities: Municipal – Mayor of Lesvos; Regional – North Aegean; National – Ministries and Government; and International – EU, UNHCR, Frontex and EASO. Municipal and National groups are almost completely staffed by Greeks while the latter, also staff mainly by Greeks, often have international staff (mainly European) in senior management positions.

Citizen: Local groups include anti-fascists – a network organised by university students and includes a few international volunteers and NGO staff; people against refugees –

people affiliated with or sympathetic to the Golden Dawn and other anti-refugee groups; anarchist groups – including the No Borders movement and some solidarity networks; and informal groups – groups not connected to NGOs, 'maybe just a group of friends' helping on their own, or ad hoc local initiatives.

The above extracts represent a solid outline of Lesvos' humanitarian infrastructure during the time of my fieldwork while the next section looks at the different operating environment since 2015.

5.6 The 2015 Refugee Context

This section examines the 2015 refugee context based on three phases identified by Evthymios Papataxiarchis (2019), an anthropologist at the University of the Aegean who conducted his PhD fieldwork in the 1980s in the north-eastern fishing village of Skala Sykamnias which has since become a key refugee arrival point. The first is characterised by mass arrivals (both refugees and people coming to help or stand in solidarity with refugees) and rescue-at-sea operations. The second phase begins with the 'EU-Turkey deal' in March 2016 when harsh restrictions on refugees leaving the island were introduced and is characterised as the 'age of lawyers and teachers'. The third phase begins in April 2018 following the violent end to a peaceful refugee/humanitarian demonstration in Mytilene's central Sappho Square and, he argues, marks the transformation of the island's identity from a site of solidarity to a site of violence. I argue that this phase climaxed in February 2020 with open hostility and attacks against humanitarians (as well as refugees), and was halted only by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's response to put the country into lockdown.

5.6.1 The Background in 2015

The economic crisis had significant consequences for the political system in Greece. Following the end of the seven-year military dictatorship in 1974, national politics were characterised by relatively stable alternations between the right-wing party New Democracy (ND) and the left-wing PASOK. This changed in 2015 when, reeling from five years of increasingly stringent austerity measures and disillusioned with the ongoing status quo, the Greek electorate

ousted ND and voted in the Coalition of the Radical Left party, known as SYRIZA, under the leadership of Alexis Tsipras and a banner of 'Hope is coming'. SYRIZA offered a third way between the ND-PASOK support for the bailout and austerity measures on the one hand, and the Communist Party and far-right Golden Dawn's rejection of the bailout and support for Greece's exit from the European Union (Grexit) on the other (Mudde 2017:11). SYRIZA proposed a bailout without austerity despite opposition from European elites and, in January 2015, formed a coalition government with the far-right Independent Greece party (ANEL) as junior partner. At the end of June, banks had closed to prevent a 'bank run' and capital controls were introduced allowing Greeks to withdraw a maximum of just €60 per day. In the midst of national strikes and widespread protests against the Eurogroup's insistence on yet more austerity measures in exchange for more funds to avoid defaulting on existing loans, Tsipras held a referendum on 5th July on whether Greece should accept these measures. Even though the people replied with a solid 'No', Tsipras proceeded to sign on to even more severe austerity measures than initially proposed.

5.6.2 Phase One: Mass arrivals and Search-and-Rescue

It was during this time of great political, economic and social turmoil that refugees began to arrive on the islands of the Aegean in ever greater numbers. Prior to 2015, people had been arriving since the mid-2000s although on a much smaller scale; they began to increase in 2014. Very few had (or have) any interest in staying in Greece and were more interested in travelling to northern Europe. In the summer of 2015, the European Commission (2015) introduced the 'hotspot approach' across the islands which (although remaining without clear definition) involved the deployment of the European Asylum Office (EASO), the EU Border Agency (Frontex), the EU Police Cooperation Agency (Europol) and the EU Judicial Cooperation Agency (Eurojust) to 'swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants'. This took place mainly in the now infamous Moria First Reception Centre – later renamed Registration and Identification Centre (RIC) – which became known as the 'worst refugee camp on the earth' (BBC News 2018) before being burnt to the ground in September 2020. Depending on the number of daily arrivals and available agency staff and policemen, the process took either a few hours or a few days and, the longer it took, the more people were forced to stay on the island, often having to sleep on the streets of Mytilene. Responding to the islanders' complaints, the then Mayor, Spiros Galinos, opened up a disused go-karting

park on municipal land known by its Turkish name Kara Tepe ('Black Mountain', also less commonly known as *Mavrovouni* in Greek) for new arrivals to stay; registration was also occasionally conducted there during this period.

UNHCR (2015a) recorded more than 500,000 people passing through Lesvos during 2015, 58% of the total who entered Greece. Arrivals peaked in October at nearly 6,000 people per day (UNHCR 2015c). Most landed on the north coast between Skala Sykamnias and Eftalou and, with the Greek government outlawing the transportation of refugees, most walked from the north of the island to the Mytilene in the south-east. According to one local (L,F,40s,SI:3/4/19):

> 2015 was a shock for us in many ways, I mean, you could see people walking on the roads and this brought back pictures in our memory from when we studied the history about Asia Minor. There were descriptions that people were walking and so destitute and so tired, and then in 2015 you could see that here – live! I mean we could not believe that we were living those things again.

And another (L,F,39,SI:5/5/2019):

> I still have it in front of my eyes. It was like biblical, it was biblical because you sometimes saw people walking barefoot, you know, just huge numbers of people…it will never leave my eyes.

It is well documented that local communities are usually the first responders in humanitarian crises (see Chapter 2) and the case of Lesvos is no different. During the early part of the summer, there were only a few international organisations, independent volunteers and solidarians offering basic assistance including tents and sanitation facilities (Rozakou 2017). Locals opened their homes to refugees, offered them food, provided a place to stay for the night, drove them 45km from the north of the island to registration centres and port in the south, and various other activities. Amongst the "ordinary people" involved in the local response, Papataxiarchis (2016a) highlights the local fisherman who pulled people out of the water and saved countless lives, and the 'grannies' who fed refugee babies while their

mothers and families recovered from the traumatic journey across the sea. While I did not specifically ask my interlocutors about this period during interviews, most locals seemed to want to speak about it and did so with seemingly fond memories. One mother of two (L,F,50s,SI:1/6/2019) who later found work with an international NGO recalled:

> When this whole thing started, I was involved with just trying to help with the situation as people were walking all over the place, down the island, and our kids were involved in the effort too. They would help us make sandwiches and hand them out. So, the kids had this first-hand experience at a young age…It was a special time, a powerful time for us all.

While the local responses of the people of Lesvos resulted in a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for their 'empathy and self-sacrifice', not all responses were so empathetic or self-sacrificial. Rozakou (2017:100) comments on street vendors selling overpriced tents, sleeping bags, shoes and snacks. One incident repeatedly mentioned by several interlocutors involved a local shop owner selling water at 5 Euros per small bottle, against a national law which caps the price at 50 cents. Many hotel owners refused to accommodate refugees while others charged astronomical prices to people desperate for a bed for their families for the night. It should be noted here that the buyers of these products and services included both refugees and people who had come to help refugees, although not locals who knew the prices and would not stand for the extortion. Human Rights Watch reported that some restaurant owners were charging refugees to use the toilet, and taxi drivers charging €200 a ride (HRW 2015). Several interlocutors reported that some people with cars 'got rich' during this period from spending their days driving down and up the island transporting refugees one way and volunteers the other. Meanwhile, professional humanitarians recalled popular opposition to the state-sanctioned hiring of coaches to transport people from the shore to the reception centres in case 'they spread their diseases'. Many interlocutors recalled 'racist' reactions and attitudes during this period. One café/bar owner (L,M,43,II:29/03/19) explained to me that he personally did not have a problem with serving refugees, 'money is money and people are the same' but his customers did so he gave into peer pressure and refused to serve them during this period despite the illegality of his actions. While such accounts are plentiful, they were rarely reported in the media.

With images of 'Europe's refugee crisis' prominent across international and social media – most powerfully represented by the washed-up dead body of 3-year-old Alan Kurdi in early September – people and organisations descended upon the island to help. Rozakou (2017) notes that by October there were at least one hundred NGOs operating in Lesvos, UNHCR had declared an emergency and the EU had deployed funds traditionally reserved for outside its territory. In addition to formal humanitarian organisations, large numbers of 'independent volunteers' – a term that Rozakou (*ibid.*) notes became central during this period – arrived on the island and worked with and alongside local, regional/international grassroots groups, local citizens, and solidarians (see Chapter 2 on Citizen Humanitarianism). These diverse groups and individuals cooperated and competed with one another to help and stand in solidarity with refugees during this crisis. As Rozakou notes (2017:102), '[a]ll over the island the vests of humanitarian workers and their logos colored public space and demarcated zones of operation, sociality and, ultimately, sovereignty over space'.

According to Effie Latsoudi, an activist who had been on the island for many years and first among equals in the horizontal management structure of the solidarity network 'The Village of All Together' and Pikpa camp (before its closure by the national authorities in 2020), and winner of UNHCR's Nansen Award in 2016 (Pantazis 2017):

> There were many NGOs. We had to find a way to cooperate or not cooperate. For me it was very important the network between us, between the groups that were similar…Some people they do a lot of humanitarian work, they don't do anything else. So they come here, we felt a kind of colonialism, like all the NGOs, big money coming, hotels all hotels were booked, it was a strange feeling for us, very different.

The period leading up to the 'EU-Turkey deal' witnessed a huge turnover of diverse people. Eugene Guribye and Trond Mydland's (2018) analysis of the processes and relationships between various stakeholders in the response on Lesvos identifies three further phases during the period leading up to the deal. The first ('The Awakening' – January to late summer 2015) is characterised by increasing arrivals, local responses, growing prominence in the media and, latterly, the arrival of international spontaneous volunteers. The second

(‘Spontaneous Responses’ – early Autumn) by ever increasing refugee arrivals from Turkey as well as from UNHCR, NGOs and volunteers. The latter included ‘lifeguards, doctors, nurses, cooks, artists, priests, lawyers, journalists but also unemployed, retirees, students and so forth’ who worked hard using their skills or transporting arrivals in hired vehicles, cleaning up beaches, organising and distributing food, water and dry, second-hand clothes (*ibid.*:353).

According to one local interlocutor (L/H,F,29,SI:4/9/2019) who worked for one of the few professional organisations operating on the island before being hired by another with a higher salary:

> There were a lot of volunteers, it was total chaos. You could see anything, everything was happening in those days…organisations who were coming to spread their Jesus Christ…people giving out fruits and making orange juice for people, or doing acupuncture for an 80-year-old Afghan woman who just got off the boat…some people came just to have fun “OK I will distribute clothes but at the same time I will go out and meet new people”.

There were plenty of divisions within the humanitarian response. While the above comment hints at a professional/volunteer divide (discussed further in the following chapter), Afouxenidis et al. (2017) comments on the mistrust that emerged between representatives of the top-down policies of the EU and Greek state on the one hand, and the bottom-up practices of individual volunteers and civil society organisations. Meanwhile, Guribye and Mydland (2018) point to local and international divides that transcend this binary. These, they argue, were compounded by a lack of systematic information coordination, mistrust in the authorities, and volunteer frustration with newly arriving formal humanitarian actors who needed to make plans and receive approvals before implementing. Many volunteers refused to cooperate with local authorities and formal humanitarian actors, choosing to operate independently. Furthermore, locals were frustrated that internationals seemed to ‘make a career from the crisis, with little concern for local laws and regulations, and while partying hard after sundown’ (*ibid.*:355). As reported by several interlocutors and as observed during fieldwork, another division that emerged during this period was between secular and

religious groups (with members of the latter group largely absent from Mytilene’s bar circuits).

Meanwhile, some volunteer groups began to professionalise and move closer to formality. Guribye and Mydland's (2018) call this phase ‘Professionalization (Late fall 2015 – March 2016). Some grassroots organisations began to formally register as NGOs either in Greece and/or their home countries and many began to identify focal points for the systematic coordination of information and activities, organise volunteers into teams, provide them with matching vests, and develop standard operating procedures for beach landings, distributions and other activities. Not all groups professionalised in this way and some rejected cooperation with formal humanitarian actors.

Others, regardless of their level of cooperation with formal actors, have been caught up in ongoing processes of the criminalisation of humanitarian aid and solidarity. The first person arrested in Lesvos for transporting refugees in a car during 2015 explained to me (L,F,63,SI:27/8/2019) that she ‘had no problem’ in being charged under Greece’s anti-smuggling laws as it gave her an opportunity to demonstrate the ‘madness’ of the situation. While this particular law was amended to allow private individuals (including taxis) to transport refugees in their vehicle, the overall trend in the implementation of such laws – both in Greece and more globally – has been less sympathetic. A growing body of research situates processes of criminalisation within broader trends of the securitisation of migration (Huysmans 2000; Bigo 2002; Messina 2014; van der Woude et al. 2017; Fekete 2018), some of which focuses specifically on Lesvos (Carrera et al. 2018; Gordon and Larsen 2020; Papada et al. 2020). High profile cases include five search-and-rescue (SAR) actors (including three Spanish firefighters) responsible for saving hundreds of lives who were arrested in 2016 on charges of smuggling, imprisoned, and acquitted two years later (Amnesty 2019). Another four SAR actors were arrested and charged not with only smuggling but also espionage, money laundering, forgery and membership of a criminal organisation, all of whom were released after 100 days in prison, two with thousands of Euros of fines and two unconditionally (Vosyliūtė and Conte 2019). Charges were also brought against 33 NGO workers from 4 NGOs in 2020 who were charged with ‘forming and joining a criminal organisation, espionage, violation of state secrets, as well as violations of the Immigration

Code' (Euronews 2020). At the time of writing no NGO worker or volunteer has yet been found guilty of any of these charges.[21] Regardless of the merits of these cases, the construction of humanitarian and solidarity initiatives as criminal has not boded well for public perceptions and relations (Bousiou 2020). Meanwhile, Martina Tazzioli argues (in Fekete 2018:76) that, in Lesvos, the EU is attempting to create a division between the 'good humanitarians' − larger institutions that are integrated into the system − and other smaller independent organisations.

5.6.3 Phase Two: The 'EU-Turkey deal' and the 'age of teachers and lawyers'

The situation on the island changed dramatically with the 'EU-Turkey statement' (Council of the EU 2016) that became operational on 20th March 2016. Amongst other things, the EU pledged €3 billion in exchange for Turkey taking 'any necessary measures to prevent' irregular crossings into Europe and, almost overnight, the large number of boats seemingly stopped coming. The most controversial part of the deal for the people of Lesvos and the other five named islands (Kos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Rhodes) was the legally questionable geographical restriction whereby asylum seekers on the islands were required to remain there until either: their asylum process resulted in refugee status; they were returned to Turkey; or were given special permission to travel to the mainland due to a specific vulnerability. Guribye and Mydland's (2018) name this phase 'Fortress Europe and Resistance'. While the deal largely – but by no means completely – halted new arrivals from Turkey, it resulted in a heavily unequal distribution of asylum seekers across the country and effectively transformed Lesvos in to a 'prison island' (Bousiou 2020). Opposition to the geographical restriction was one of the few issues that that locals, humanitarians, refugees and human rights groups on the island could agree upon, and policymakers in the EU and the government in Athens were deemed responsible for this new situation. Following a municipality-led general strike in late 2017, a delegation of local officials from Lesvos, Samos and Chios travelled to Athens to protest the geographical restriction while simultaneous demonstrations were held on the islands (The Guardian 2017).

[21] Asylum-seekers, however, are regularly charged, found guilty, imprisoned and fined for smuggling including the 2021 case of one who saved his and 33 other lives and was sentenced to 146 years.

With the signing of the deal came significant change in the humanitarian infrastructure. Some NGOs withdrew from Moria in protest as it effectively became a detention centre and, with fewer boats to search for and rescue, SAR NGOs scaled down or withdrew from the island. Meanwhile, there was a scale up of teachers and lawyers to cater to the educational and legal needs of the now less mobile refugee population. Formal humanitarian organisations engaged in what the head of a local organisation called 'the very clever policy of Hellenisation' (Migration Talks 2019) in reference to the historical and Greek name of Greece (*Ellada*) and which involved recruiting primarily Greeks for positions in professional humanitarian organisations. This had several advantages for recruiting organisations including being relatively cheap compared to hiring or maintaining expensive international staff, and also through gaining favour with the local population who, in the midst of an economic crisis, was much in need of jobs. As a result, there were much fewer international professional humanitarians on the island compared with the period before the deal.

5.6.4 Phase Three: Violent Resistance (April 2018 – March 2020)

Although Papataxiarchis' phases were presented during a summer school presentation in July 2019, I have extended this phase to the beginning of Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. While the 'violence' in this third phase referred primarily to violence against refugees, by February 2020 this violence had extended to the national government and the humanitarian community. My fieldwork took place mid-phase between January and October 2019.

The phase begins with a peaceful sit-in demonstration in Mytilene's central Sappho Square by around 180 refugees who were protesting the squalid living conditions in Moria, the associated recent death of a refugee as well as the geographical restriction. The demonstration triggered an unprecedented mobilisation of the far-right that included use of Facebook groups to call a violent counter demonstration which took place on the fifth day. According to the Observatory of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the Aegean (2018), the 'rally not only manifested extreme xenophobic violence, but also exhibited the toleration of such violence among various strata of local society'. Police intervention resulted in the arrest of 120 refugees (around 30 of whom were hospitalised during the event), 2 Greek students, and none of the perpetrators. The refugees were soon released from prison and, a year later, acquitted of all charges that included 'illegal occupation of public space', 'rioting', and

‘resistance against the authorities’ (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, two people identified by the police as suspects in the attack (but not arrested) were elected to the Community Council of Mytilene the following year.

While this event marks a transition from the previous phase, local frustration and anger with the refugee situation had been building for many years. The Observatory article (2018) cites events that include a farmer firing his gun to scare off refugees trying to steal livestock, ongoing opposition to the rental and opening of NGO facilities in the villages around Mytilene, local authorities’ opposition to government efforts to improve living conditions in Moria camp, local opposition to the government/UNHCR ‘ESTIA’ programme that rents accommodation for refugees in the community, social media attacks on those who agreed to rent their property to the programme, and other events and incidents. The article argues that ‘the attitudes of ‘solidarity’ that had flourished between 2015 and 2016…appear to be absent at the current juncture’ (*ibid.*).

Change was reflected at the ballot box. In 2019, Lesvos’ electorate voted overwhelmingly for candidates and parties on the political right in three sets of elections (Greek parliament, European Parliament and municipal elections), confirming the island’s transformation from a ‘red island’ to a deep shade of blue. While significant in Lesvos, this was also reflective a broader trend in national politics in which the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition was ousted by New Democracy whose landslide win campaigned on calling out the government and promising to take a hard line on Turkey and migration. Lesvos’ political tilt to the right did not, however, mean political cohesion with the government in Athens. The geographic restriction of refugees’ movement remained a sore point of contention, and the national government’s plans to build new reception facilities on the island with EU funding only strained relations further. Local tensions were exacerbated further still by the huge increase in arrivals from Turkey following the elections. According to UNHCR estimates, Lesvos’ total refugee population shot up from a fluctuation of between 6,000 and 7,000 until July to over 20,000 by March 2020[22] when the Covid-19 lockdown severely limited movement to and from the island. According to a local businessman (L,M,60s,II:26/9/2019), ‘The Turkish don’t make war

[22] UNHCR, Inter-Agency Consultation Forum – Lesvos Meeting Minutes, (January 2019 – March 2020; on file).

with us anymore. They just send all the Muslims here. They send 4 million people here to make Islam here and Islam in Europe'. This sense of invasion was not limited to the refugee or 'Muslim' presence. Referring to the humanitarian community, the comments of one civil servant (L,F,46,II:23/2/19) that 'we used to all know each other here, recognise each other on the streets, but now we don't know who is here anymore' were echoed by a wide spectrum of the pre-2015 population throughout my fieldwork. Discontent with the post-2015 newcomers was clear.

By January 2020, UNHCR had already estimated that there were more than 20,000 refugees on the island.[23] Tensions were high and rising; peaceful and violent resistance ensued. In January, strikes and large-scale protests took place on Lesvos, Chios and Samos under the banner 'We want our islands back' (BBC 2020). As the government tried to procced with its plan to build a new reception centre for refugees in the newly created West Lesvos municipality, protestors blocked the roads leading to the site. Athens sent riot police to Lesvos (and Chios) to facilitate the first phase of construction. The protestors identified where the riot police were staying overnight, entered their guesthouses by surprise, and threw out and set fire to their clothes. Later at the roadblock, riot police used tear gas and stun grenades while a protestor shot his gun from behind cover. Despite government claims of success, the riot police retreated on the next ferry to Athens. According to one local, (L/H,M,40,II:6/3/2020), 'they definitely didn't expect resistance. They were fighting in the hills and everything – 50 riot police had to go to hospital!'

The following week, the humanitarian community became a direct target of the resistance. Roadblocks were set up around the camps and protestors threatened humanitarians with steel pipes and nail-headed cudgels (NL Times 2020; The Guardian 2020). Humanitarians' vehicles, easily identified by locals, were smashed up overnight in car parks and also while people were inside them (Anas Tsi 2020; H,M,27,II:27/3/2020). The informal school where I had volunteered was burned to the ground. One of my interlocutors, a Greek Lesvian born-and-bred abroad who returned in 2015 to help during the crisis (L/H,M,32,II:18/4/2020), informed me that not long after accidentally walking into a house where people were

[23] UNHCR, Inter-Agency Consultation Forum – Lesvos Meeting Minutes, (January 2019 – March 2020; on file).

polishing guns and knives in what appeared to be a preparation for an attack, he received a call from a family member warning him to leave the island as ‘they are coming for you’. He immediately left the village, went to Mytilene, booked a ticket and left the country. By the onset of the pandemic, tensions between locals and the humanitarian community were as high as they had even been and were only diffused, or at least put on hold, by the COVID-19-induced national lockdown.

5.6.4.1 Micro-resistance

While the attacks on refugees, election results, large scale strikes and protests demanding ‘our islands back’, clashes between islanders and police from Athens, attacks on aid workers and the burning down of a community centre all represent open acts of resistance against the humanitarian community, fieldwork revealed other less newsworthy but nevertheless very important acts of resistance during this period. For example, while refugees commonly complained of being made to feel unwelcome in certain bars, cafes and restaurants, such accounts were also heard from several members of humanitarian community from the global north as well as some Greeks. Tactics included deliberately ignoring customers after they’ve sat down, serving lukewarm or even cold coffees instead of hot ones, and providing customers with excessively high bills (the latter was mainly reserved for non-Greeks). Indeed, a waitress (L,F,20s,II:5/7/2019) in one seaside bar/café confirmed to me that her boss had indeed given her the instruction to delay serving humanitarians and discourage them from returning.

Another, more violent, example was reported to me on enough occasions to warrant a paragraph here. Several humanitarian interlocutors reported incidents of being hit by cars in Mytilene. In one instance, a northern European woman (H,F,60,II:23/6/19) was knocked to the ground by a car and was then told that the person who owned the car was a known member of the far-right political party/criminal organisation the Golden Dawn. Another northern European (H,F,24,SI:5/6/19) explained that it had happened to her several times:

> They would try to like hit you or at least like not be careful with you at all. Like the other day, I got hit by one of the mirrors of the car. I didn't know what to say, I was a bit angry, or at least shocked. And they just, like, drove off shouting ‘la la la’ in angry Greek. So sometimes you feel like you’re not very welcome here.

It is worth highlighting here that the streets of Mytilene are very narrow places and that, in the above case, it may well have been an accident. The driver quite possibly did not intend to hit her and was shouting at her (in Greek which she did not understand) because she was walking carelessly and caused the accident. Unlike the bar/café case above, I was unable to verify whether this type of act was deliberate. Meanwhile, other examples reported by humanitarian interlocutors include countless reports of locals not responding to greetings and showing their "angry face" as well as damaging and graffitiing of humanitarians' property. Other examples that I observed (but were not necessarily noticed by my humanitarian interlocutors from the global north) include countless incidents of overcharging for products and services and, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, the vernacular labelling of humanitarians as 'tourists' which can be considered a form of epistemic violence.

5.6.4.2 Case study: Costas' Story

Costas' story presents a poignant example of how attitudes towards humanitarians have changed over time. He was nineteen-years-old when we met during fieldwork and the only local/Greek I encountered who volunteered with an international NGO without being paid a stipend. 'Volunteering is something weird in Greece. We've never experienced something like that and, actually, we can't afford to leave our country and go volunteering somewhere else for no money' (SI:21/8/2021). His parents arrived from a neighbouring country in the region not long before he was born and worked in various agricultural and menial jobs to make ends meet. By the time of my fieldwork, his family owned some land that where they kept livestock. Costas helps his father on the farm and, where and when possible, would work elsewhere. After finishing high school, he spent the following year working in a café/restaurant/bar six days per week for 25 Euros per 12-hour shift while applying for universities. The proprietor was a 'complete racist' he told me, 'hates all foreigners' and often refers to refugees as 'monkeys' or 'gorillas'. Despite this, Costas enjoyed the work, saved up for university and met a lot of international volunteers who encouraged him to volunteer with them. One day he joined them, partly because the situation of the refugees reminded him of the stories his parents tell him about when they first arrived in Greece: 'they had nobody to help them, they didn't know the language, they had nothing, they created their own lives here so I kind of felt like the refugees are my parents, so that's why I wanted to help them…and it looks good on

your resumé'. He found the experience rewarding and continued to volunteer until he left for university: 'I like building tents cos I feel like I gave a house to somebody'. As much as he enjoyed it, he did not tell any of his local Greek friends about his volunteering as 'most people on the island are a bit racist' and 'they'd think I'm crazy. Every time we have a conversation about the situation here, we end up arguing so I just avoid talking about it'. His friends just used to think that he likes spending time with foreigners.

Six months later, however, his attitude towards refugees and volunteers demonstrably changed. Although his family's farm, situated next to one of the main refugee reception centres, had been broken into a few times since 2015, these break-ins became more frequent with so many more refugees on the island (and humanitarian actors struggling even more to respond). One night 'this group of fucking refugees tried to break in but my dad was there with his friends, so they went to the next farm and killed all three of his cows. They took most of it with them but left half a cow' (II:21/1/2020). He posted a picture of the half-cow on Facebook and was very upset when his volunteer Facebook friends replied with comments that overwhelmingly supported and justified the refugees' actions and, furthermore, accused him of being a racist and a member of the right-wing Golden Dawn. He chastised his volunteer friends for not caring about locals and later explained: 'I'm sorry, I'm sick of these fucking refugees and the volunteers who claim to care but actually they don't. They're just defending the refugees even though they do wrong. They don't care about us who have to live here, they just come and go' (II:23/1/2020).

Several analytical points can be drawn from Costas' story. His comments regarding travelling abroad to volunteer not only highlight the wealth and privilege disparities between the island's residents and its transient, mainly northern European and American, humanitarian population, but also touch on the blurred boundaries between international humanitarian practice and tourism that is the central theme of this thesis. Second, the examples of both his manager and volunteer Facebook friends highlight the extent of socially acceptable casual racism that exists amongst different population groups as each homogenised and demonised their respective other. Most importantly, however, Costas' story highlights the extent of social change and the transformation of attitudes produced by both the humanitarian and refugee presence. While I interviewed a broad section of society, fieldwork revealed Costas

to be a unique figure, not only by being in the minority of islanders who initially supported refugee and humanitarian objectives on the island, but also as the international humanitarian community's only Greek volunteer without a stipend (that I encountered) who felt he had to hide his volunteering from his friends and family. However, by early 2020, he had transformed into someone who was 'sick of these fucking refugees and the volunteers'; and he has not volunteered again since. His story may not be as headline-grabbing as the violent incidents discussed in the rest of this section but it is a powerful example of both changing attitudes and the pre-existing and growing anti-refugee and anti-humanitarian sentiment during this period.

5.7 The Disconnect – some possible causes

5.7.1. 'Conspiracy theories'

There is a fairly widespread mistrust of NGOs in Greece that predates 2015. According to Valvis (2014), much of this is rooted in a history of very public scandals against Greek NGOs in Greece and abroad concerning alleged and proven cases of corruption, clientelism by political elites, and misappropriation of funds. All of this has led to a particularly negative public image of NGOs and, moreover, helps explain some of the attitudes towards the arrival and presence international NGOs and volunteers on the island. Indeed, while Papataxiarchis (2016b) noted that professional NGO workers' motives are seriously questioned by solidarians, my fieldwork revealed a much more widespread level of distrust. For example, Pandellis (L,M,66,II:1/6/19), a retired civil servant and village resident, expressed similar sentiments to many on the island with his comments and questions: 'The volunteers, I respect them, I admire them. But the MKO [Greek for NGO] people, they have a programme. Why do they come here? Who are they to come to my island and tell me what to do? Who told them to come here? Who pays them?'. Attempts to gain answers these questions led to the 'EU', the 'Germans', the 'CIA', 'Turkey', 'shadow organisations' and others. Harris' (L,M,49,SI:20/8/19) accusation that 'they're all spies and money launderers' was another common refrain that featured regularly in coffee shop discussions and interviews. Such comments were repeated by a diverse cross-section of society including civil servants, small business owners in food, accommodation and transport as well as professional aid workers, teachers and a priest.

Foreign designs on Lesvos is a theme that emerged frequently among many of my interlocutors' narratives. Beliefs that 'they want to take our island' or 'they want to change our identity' were particularly common. While various versions of this narrative exist, the most common runs along the following lines: Turkey has always wanted to reclaim Lesvos since the end of the of its 450 year rule in 1912; the Germans also want it and, having failed to take it militarily (their WW2 occupation ended in 1944), are proceeding to take it economically and politically via the EU; and 'everybody' (including the United States) wants it not only because of its stunning natural beauty, agricultural resources and great beaches, but because of the oil and gas reserves under the Aegean. The narrative continues: the Turkish state plays an active role in sending (mainly Muslim) refugees/migrants to Lesvos to put pressure on both Greece and the European Union; and these refugees/migrants will serve as a fifth column and assist in the Ottoman/Muslim/Turkish (these words are often used interchangeably in Greek) reoccupation of the island. Another version of this narrative includes a deal that has been made amongst the "great powers" to turn the "belt" of Aegean islands into a "Green Zone" that is neither part of the EU nor Turkey, but will serve as buffer zone between the two where refugees/migrants can be "stored" and oil and gas extraction can proceed.

For those amongst the high turnover of (mainly European) humanitarian who hear them, the above views are largely ridiculed or written off as 'paranoid'. Nevertheless, they are believed by many on the island and, given the history and politics of the region and they provide a coherent lens for interpreting current events. Evidence is marshalled accordingly: why do the vast majority of refugees/migrants go (or are sent) to Lesvos and not so much to Kos where there is a much larger and more valuable tourist infrastructure? Because the "great powers" and "rich people" have a vested interest in keeping these tourist destinations "clean". Why, the questioning goes, does the EU and the Greek state provide seemingly endless millions of Euros for building reception centres and providing cash assistance for refugees yet 'insists on taking from our pensions', and 'can't provide a street good enough to drive on' nor 'activities for unemployed youth'. With thousands of (mainly Muslim) refugees not allowed to leave the island, the 'they want to change our identity' argument becomes particularly powerful when considering EU funding for the rehabilitation of two of Mytilene's formerly derelict mosques:

‘this is part of some kind of a plan’, I was often told, designed by the great powers to make life more comfortable for refugees in Lesvos. When asking one beach café/bar owner (L,M,57,SI:1/9/2019) about change on the island, he responded somewhat angrily:

> You want to know what has changed? I'll tell you what has changed. The people have changed. And they are going to change some more. We are an island of 80,000 people and now thousands and thousands and thousands of people have come here and are staying here, and they want their children to go to school here, and they want to live here, and they want them to stay here. Not everybody wants this my friend!

Meanwhile, the role of humanitarians in this process and narrative takes two main forms: as agents of the EU via their direct employment in the (mainly EU funded) UN agencies and NGOs on the island, or indirectly via paid work or volunteering with organisations and networks accused of promoting an anti-state agenda that includes facilitating refugees/migrants’ irregular entry to the island. Humanitarians are, at best, considered a ‘pull’ factor and deemed to be making the refugees’ stay on the island more comfortable. At worst, they are held directly responsible for bringing them to the island. Either way, by March 2020, patience had run out with the refugees’ “occupation” and their perceived sponsors and implementers from northern Europe.

5.7.2. Limited interactions

Local mistrust of the incoming international humanitarian community is not helped by the general lack of interaction between the two communities. Below is an extract from an interview with Beatrice (H,F,23,SI:12/5/19) who spent just eight days on the island. She, like many short termers in Lesvos, barely considered those who had been on the island before 2015:

> A: How are relations with local people?
> I: Between we as volunteers and the refugees?
> A: Er, your relations with local people here in Lesvos.
> I: You mean the refugees, right? Okay…

…and continued to talk about her and other volunteers' relations with refugees before I asked the question differently:

> A: Um what about relations with local Greeks?
> I: Yeah, I didn't see so much local Greeks. I heard some stories from other people who work at [my NGO] that sometimes the Greeks start a restaurant and the refugees can eat there. I hear it, but I've not seen local Greeks so much. So I don't know. Actually, I had no relationship with any Greeks.

Beatrice's account is fairly representative the of short-term volunteers I spoke with. Indeed, the shorter they stayed, the less likely they were to develop relations with people outside of their colleagues and the refugee communities they volunteer with. I found relatively little interaction between the pre-2015 population and international humanitarians beyond economic transactions (see next chapter). When I asked what 'local community' means to one northern European volunteer who has spent a total of 8 months of his life volunteering independently and with different NGOs over five trips to Lesvos since 2015, he replied simply, 'A blurry mass of people you never meet'. When asked for more detail, he continued:

> It means sort of, I can't really say I've ever interacted with anyone I would consider being part of the local community. For me, the term local community would mean the actual locals which are people that have been living there before this all started, and I cannot say that I have been in any contact with anyone. Local community is talked about a lot in terms of we need to support the local community by, say, buying our vegetables for the kitchen from the locals to support the local community instead of, say, buying at Lidl, for example. Yeah, I guess, that there isn't really too much to say about the local community in terms of interactions, it's more like this anonymous thing that's living there, existing there in a parallel world that we need to, in a way, take care of not to offend them, to not have the opinion turning even worse than what it is already.

Even in spaces at the intersection of these communities such as the camps/hospitality sites where locals and internationals working/volunteering in the sector often spend the majority

of their waking hours, there is also surprisingly little interaction. When asked what 'local community' means after nearly six weeks of volunteering six days per week in one of the sites, Fatma (H,F,23,SI:26/4/19) proposed a broadly inclusive theoretical definition:

> If I answered without really thinking just off the top of my head, then it would mean Greek people. But then when I think about it more, it also includes the volunteer or aid worker community 'cause we're still part of the community, we still contribute to the economy here, we still live here, use the town services, work and/or study. So, yeah, us and also the refugees 'cause they're the same, they also live here, they also use the services. So, yeah, everyone. Everyone who's here and is using these services is in some way part of the community.

However, when asked about her interactions with the 'Greek people who are here', she noted the limits of her definition in the context of her everyday practice and life in Lesvos:

> Well, that's the thing, even though technically I would say we're all part of the community, sometimes it feels like we're two different communities. Like aid workers, volunteers and refugees are one community because we work together, you know, and then locals as like a separate community. Because the places people tend to stay are flats with other volunteers or just studios by themselves and then, for some reason, most volunteers tend not to be Greek. And then 'cause I'm working so much, it doesn't give me much time to actually meet Greek people. There are Greek staff in [the camp], but I mostly interact with either people from my organisation or camp residents. I would really like to know more Greek people but now I'm leaving. But if I was here for longer, I would like to, but I don't know how that would happen.

When asked for more detail, she described various Greeks she had met in the camp or spoken with although, after six weeks of volunteering, 'not to the extent that I can remember anyone's names or that I'd arrange to meet up with them outside of work or anything'. Meanwhile, a local Greek NGO worker (L/H,M,40,II:7/5/19) whom she did not mention but with whom I had observed her interacting on most days, corroborates these limited levels of interactions. When I first asked him at the camp, he told me:

> I never speak with them, never. I'm always here but I never speak with them. Maybe I don't really want to speak with them.

But, in a separate interview over a drink, (L/H,M,40,SI:7/5/19), he told me:

> I'm indirectly forced to have contact with these people that work in these kinds of organisations and services…Its mostly good mornings, good night, and you have to kind of go through this. Also, in terms of help-to-help, let's say, 'Do you know/Can you help me' or 'I have a situation, I have a problem with something', they would kind of refer to us or I would refer to them and they would look into it more immediately than if it goes through procedure or protocol or whatever. Kind of like that. But, other than that, on a personal level, not much. No, I won't meet with them after work or go for a drink, no.

As these extracts demonstrate, there was very little interaction between locals and international humanitarians in Lesvos. The language of 'us' and 'them' was common throughout my interviews most people I spoke to. While Fatma and many others referred to the idea that 'we're all part of the community', the reality observed on the ground was quite different. As the following chapters demonstrate, viewing these relationships through the lens of 'tourism' helps to explain this lack of interaction. In her research of volunteer tourists in Thailand, Sue Broad (2003) found that, unlike conventional tourists who often remain isolated in an 'environmental bubble', volunteer tourists enjoy significant opportunities for direct interactions with locals thereby allowing them to experience authentic Thai culture. While the volunteers of Lesvos typically reject the label of tourist (see Chapter 7), my fieldwork produced similar but different results: most volunteers remained isolated in an 'environment bubble'. Instead of interacting with local Greeks, volunteers mainly interacted with refugees and their fellow volunteers. Pushing Broad's framework, the Thai locals are better equated with the refugees of Lesvos than with the locals: the refugees in Lesvos are effectively the 'toured'. As the extracts above demonstrate, neither volunteers nor locals invested much time with each other. Where relationships were developed, it was primarily with refugees and other volunteers. Furthermore, with the majority of volunteers staying

between 2-3 fairly intense weeks (my findings; Cavallo and Di Matteo 2020) and focusing mainly on refugees and other volunteers, there was very little time or space for interaction with local Greeks beyond the transactional. Even those volunteers who spent longer on the island and had the time and energy to invest in learning a 'local' language usually chose Farsi or Arabic rather than Greek. With most volunteers travelling to Lesvos specifically for refugees, relationships with Greek locals were secondary if considered at all. In this respect, it is hardly surprising that several locals reported feeling or being treated 'like a second-class citizen on my own island' (L,M,49,SI:20/8/19).

5.8 Conclusion: continuities, resistance and acceptance

The humanitarian arena framework (Chapter 3) helps us to identify continuities before, during and after crises. References in the media and elsewhere often refer to the island and islanders' change of heart from the Nobel Peace prize nominees' 'empathy and self-sacrifice' to a 'stage for Europe's far right' (Fallon 2020) but neglect the pre-existing anti-immigrant sentiment on the island. The claim that Lesvos is the island 'which holds the most [refugees] and has been the symbol first of welcoming refugees and migrants and now not wanting them' (The National Herald 2021) emphasises a normative reading of crisis as 'a state of exception, separated from normality' rather than 'acknowledging continuities between crisis and normality' (Hilhorst and Serrano 2010:184). Speaking to notions of conditional and unconditional hospitality (Pitt-Rivers 1977; Derrida 2000), analysis reveals that local acts of welcoming and hospitality between 2015 and the implementation of the 'EU-Turkey deal' that have been prominent in the media and elsewhere can be interpreted as dependant on the condition that refugees – and those who came to help them – would, like tourists, eventually leave the island. In this respect, this conditional humanitarianism can more readily be understood as helping refugees on their way to leaving the island rather than acts of welcoming and hospitality. While anti-immigrant sentiment was certainly present prior to 2015, it increased significantly thereafter when it was extended to the incoming humanitarian population and, ultimately, reflected on the streets and at the ballot box.

Lesvos' vast history of external interventions on the island notwithstanding, continuities of resistance to change and the arrivals of 'others' pre-date the arrival of refugees and humanitarians. The history of the island's university and arrival of students provides further

useful insights into possible outcomes. Several of the pre-2015 population commented on the local opposition to the opening of the university in the 1980s. One born-and-bred Lesvian (L,F,49,SI:2/10/19) who left the island and moved to the mainland when she was 18 years old and returned ten years later, punctuated by holidays on the island with her family, recalls:

> People here were so crazy that they objected to the university. Generally, they object to any progress. So, slowly [after 1988], it began to change. There were some shops, some new shops, and you could see people in the streets after nine in the evening for the first time. Even ten years later, I still could feel the difference between locals and others, I mean, people from other places. They form ghettos, and maybe they're forced to do so, like maybe they don't have an alternative in that. It's really very difficult to mix with the population here…People here, they just don't want to be disturbed.

Not long before 2015, she was able to open a café/bar that has since become popular with refugee and humanitarian customers and is doing a brisk trade. She is 'very positive about the big picture and I think there are great benefits from have these people here', but notes that 'I'm not a typical local after all'. Her and others' accounts of the local opposition to the university highlight a recent history of resistance to the arrival of new populations on the island and the change that they bring. She comments on the opening of new shops, changing social practices but, along with many others, also comments on the disconnect between students and locals that continues today. There is, of course, a high level of interaction between locals and students that exists today ranging from renting rooms to intermarriage plenty in between with the initial resistance appears to have largely been forgotten. Meanwhile, the refugees of the 1920s are very much a part of the island's social, economic and political infrastructure. As such, historical continuities indicate that there are precedents for a longer-term acceptance of newcomers to the island. At the same time, the humanitarian presence is dependent on the refugee presence whereby the latter are significantly more 'othered' than the former. However, despite ongoing resistance to the construction of a new EU-funded reception centre to replace Moria (InfoMigrants 2022), construction continues and the international humanitarian and refugee presence remain. While local sentiment towards the post-1920s refugee and post-1980s student presence has warmed significantly,

perhaps the pre-2015 population will come to accept the humanitarian and refugee presence. They might be ‘disturbed’ now, but they might get used it. Meanwhile, building on Jennings’ and Bøäs’ (2015:293) observation from peacekeeping contexts that microeconomic arrangements ‘are generally the only real contact that most peacekeepers have with “the locals”’, the next chapter links to the above discussion of local/humanitarian interactions with an analysis of the humanitarian economy of Lesvos.

CHAPTER 6 – The Humanitarian Economy of Lesvos: Where Humanitarianism and Tourism Meet

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to 2015, the main political, economic and social issue affecting Greece and Lesvos was the economic crisis. According to one interlocutor (L/H,M,31,SI:8/10/19), 'from before the start of 2013, all the stores, all the markets, bars, cafeterias, restaurants and businesses were closing down, one after another. That all changed in 2015. As far as I'm concerned, the economic crisis ended in Lesvos when the refugee crisis began'. Indeed, the expansion of the humanitarian arena in Lesvos has had a significant effect on the local economy, livelihoods and the labour market. In this chapter, I focus on tourist, employment, and property markets. When asked about how things have changed on the island, almost every participant mentioned the economy, with several suggesting that every family in Mytilene has benefited in one way or another from the expansion of the humanitarian sector. Either people have found direct employment in the humanitarian sector, or a member of their family has, or their business (restaurants, bars, hardware shops, plumbers, etc) has expanded and employed extra staff to cope with the increased demand on the island. 'I remember when café owners used to work in their own cafés!' quipped one local humanitarian (L/H,M,51,SI:7/10/19) pointing to a row of cafés that benefits from its geographical situation between two of the island's main camps. Meanwhile, organisations and networks working on refugee issues prior to 2015 have seen their profile, operations, budgets and teams expand significantly. Furthermore, people have come from other parts of the island, the country, and indeed the world, to benefit from these new economic opportunities. Not everybody benefits, however, as some groups including students, civil servants and others find themselves displaced by the island's expanding humanitarian arena.

Within the overarching framework of the humanitarian arena, this chapter proposes the 'humanitarian economy', as adapted from the 'peacekeeping economy' in peacebuilding studies literature (Jennings 2014, 2015; Jennings and Bøås 2015; see Chpater 2). Jennings defines the 'peacekeeping economy' as 'economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence'

(Jennings 2014:315). In adapting this concept to the humanitarian context of Lesvos, I focus on the economic activity that the humanitarian presence has generated in the commercial and non-commercial accommodation sector (Chapter 5) and the bars/cafés and restaurants frequented, and not frequented, by humanitarian actors. The second section analyses the humanitarian labour market on Lesvos and compares its different structure yet similar sets of power relations with 'traditional' humanitarian responses outside Europe. Acknowledging continuities and discontinuities in times of crisis and normality, I analyse the interface of the aid industry and tourism sector in Lesvos and highlight the ways in which international humanitarians constitute a consumer group similar to international tourists. With most international humanitarians coming for short periods of time, often from the same countries of origin as traditional international tourists, using funds from outside the island and engaging with the island's tourist infrastructure of hotels, Airbnbs, bars, cafés, restaurants and car hire companies, there are several areas for comparison between these groups. The chapter concludes by situating Lesvos' humanitarian economy within the humanitarian arena framework and commenting on the humanitarian boom's potential transience.

6.2 Conceptualising the humanitarian economy

Various conceptualisations of the humanitarian economy exist to date. More than forty years ago, Robert Chambers (1979, 1986) observed from mainly Sub-Saharan African case studies that the better-off and more visible hosts usually gain from the presence of refugees and assistance programs while the poor are often rendered hidden losers. While much research has focused on the role of the displaced in humanitarian context, much less focuses on the role of humanitarians. Some have focused on the formal aid sectors' 'humanitarian marketplace' with its 'myriad of [sic] competitors in an unregulated free market' (Weiss 2013:162) or evolving humanitarian supply chains, labour market inequalities and the economics of war, terrorism and disaster (Carbonnier 2015; Kovács et al. 2018). Others have shifted the focus away from financing to, for example, north-south encounters and imaginations in 'humanitarian economies' defined as 'the organised systems of assistance provision that address people affected by war and rely on their own repertory of values and norms' (Carpi 2019:296). For the purposes of this thesis, however, a definition is adapted from a recent conceptualisation of the 'peacekeeping economy' (Jennings 2014; 2015; Jennings and Bøås 2015). Elizabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2002:62) first coined the term

‘peacekeeping economies’ which they describe as ‘industries and services such as bars and hotels that spring up with the arrival of large, foreign, comparatively well-paid peacekeeping personnel’. Jennings’ built on this concept with her above definition (2014:315) and, in this chapter, I apply it to the humanitarian arena rather than the peacekeeping arena. In doing so, we are able to analyse the economic activity that allows the humanitarian presence – and the humanitarians themselves – to function. Conceptualised in this way, the humanitarian economy involves a multitude of actors typically marginalised from humanitarian studies, but whose activities, services, and interactions with humanitarians are far from marginal. Within the literature on forced migration studies, I situate the humanitarian economy within the ‘displacement economies’ approach contained in Amanda Hammar’s (2014) edited volume which examines the rupture, repositioning and reshaping of economies during processes of displacement.

Before 2015, Lesvos already had in place a well-established infrastructure of bars, hotels and restaurants that catered to tourist, student and local populations. In this respect, the case of Lesvos is somewhat different to the examples in Rehn and Sirleaf’s ‘peacekeeping economies’ (2002:62) where such industries and services are established on a large scale in direct response to the peacekeeping presence. At the same time, the dynamics of Lesvos’ humanitarian economy have indeed produced new businesses and jobs that cater directly to the needs of humanitarian and refugee populations as well as locals. Humanitarians, like other humans, need to sleep, eat, drink, move around and generally consume and, as such, have drawn on the island’s existing infrastructure, all of which is paid for with funds generated outside the island. As a result, in the midst of a national economic crisis, significant economic activity has occurred that otherwise would not have occurred without the humanitarian presence.

6.3 Coping with humanitarians: new spaces of profit, loss, and solidarity

In his edited volume, *Coping with Tourists,* Jeremy Boissevain (1996) notes that not all inhabitants of tourist destinations profit equally from tourism and, indeed, the same can be said of the new economies produced by the humanitarian presence in Lesvos. Cornélia Zarkia’s research (1996) found that, until the advent of tourism, the land by the sea on the Aegean island of Skyros was deemed to be of little value and usually belonged to the poorest

class of the island's inhabitants. As tourism developed, the land became more valuable and social relations on the island changed. With regard to Lesvos, the economic geography of the island has changed around the presence and spatial practices of humanitarian actors. While in traditional tourism, it is usually the residents of seaside communities and historic centres that profit from the new industry, in Lesvos' humanitarian economy it is those in proximity to refugee sites such as camps/hospitality centres and landing spots who are best placed to access new resources and opportunities. The main locales directly affected by this new industry have been: the main town of Mytilene (which was not typically a tourist destination except for those *en route* to/from Turkey via cruise ship); the villages and areas surrounding the camps/hospitality centres (mainly agricultural areas as well as a pleasant spot where Mytileneans and others would enjoy a weekend lunch or coffee); and Skala Sykamnias in the north-east of the island, which has typically been a tourist destination although not of the humanitarian sort and certainly not all year round as has been the case since 2015. All these areas have experienced significant physical and social change.

In the areas surrounding the main camps, land and building owners have benefitted from renting their property to humanitarian actors in need of space and access to the sites. For example, warehouses in the area surrounding the main camps that had been empty for years were rented out to NGOs to store NFIs and/or provide services to refugees. During fieldwork, an NGO programme manager (H,F,30s,II:29/7/19) complained to me that there was 'nowhere to rent anymore' and they were struggling to find additional space some 30km away from the camps. In another example, with no space available for accommodation inside one of the main camps, refugees were sleeping in tents provided by humanitarian actors in the adjacent olive grove. The owner of the land initially allowed this to happen in solidarity with the displaced (and accepted some ad hoc payments from NGOs) while suffering significant damage to his olive grove. As the situation continued, he entered into a formal financial agreement with an NGO and rented out the land, securing regular income as well as solidifying the camp management role of that particular NGO. In 2019, despite significant local opposition, he rented out more of his land to the same NGO before it was burnt down the following year. Across the road, a large English-language 'For Sale' sign was hanging on for the duration of my fieldwork where a tenant sold food, drink, cigarettes and shisha (the smokable water pipe popular in the Middle East) from 6am until midnight each day. 'The

owner is asking for 300,000 Euros for it which is crazy', the tenant (L,M,50s,II:6/10/19) explained, 'but it's good for me because no one will buy it at that price'. Meanwhile, I observed a small but growing trend of English-language advertisements for rental accommodation sticky-taped to trees in Mytilene and the surrounding villages, a medium that traditionally targeted the island's transient student and soldier population (see Chapter 5) and was exclusively written in Greek. The significance lies in their being written in English, apparently recognising (if not accepting) international humanitarians (if not refugees) as a new consumer group on the island.

One village situated directly in between some of the island's key refugee sites has effectively become a humanitarian hub. As the owner of a thriving low budget hotel in a village close to the camp (L,F,61,SI:11/10/19) which, prior to 2015, was mainly open during the summer and mainly for religious tourists and the odd international summer backpacker, remarked 'Who would have thought that [this village] would have become the place to be!'. With its hotels open all year round and 'no apartments [available in the village] to rent anymore' *(ibid.)*, humanitarian actors hold meetings in its cafés and restaurants, stop off for food and other supplies on their way to/from the camps/hospitality sites, and often spend their daily lunch and coffee breaks there. The village has also witnessed the opening or expansion of small food and coffee businesses with delivery and takeaway services, affecting the economic balance and social relations in the village. For example, the owner of one such business (L,M,43) was, like many in the country, made redundant during the early years of the crisis, now finds himself in the new position of both running a business and working in the food sector. In addition to the local clientele of the village, a significant part of the business' income comes from the humanitarian community. This new consumer group is made up mainly of the new humanitarian residents of the village as well as the substantial traffic that passes through, to and from the camps. Of the two key groups of newcomers to Lesvos since 2015, he notes (L,M,43,SI:16/9/19) that not many refugees come to his shop, suggesting that 'probably they can't afford the prices in here. They go to [the international supermarket] mainly I think'. Claiming to be happy with being his own boss, providing for his family, and building his own business (although often looking a little tired and overworked), he was surprised and a little concerned that another shop offering almost the same products as his and services opened up just a few months and a few metres after his. Although it was the

third such shop in the space of 100 metres, he was concerned with the economic threat it posed to his own business than he was with how *oi alloi* ('the others' in the village/society) might perceive him and his venture. He was mainly worried that they might be criticising him behind his back for opening a shop and 'trying to take advantage, to profit, from the [refugee] situation' when he should, according to 'the others', be trying discourage it, not least so the pre-2015 population can 'get their island back' and return to pre-2015 'normality' (see Chapter 5).

Meanwhile, one formerly Athens-based entrepreneur travelled to the island 'in 2015 because I saw a market here'. He quickly found a local partner and began serving halal food from a restaurant in a prime location and began charging several times the Athens rate for shisha. By 2019, in the new operating environment, he was no longer serving shisha but continued serving halal food and had expanded his business to include acting as an intermediary in renting studio apartments to volunteers and providing support with Greek bureaucracy. In 2020, his restaurant received a crippling fine from the local authorities for an issue related to the building's infrastructure. As an (economically successful) outsider, he was never particularly popular with the island's pre-2015 population and, supported by the post-2019 political environment (Chapter 5), he believes that he was targeted because of his associations with refugees and humanitarian actors. Perhaps inspired by the success of humanitarian fundraising initiatives, he set up a campaign to help raise money to pay the fine. While this vignette demonstrates another way in which the humanitarian economy has attracted commercial interest from outside the island, it also highlights the risks involved in operating in such an economy.

Not everybody has been as successful in adapting to the humanitarian economy as the people above. For example, a restaurant in the village that had been operating for more than a quarter of a century closed down during fieldwork. More suited to the pre-2015 economy, the owner's customer base included pre-arranged coaches that brought in Turkish tourists from Mytilene and international tourists from cruise ships who wanted to explore outside Mytilene, as well as locals celebrating weddings, christenings or just having a weekend lunch. According to the owner (L,M,57,II:1/5/19), the village 'is black and every road [to the village] is black' referring to the refugee presence, and 'nobody wants to come here anymore'. He

held refugees responsible for the seven break-ins since 2015 when each time all the alcohol and remaining food was stolen from the restaurant. Several rumours circulated during the period up the final closure including that a German NGO was going to rent the property for €5,000 per month and, at one point, some of the staff were told that a Dutch NGO was going to buy the whole building. None of the rumours materialised – some suggested that they had their origins more in marketing than in reality – and, after more than 25 years of living and working there, the owner and his family had moved back to the other side of the island to start a new restaurant. In March 2020, the building remained empty and unsold.

The village has since lost some of its geographical advantage after Moria camp burnt down in 2020. However, the new camp is also situated near the village, its rows of cafés, bakeries and convenience shops than it is to Mytilene so its economic geography has not faced too much disruption. However, just as the villages in the north-east of the island gained a lot of trade between 2015 and the 'EU-Turkey deal' of March 2016 and then lost it as refugees (and humanitarians) stopped arriving, the situation will likely change again if/when the Reception and Identification Centre being constructed to the north becomes operational and the new camp is closed down. Indeed, the transient economic and humanitarian geographies of the island are very much dependant on political developments outside the island.

6.4 Constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing tourism in Lesvos

A dominant narrative on and off the island is that the refugee crisis has destroyed tourism in Lesvos. In addition to some businesspeople in the tourism sector, the narrative of the suffering tourist industry has also been promoted by humanitarian organisations and the media. This view is often held and espoused by many of the locals who oppose the refugee presence (see Chapter 5), promoted by businesspeople in the tourist sector and, as discussed below, is also supported by research in tourism studies and business intelligence reports. On the other hand, the arrival and presence of humanitarians and refugees have provided a significant stimulus to the economy, not least through their enthusiastic engagement with the island's tourist infrastructure. While this thesis is by no means suggesting that tourism in Lesvos has not been affected by the refugee crisis, it nevertheless proposes a reinterpretation of what is tourism in Lesvos, one that better reflects the year-round occupancy of hotels,

rented accommodation and other sectors of the tourist industry on the island. Such a perspective may be as useful to the study and practice of tourism as it is to humanitarianism.

Even putting to one side the relative unpopularity of Lesvos as an international and domestic tourist destination compared to many of the country's other islands (Chapter 5), other significant yet less mentioned global and local economic trends have also affected tourism to the island. As noted earlier, these factors include the global economic crisis that began in 2008 and affected the willingness and ability of 'traditional' international tourists (northern Europeans and Americans, Australasians, etc) to go on vacation. Similarly, Greece's specific financial crisis and the particularly harsh austerity measures put in place since 2010 have affected Greeks' willingness and ability to engage in domestic tourism. Furthermore, while this decline in tourism generally was offset to some degree by the rise in Turkish tourism in the years up to 2015, with neighbouring Lesvos representing a popular and easily accessible destination, Turkey's more recent currency and debt crises have, in turn, affected Turkish tourists' willingness and ability to vacation on the island. Even so, according to the Vice-Mayor for Cultural and Tourist Affairs for Lesvos (L,M,50s,SI:19/8/19), around 80,000 tourists from Turkey were recorded to have visited Lesvos in 2018. Meanwhile, the thousands of humanitarian actors who stay for varying periods throughout the year are not considered as tourists.

Various studies have highlighted the negative impacts on the refugee crisis on the tourist sector in Lesvos. According to Stanislav Ivanov and Theodoros Stavrinoudis' (2018:214) analysis of the impacts of the refugee crisis on the hotel industry on four Greek islands including Lesvos, this 'had a very serious negative impact on the hotel industry and their operational statistics deteriorated significantly'. Based on unpublished data gathered from the Hellenic Chamber of Hoteliers and an online questionnaire covering the period from 2012-16, the research identified 'multiple negative effects' on 'tourism activity on the islands: cancellation of hotel reservations, flights, conferences and cruise ship port calls; loss of income; shrinking of the active tourist season; decrease in bookings, etc' (*ibid.:*215). Other literature in tourism management (Krasteva 2016; 2018) has come to similar conclusions as does at least one business intelligence and solutions provider which states that that the 'migrant crisis' is 'particularly affecting previously popular islands such as Lesvos' suggesting

'that some tourists will be put off by the media reports from the country' (Fitch Solutions 2019:19). Moreover, this is a narrative that repeatedly came up during fieldwork from both locals and humanitarians.

These representations stand in contrast to other research which highlight the positive impacts in the tourist sector. For example, Afouxenidis et al. (2017:30) found that between mid-2015 and early-2016, 'hotels and rooms to let kept operating with full occupancy even after the end of the summer season in order to cater for the large numbers of volunteers and NGO officials'. Guribye and Mydland's (2018:352) study of volunteer engagement on Lesvos notes the 'tens of thousands of spontaneous volunteers of all ages flocking to the beaches to help, typically staying for a week or forthnight [sic] at a local hotel'. Interviews with people present on the island during the same period also support these findings. The recollection of a tourist industry professional (L,M,33,SI:18/3/19) that 'there was no other period in the history of this island where hotels were full to the brim, even in mid-winter' was repeated by many of my interlocutors both from within and outside the tourist sector. Meanwhile, ethnographic observations and interviews during 2019 reveal that, unlike the pre-2015 period, hotels continued to remain open all year round including during winters and other formerly 'out-of-season' periods. Indeed, this pattern continued until the March 2020 coronavirus lockdown. Furthermore, car hire companies have expanded their fleets significantly since 2015.[24] Prior to the EU-Turkey deal of 2016, refugees were mainly passing through the island as quickly as they could and international volunteers hired vehicles for transporting them from their arrival points to their departure points (Chapter 5). Professional humanitarian organisations also hire vehicles but, due to the bureaucratic processes of some organisations, are only able to do so through officially designated agents. Hired vehicles are used by humanitarians for an array of both project-related activities as well as personal or social purposes and, as with the many of the hotels, hire companies are now busy throughout the year instead of mainly in the summer.

[24] Unfortunately, economic data on the car hire companies in Lesvos is classified as a 'statistical secret' as there are only a limited number of companies operating on the island. Interviews with company owners and others, however, confirm significant expansion.

How, then, to explain the discrepancy between these two accounts? First, it should be noted that the whole island was not affected equally. Refugees tend to arrive on the north-eastern and eastern coasts of the island and then travel to the camps or port in the south-east. Despite the lack of refugees, the tourist sector on the western side of the island was still affected by hotel and flight cancellations during 2015-16, after which they began to recover. Regarding complaints from businesspeople in the tourist sector in the south-east of the island, however, the most common explanation that emerged from my interviews and observations was that they were simply not telling the truth about their income. While there were indeed widespread cancellations during 2015 and 2016, a professional in the tourist industry (L,M,33,SI:18/3/19) argues that claims 'of lost revenues and profits' from businesspeople in the tourist sector have been 'much exaggerated'. Meanwhile, one born-and-bred Lesvian (L/H,38,SI:13/9/19) recalls a heated discussion with one hotel owner during the winter of 2015/16 who was 'blatantly lying' to the media, government and others about her and others losses. Many on the island argued that while these cancellations did indeed take place, the arrival of thousands of humanitarian actors (and refugees, particularly during the period before the EU-Turkey deal) replaced and exceeded 'traditional' tourist revenue, especially in the north and the south-east of the island. They argue that the income generated by these spontaneous customers was most likely not reported or underreported to the tax authorities and is not reflected in official tourist data provided by hotel owners.

With hotels, car companies, bars and restaurants busy throughout the year rather than just seasonally, there is a powerful argument to suggest that the refugee crisis has been an economic boon to the island's tourist economy rather than the opposite. The Director of the Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory and Professor of Local and Island Development at the University of the Aegean, Ioannis Spilanis (SI:26/2/2021), argues that 'the money that has come into the island from all the volunteers, NGOs, etc., all that they spend and consume on the island, this money is much more than the tourists ever used to bring. For me, this is clear'. Meanwhile, the local accommodation sector has adapted to changes in global tourism more broadly. The rise of Airbnb and social media coincided with the expansion of the humanitarian arena enabling anyone with a room to spare to become a landlord in Lesvos' new economy. While the commercial hotels remained open throughout the year until the onset of the global pandemic in 2020, by 2019, the vast majority of incoming humanitarians tended to stay in

what is classified as 'non-commercial accommodation' (UNWTO/Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory 2016, 2021; Chapter 5).

6.5 Commercialised non-commercial accommodation

While the numbers of incoming guests since 2015 were sufficient to enable hotels to stay open all year round, the majority of humanitarians tended to stay in private houses, bed and breakfasts, and Airbnbs. As discussed in the previous chapter, recent and reliable island-level statistical data on non-commercial accommodation are unavailable. Nevertheless, my own research reveals that these are indeed the preferred forms of accommodation for incoming humanitarians. Of the 52 people (mainly from northern Europe and America, but also from Greece, Syria and Afghanistan) whom I asked specifically about accommodation and who were working/volunteering with refugees, 47 people (90%) were staying in rented accommodation; three people (6%) with friends and family; and two (4%) were staying on a boat. Of the 47 people staying in rented accommodation, 42 (89%) were staying in non-commercial accommodation. These often consisted of an apartment converted into dormitories with several beds (sometimes bunkbeds) in one room at a cost of around ten Euros per night that were usually owned by a local and managed by a refugee volunteer-on-a-stipend associated with an NGO (see section 6.7.2). These were either suggested by the NGO they were volunteering with, were found via Airbnb on the internet or recommended via friends and/or social media. The remaining five (11%) were staying in larger hotels. Meanwhile, 13 of the 47 (28%) staying in rented accommodation had their accommodation either paid for or subsidised by the organisation that they were working/volunteering for, while the vast majority (72%) were paying the costs from their own funds.

My findings largely corroborate the work of Tsartas et al. (2020) who found that the vast majority of NGO workers and volunteers in Lesvos between October 2016 and March 2017 (during the winter season) typically found accommodation via hotels and rented rooms. They surveyed 30 NGO members and volunteers who worked for mainly Northern European NGOs, Greek NGOs and as independents. Nearly half of their sample identified as Greek with the bulk of the remainder from northern Europe, the US, and Australia as well as Syria and Afghanistan. They found that 76.7% of participants stayed in hotels and rented rooms which they heralded as a 'significant contribution to tourism' (2020:1322). While my research builds

on theirs to some extent by distinguishing between hotels and non-commercial accommodation, there remains scope for more research on the accommodation practices of humanitarians on the island. Meanwhile, there is a definite need for official and reliable data on island-level non-commercial accommodation in order to contextualise these findings.

6.5.1 Humanitarian Gentrification

The increased demand for accommodation since 2015 has significantly affected the local rental market and urban development of Mytilene and its surrounding areas. While hard data on the historical rental market of Mytilene are also hard to obtain, my interlocutors unanimously agreed that prices for accommodation have increased significantly since 2015 revealing benefits for property owners as well as challenges for other groups such as students and civil servants. One local humanitarian (H/L,F,39,SI:3/10/19) who has lived in Mytilene for more than twenty years since finishing her studies at the local university explained:

> After 2015 it was very difficult for locals to rent a house in Mytilene, and for me as well, I was also looking for a house. Because internationals would pay like 600 Euros for houses that were rented for 300 Euros in the past. Because they had the money, they could afford this. And, also, because the locals – the landlords – would just elevate the prices. This is also because internationals would come with short contracts and they would not guarantee their stay. And some organisations also provided money for the rent so locals could not approach these prices anymore. Plus the fact that too many people arrived and there were not enough houses. It's a small market so there were not any decent houses available to rent anymore.

Meanwhile, a professional in the rental market (L,M,29,SI:7/3/19) explained that, for a one-bedroom flat with furniture before 2015:

> [o]wners used to ask for around 250 euros, 220. Right now, they ask for 350, 400, because they know there are a lot of people who need an apartment to rent because of all the NGOs and the policemen that they come for the refugee phenomenon. So [property owners] know [that] people cannot find an apartment so [the owners] ask a lot of money.

Increased rental prices have not benefited everyone. In a context where the national GDP has declined and income and wages have dropped to levels far lower than any other EU country, while taxes are rising, pensions have been slashed and public sector wages frozen for a decade (Tsampra 2018), those who do not own property or businesses do not necessarily benefit from these economic changes. Particularly affected are renting locals and those social groups who had been coming to the island before 2015 – and continue to do so – such as police officers, soldiers for national military service at the island's base, and university students. Members of these groups can be heard complaining both about the increasing costs of renting in the town centre as well as having to seek accommodation in further away places. Furthermore, it is agreed amongst local participants that these changes have not affected the whole island equally and are particularly prevalent in the areas around Mytilene, the camps and the areas where most refugees, aid workers and humanitarian services are concentrated. Indeed, not everybody is even aware of these changes, as one renting born-and-bred resident of Mytilene and former employee of an international humanitarian organisation (L,M,40s,II:30/3/19) worried that the owner of his house on the other side of the island might increase the rent if the extent of these price increases was better known.

Meanwhile, a Greek policeman deployed from the mainland to the island's main refugee camp (H,M,28,SI:31/7/19) would have preferred to stay in the main town but could not find anywhere. After failing to find a landlord/lady in Mytilene who would accept him, his girlfriend and his dog, he eventually found a small one-bedroomed apartment in one of the villages further out of town for the price of 900 Euros for two months:

> I know it's a lot but there was nothing we could do. I found one place in Mytilene but it was so old and the owner was asking for so much money that it just wasn't worth it. When I found this one, I tried to get it for a better price but the landlord knows exactly how much I get paid and told me "You can afford it, do you want the place or not?" So we took it cos we couldn't afford paying for staying any more in [the hotel].'

He is not complaining though. He receives around two and a half times as much net pay as he did in his regular work back on the mainland, plus he enjoys the opportunity to go to the

beach regularly and explore the island and surrounding areas. He would have liked to have stayed longer but unfortunately did not have the necessary ‘connections’ with his superiors and others to extend his stay to the maximum 3 months that is permitted. There were many others in his department who wanted this opportunity and were waiting their turn in the rotation.

While he was not complaining about the rent, others were. Eleni (L,F,20s,II:23/3/19), a substitute primary school teacher deployed to the island for at a village school on the outskirts of Mytilene, certainly was: ‘Most of the money I get goes on rent, it doesn’t make sense’ explaining that ‘I have to come here or I lose my job’ referring to the public sector employment system for substitute teachers whereby teachers must accept offered placements or potentially forfeit future work or even their jobs. Meanwhile, Maria and her university friends have experienced the sharp edge of changes in the rental market. Upon returning to Lesvos from their summer holidays in 2015, they found themselves forcibly displaced by their landlord. While they were away and the mass migration of humanitarians and refugees to the island was underway, their landlord apparently took the decision to remove their possessions from the apartment and rent the property out to ‘NGOs’ instead. Maria (L,F,25,SI:9/10/19) explained:

> ‘So it was a bit difficult then, the first three months we were living four people in the living room of a friend that he was hosting us because we couldn’t find a house…[then we found] this amazing house somewhere from people we know from here, from Lesvos…I think everything was 700 [Euros]… too, too much! Its like 200 each which is a price that I would pay if I was living alone! And they were like “We’re planning to rent it to NGOs, sorry”’.

While most of her friends have since graduated and left the island, Maria has stayed and, despite working two part-time jobs, is once again sleeping on a friend’s couch, ‘homeless now, two months’. At one point during the summer of 2019, Maria and a friend thought they had secured a suitable apartment only to find out the next day that the prospective landlady had rented it to someone else:

> ‘It was a good apartment for €250…two bedrooms because for that you cannot find here two bedrooms apartment in the centre for 250, for sure not. So I don't know who told her, they probably talk with the real estate people and they probably told her “This is crazy, you cannot rent it for so low!”…and she gave it for 300 to new students without even asking us’

Despite the seriousness of her situation, initially Maria only ‘jokingly’ identified the city’s rising rental costs as an important change:

> A: What have been the most important changes since 2015?
>
> I: [laughs] the house renting. No, I am joking, I don’t know. That I'm here living in a situation that many people come from far to live it, to experience it, and to me it just happened that it’s here, and I don't want to say that it's an opportunity because it’s not an opportunity for peoples’ lives right now but…

Maria only ‘jokingly’ identified rent as a problem, skipped past the issue and was surprised that I wanted to discuss it further. Although she recognises the connections between the humanitarian presence and her homelessness, she does not seem to harbour any resentment for this. On the contrary, she says and seems to enjoy and appreciate the new multicultural environment and community that she has lived with over the past few years. While not particularly interested in volunteering or working in the humanitarian sector, she has a lot of contact with humanitarians (and refugees) through her work in a late-night bar popular with late-night drinkers from the humanitarian community. By her own account, however, and excluding her northern European humanitarian ex-boyfriend, she does not have many relations with ‘them’ apart from some drunken exchanges of pleasantries at work. Her lifeworld nevertheless intersects with the humanitarian community on a daily basis: she has spent the last two years working in a bar that would normally be closed for the winter and, despite her current difficulties in finding a place to live, she is overall very positive about humanitarian and refugee presence on the island. These warm feelings, however, are by no means shared by all of the island’s renting population.

6.5.2 Humanitarian renovation

Meanwhile, humanitarian renovation is rife. One family from the global north who had moved to Lesvos with funding from their organisation were concerned about the damp in the house. With long term plans to stay in Lesvos, they had paid their rent for a year in advance and were renovating the kitchen. According to the husband/father (H,M,35,II:9/10/19), the job cost them '1500 Euros including the work quotes and the cupboards. It would have been cheaper in [northern Europe] but we just weren't able to get it cheaper than that'. This humanitarian recognised it was expensive but also recognised that he cannot speak Greek and, noting that 'we've got the funds anyway [from the organisation]', went ahead with the work despite what he believed to be an inflated quote. As is often the case with renovations, the builder didn't finish on time but, on the bright side, 'he didn't add any extra costs though'. Indeed, he hardly could at that price.

Various people and organisations have renovated buildings used for offices and/or accommodation. Renovations can range from significant infrastructural repairs to the building to painting the inside/outside of the house. In the case of some of the larger professional organisations, renovation work has taken place to enable the building to meet criteria laid out in internal safety and security guidelines. One such organisation spent over a year finding a suitable building that met its criteria. It then proceeded to 'upgrade' the building in order to meet its guidelines while paying rent at a far higher than market rate. In other cases, such as the abovementioned residential kitchen, renovations are conducted in accordance with tenants' personal preferences. In addition to the incoming humanitarian population, a real estate professional (L,M,29,SI:7/3/19) noted that those from the pre-2015 population who are able to do so, now 'fix' their houses and rooms that previously 'they didn't think about' in order to benefit from the new market. He and several participants indicated that the rise of Airbnb has played an important role of property owners' ability to rent out places in the new market.

6.5.3 Humanitarian bookings

Humanitarian organisations' practices of long-term renting of apartments and houses or 'block-booking' rooms and studios to accommodate their staff and/or turnover of short-term 'volunteers' also contribute to rising rents. For example, a recently constructed block of studio

apartments was fully booked by a single humanitarian organization until the end of the year. This is similar to practices in the tourist industry whereby travel agents book accommodation for extended periods and then rent separately to their own customers. Unlike the tourist season, however, which lasts a few months in the summer, humanitarians rent properties all year round. Some NGOs charge volunteers a fee for volunteering and, in some cases, this includes meals and accommodation. While prices vary depending on the organisation and level of service, accommodation usually consists of a bed in a shared room or a room in a shared house which, according to one such volunteer from north America (H,M,23,II:26/3/19), 'When you consider that you don't have to pay for board and lodging and all your food is included, it works out really well'.

While this thesis focuses on humanitarians' activities outside of the projects they implement, it should be noted that their shelter/accommodation programmes also contribute to rising rents. According to one report there were 597 refugees and asylum-seekers in UNHCR's accommodation scheme and 310 in other facilities or in self-accommodation in March 2019,[25] although it should be noted that these figures do not include refugees and asylum-seekers who rent privately nor programmes/initiatives that choose not to report their figures. While these figures are related to the refugee presence rather than the humanitarian presence, observations and interviews reveal that it is humanitarians who often pay these rents.

Those refugees who are able to rent in Lesvos often complain of discrimination. Interviews with professionals in the real estate sector as well as property owners themselves corroborate this, many of whom stated that they do not want to rent to refugees because of the perception of refugees being 'dirty', an unwillingness to contribute to the 'refugee problem' and, importantly, an unwillingness to be *seen* by *oi alloi*, ('the others') as contributing to the 'refugee problem'. The case of one house-seeking refugee (R/H,M,27,II:21/2/19) who was told one price for a property and then, having accepted it, was given a much-inflated and unaffordable price two days later is not uncommon. In this case, he did not know why this decision was taken ('he probably changed his mind') but discussions and observations indicate that property owners' decisions to rent to or host refugees are often met with

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[25] Inter-Agency Consultation Forum Lesvos Meeting Minutes, 14th March 2019, on file.

resistance from friends, family and society which can result in reconsideration and/or higher rents. This particular refugee could not afford the newly proposed rent and, by the end of my fieldwork eight months later, he was still staying with international volunteer friends/colleagues.

Meanwhile data gathered on the experiences of aid workers and international volunteers in the rental market painted a different picture. Non-Lesvian Greek professional aid workers, mostly posted from Athens or Thessaloniki, pointed out their surprise at how expensive rent was on the island while, at the same time, recognising that they would not necessarily be on the island if not for the job that they have, 'I thank [my donors]', quipped one aid worker from the mainland. International aid workers and volunteers, on the other hand, mainly from the global north, tended to place less emphasis on rental or property prices and rarely mentioned it in any of their informal or semi-structured interviews whereas, on the other hand, almost all locals mentioned it as a key significant change since 2015. Elsewhere where accommodation was mentioned by international humanitarians, it was mainly done so in the context of being much 'cheaper than back home' or complaining about the quality of the building, plumbing, etc. rather than the price.

The data and analysis above show some of the ways that the accommodation sector on the island has changed since 2015. The arrival of relatively well-paid professional humanitarians and the high turnover of volunteers typically from the relatively rich global north with money to spend over short periods have led to increased rents and renovated properties in areas where the humanitarians live and operate. Newcomers struggle to find property to rent or hotel rooms to book, hotels in Mytilene are often fully booked in formerly 'out-of-season' periods while property-owners profit and certain groups of renters struggle. Following on from this analysis of the accommodation sector, the next section examines some of the ways in which another part of the hospitality sector has been affected: bars, cafés and restaurants.

6.6 Free time: eating and drinking in the 'golden triangle'

Most bars, cafés and restaurants in Mytilene have benefited from the humanitarian presence from the addition of a relatively young and rich consumer group who work long hours. While most have benefited, a handful of these establishments has benefited more than others.

Several humanitarian interlocutors talked of the ‘golden triangle’ (or, sometimes, the ‘Bermuda triangle’) of four or five ‘alternative’ bars/cafés/restaurants deemed to be refugee-friendly. Located in the town’s small centre, they are described in this way because one can begin the evening at one establishment, then move on to another, then another and finally return to the first, all within in an evening. They are particularly popular with volunteers and Greeks who work in the humanitarian sectors as they are known to be ‘refugee-friendly’, are recommended and frequented by others from the humanitarian community and also tend to play more non-Greek music than most other venues. With a substantial part of the humanitarian community made up of short-term international volunteers who come for as little as a few days to a couple of weeks, this triangle of bars/cafes/restaurants are often the only venues they go to. This practice is reinforced by the circulation of narratives that other bars (or, rather, their owners and/or customers) are ‘racist’ or ‘against refugees’, with such narratives more likely to impact the short-termers who, for reasons of time and sociality, are less likely to explore outside. The example of an occasion I went for a drink with a local who works in the humanitarian sector at a not-long-opened café/bar in Mytilene’s town centre puts this in perspective. There were no visible foreigners (refugees or humanitarians). The venue was his choice and, after we sat down, he asked me what I thought of the place. He was happy to hear that I thought it was really nice and he told me that ‘other foreigners don’t like to come here because they don’t like to serve refugees in here’ (L/H,M,31,II:7/5/2019). In Mytilene, some bars/cafés/restaurants are more popular humanitarians actors than others depending on their perceived friendliness towards refugees.

6.6.1 Case study: a new restaurant for newcomers

One such venue is hosted in a formerly disused building in the centre of Mytilene and is particularly popular with the humanitarian community. It is a restaurant and legally registered as a project of a non-profit-making company. Its stated aims involve:

> working together to find solutions to benefit both refugees and local people…to provide an environment and diverse cuisine, both eastern and Mediterranean, where different cultures can meet, integrate and communicate. Where different cultures have the opportunity to share a space and atmosphere in which to foster an understanding of each other and break down barriers. In some cases refugees are still

seen in a negative light. This is a serious and sometimes contentious issue, which we will endeavour to address.[26]

On my first of many visits to the restaurant, one of the waiters/project staff (L/H,M,64:5/3/19) explained to me how things work: 'You know the ethos of this place, don't you? We don't make any money, and everything goes to helping these ladies here', gesturing towards the three female refugee workers in the kitchen. Rated in the top ten of 79 of Mytilene's restaurants reviewed by TripAdvisor,[27] it is very popular with international humanitarian actors, some of whom have described it as 'wonderful', 'an 'oasis', '*really* good food', and a 'refreshing change from all that Greek food'. Many had heard about the restaurant before arriving on the island. During one of the local university's summer schools, there was much interest in going there for lunch during the fieldtrip to Mytilene.[28] One northern European participant wanted to go there because she heard that it is run by refugees, while another from a northern European capital city liked the idea and business model of 'locals and migrants working together' (apparently unaware how much of the hospitality industry works in his hometown). According to a northern European volunteer who, at the time of interviewing, had conducted four volunteering trips to Lesvos (H,M,40,SI:2/3/19), 'It's a fantastic place…[It]'s how you would love to see every place to be. It's a mix of locals and refugees…it's just perfect harmony as you would love it to see everywhere. Unfortunately, I guess it's more the exception than the rule in Lesvos'.

During my 10 months of fieldwork, I dined there at least once per week, often more, at various times of day between lunchtime and the evening and would also meet others there for socialisation during their dinners. I soon realised that the everyday practice was less consistent with the representation. First, while refugees are indeed welcome, or at least certainly more welcome here than in most restaurants on the island, most customers were consistently from the international humanitarian community and included very few refugee diners. On most days I visited, the only refugees were those working in the kitchen. The mainly

[26] Copied from social media profile, 5th March 2019 [last accessed 20th April 2020].
[27] [last accessed 20th April 2020].
[28] Previous years' practice of fieldtrips to the camps/hospitality centres were discontinued in 2019 due to concerns that they might be considered voyeuristic.

Euro-American clientele enjoyed the food as much as the often-played Euro-American music, general ambiance and comradery of wining and dining fellow humanitarian actors. The few refugees I observed dining there were usually members of the international and Greek humanitarian community and/or accompanied by them, English-speaking, often secular-oriented/alcohol-drinking, and not particularly representative of either Lesvos' refugee population or their own "national" communities on the island. The kitchen staff, for their part, were exclusively refugees and their managers were exclusively from the pre-2015 population.

The limited refugee presence is explained partly by the restaurant's relatively high prices. While certainly 'cheaper than back home' for many its diners, these prices were still more expensive than most other eateries in town. Generally speaking (and especially when compared to relative population sizes), refugees ate out in restaurants in Mytilene significantly less often than their international counterparts in the humanitarian community. Furthermore, in the few cases where they did, they tended to do so at the few refugee-friendly yet less expensive restaurants in town. The relatively higher prices also partly explain the relative lack of pre-2015 local clientele, many of whom also have ideological differences with the restaurant's ethos (see Chapter 5). In practice, the higher prices could be seen to undermine the restaurant's stated ethos by limiting the less affluent's access to the environment. Apart from the busy multicultural kitchen, which was less accessible to customers, I consistently observed mainly Euro-American cultures meeting, integrating and communicating with each other.

Second, building on the last point, the promoted integrative narrative and ethos is called into question by alleged cases of discriminatory treatment between international humanitarian and refugee customers. Several non-white people commented on being treated rudely by particular members of the restaurant's staff from the pre-2015 population. On separate occasions, two refugees working in the humanitarian sector went as far as calling these particular staff 'racist' (H/R,M,24,II:17/8/19; H/R,M,20s,II:4/9/20) with the former explaining that he no longer goes there even when he is invited by his colleagues. In a separate case, a brown-skinned hijabed woman (H,F,32,II:23/5/19) was waiting to be seated while others from the global north who arrived after her were being seated. When she went inside to see what food was on display, one of the waitresses shouted at her to wait outside. 'I think she thought

I was a refugee' she concluded with the slightly disturbing implication that it is somehow understandable, if not acceptable, to treat refugees differently to other customers.

Third, the claim that all the money goes to paying for the refugee women in the kitchen is undermined by staff testimony to the contrary. According to one refugee staff member (R/H,F,30s,II:5/3/19), 'The Greeks who work here are paid 1000 Euros per month. When we started my salary [and the other kitchen staff] was 800 Euros but then they reduced it to 500 because there's not enough money'. This point is particularly poignant when considering the role of refugees' employment in the restaurant's marketing strategy as highlighting in, for example, a social media post citing its primary achievement as having employed more than 25 refugees over the years. Meanwhile, over the course of my fieldwork, the portions of food became smaller, the prices higher, and I increasingly encountered gossip and rumours amongst locals and long-termers that the owners/managers were profiting personally from the enterprise. The sarcastic comment of a disgruntled staff member (L/H,60s,II:2/10/19) that, 'Oh, you've never been to this profit-sharing, opps, sorry, I mean non-profit restaurant before?' did little to quash such rumours. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010:1118) might well argue that, rumours aside, the combination of the restaurant's marketing strategy and the discrepancy in staff salaries is an example of how the 'language and principles of humanitarian space are strategically or tacitly used by different actors to advance or legitimise their respective interests, projects or beliefs'.

6.6.2 The humanitarian gaze

For the mainly short-term visitors to the island, many of these insights are not visible. In his seminal work, *The Tourist Gaze*, the sociologist John Urry (1990; 2002) argues that rather than tourists viewing their destination objectively, their experience is highly subjective and socially constructed. He argues that in the tourist industry there are experts who construct and develop the gaze while effectively deciding what tourists see of a place, how they interact with it and what they take away from the experience. The tourist destination depends upon what the tourist wants to see and Urry and Larsen (2011:3) argue that 'people gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education'. In the case of the restaurant, many of the

clientele were initially attracted by the representations and stories that they had encountered on and off the island prior to their first visit. The restaurant's cuisine, ambience, non-profit status, refugee-friendly discourse and stated ethos all have strong appeal and, particularly for short-term visitors (who constitute the vast majority of the island's volunteers and the restaurant's clientele), the presented picture of shared space and perfect harmony emerges. The 'discrepancies in value interpretations and incompatibilities between actor interests' (Long 2001:59) often pass unnoticed by many of the short-term humanitarian actors in this particular arena.

A look beyond the gaze, however, reveals a restaurant which, supported by the language and discourse of humanitarianism and equality, promotes a certain image and charges above market rates for services part-produced by a refugee staff in a highly racialised and unequal labour market. In the case of the visit of the summer school participants' lunchtime visit, there were no visible refugee customers at the restaurant (nor at most times I visited or dined there) and the kitchen staff, who had finished their morning shift of cooking while the restaurant was closed to the public, were off duty until the busy shift later in the evening. Even though many of the group noted, almost disappointedly, that they didn't see any migrants or refugees there (FN:5/7/19), this did not seem to impact negatively on their overall experience or perception of the restaurant. Indeed, they seemed to thoroughly enjoy spending their time and money there. Urry's (1990; 2002) tourist gaze that both analyses and conceals is perhaps better described in this particular context as a 'humanitarian gaze'.[29]

6.7 Humanitarian livelihoods and the labour market

The expansion of the humanitarian arena in Lesvos has had a significant effect on livelihood opportunities and the labour market in Lesvos. This section analyses the livelihood and employment opportunities generated directly by the humanitarian industry itself. In particular it focuses on the ways in which the sector has grown, the opportunities generated on the island, particularities related to its location in Europe, and the effect on power relations amongst key humanitarian actors. Before concluding, the chapter discusses the role

[29] Here, my use of 'humanitarian gaze' differs from yet builds on the work of Mary Mostafanezhad's (2014) who analyses a geopolitical assemblage at the intersection of humanitarianism, celebrity culture and tourism.

of the island as a site where people can gain much needed experience to join the professional humanitarian sector while, at the same time, producing a new generation of humanitarians.

6.7.1 More funding, more jobs: organisational growth

For the handful of humanitarian organisations working on refugee issues on the island before 2015, and the people working for them or associated with them, there have been significant changes. All have received increased levels of external interest in their activities, most of which has translated into increased levels of funding. Furthermore, informal networks of solidarians, entrepreneurs/market opportunists and others, have registered themselves formally as NGOs in order to access these new sources of funding. Local NGOs which were previously not working with refugees have since started working on refugee-related projects. Increased funding has meant increased activities which has meant more jobs. For those who already had jobs, this has meant promotions, salary increases, employment in better paid institutions and opportunities for international work. Meanwhile, others have begun their career or started work in the humanitarian sector for the first time.

That the majority of staff in 'formal' international development and humanitarian organisations are recruited 'locally' is well documented (Wilder and Morris 2008; Farah 2010; Farah 2020; Redfield 2012). In the case of Lesvos, and Greece more generally, this phenomenon is even more pronounced which, I argue, is largely due to the humanitarian response's location within Europe. From the early stages of the 'crisis', the international humanitarian community's response was subject to criticisms of neocolonialism (Rozakou 2017) and there were complaints that overpaid international staff were doing the jobs that locals could do. Responding to these charges, the more formal side of the island's humanitarian organisations soon engaged in what the head of a local organisation called 'the very clever policy of Hellenisation' (Migration Talks 2019; Chapter 5) which focused recruitment efforts on locals and minimised international hires. This policy had several benefits for recruiting organisations including the relatively cheap labour costs of locals when compared to hiring or maintaining expensive internationals and also through gaining favour with the local population who, in the midst of an economic crisis, were much in need of jobs. As a result, the ratio of 'internationals' to 'locals' likely tilts even further to the latter than in similarly high-profile humanitarian contexts in the global south.

This phenomenon applies to both local and international humanitarian organisations in the formal sector in Lesvos. One international organisation which had a handful of national staff prior to 2015, and no international staff, increased their staff significantly during 2015-16. Prior to the EU-Turkey deal, they had around twenty international staff, a local staff of around 30 and growing and, like many of the formal international humanitarian organisations, had a revolving door of staff on missions from their foreign headquarters. By the time of my fieldwork, their staff had settled to around fifty people, almost all of whom were national staff with just two people on international contracts. The majority of national staff on the island was recruited from Athens, Thessaloniki and elsewhere with around ten people considered to be ‘from Lesvos’, most of whom were recruited during the early stages of the response. Other international organisations on the island have followed similar recruitment patterns which, in addition to localisation/Hellenisation efforts, is largely in line with global trends whereby locally recruited aid workers are estimated at upwards of 90% of global aid workers (Egeland et al. 2011:11). It is worth noting here that in this particular analysis, “local” means “national” (Autesserre 2014; see Chapter 2).

One local NGO which has received significant levels of funding from the formal humanitarian sector explicitly prioritizes locals in its recruitments practices. This particular NGO employed a staggering 300 people at the time of fieldwork. In 2019, its budget was 40 times larger than before the crisis and operations had expanded beyond the island’s borders. According to one of its senior managers (H/L,38,M,SI:10/6/19), who had come to the island over a decade earlier as a university student and had been working with the NGO there since before 2015, ‘90% of [the staff] are local’. When I asked what he meant by local, he explained ‘I mean they are actually from here, they vote here, they have their taxes services here, they are from here. They are Lesbians’, he laughed, finishing his explanation with a pun while emphasising a more local “local” than the international organisation discussed above. The remaining 10% are made of technical specialists such as psychologists, social workers, teachers who tend to be recruited from elsewhere in Greece due to their unavailability on the island (due to the island’s labour shortage rather than a shortage of skills). Meanwhile, this particular manager had not necessarily been promoted but had certainly received a large increase in his responsibilities and salary. This emphasis on recruitment from the island (rather than Athens,

Thessaloniki, etc) is not only due to its donors' preferences towards "localisation" (see Chapter 2), but also to respond to the locals criticisms that the NGO (and the island's post-2015 NGO sector more broadly) only helps refugees and doesn't help locals. While this latter example is of a (now) particularly large local NGO, others have also grown in size and scale.

6.7.2 Different pay structures, similar power relations

One of the key issues discussed in the literature on the humanitarian sector's labour market is the local/international divide. One such example concerns the salary and pay-scale discrepancies between international and local personnel whereby, for various reasons, the former's labour is typically valued much higher than their local counterparts'. On this subject again, the humanitarian economy of Lesvos produces interesting paradoxes (albeit not very productive in the final analysis) that add to existing debates. Defined broadly by one's passport and ability to access international and national aid labour markets, some question the ethics of the international/local salary discrepancy in development and humanitarian aid (Kanbur 2011; Fechter 2012), and others criticise it for negatively impacting the aid process by causing resentment and lack of motivation amongst local personnel (Carr et al. 2010). This division is particularly pronounced in the more formal or 'traditional' humanitarian agencies whereby, for example, United Nations agencies typically have some of the highest salaries both for internationals and locals but with one of the widest gaps; followed by the larger, more well-known of the international development and humanitarian NGOs; and then by organisations such as, for example, MSF and its efforts to 'decolonise' its operations which has resulted in a more horizontal salary structure (Redfield 2012). Noting patterns of (im)mobility between the different groups of humanitarian workers (particularly pronounced in contexts where refugees are employed), as well as the often politicised and racialised use of the term 'expatriate', Reem Farah (2020:131) takes the analysis one step further and defines the post-Syria crisis influx of international humanitarian workers in Jordan simply as 'economic migrants from the global North to the global South'. While Lesvos is not strictly in the 'global South', these dynamics are largely reproduced by formal or 'traditional' (Chapter 2) humanitarian organisations in Lesvos although local salaries tend to be higher than in operations in the global south following the logic of being commensurate with local market conditions. There are, however, some key differences.

In the humanitarian arena of Lesvos, much of the international/local labour structure described above is turned on its head. While the formal agencies tend to more or less reproduce the above-mentioned structures, the 'grassroots NGOs' who provide the vast majority of international humanitarian labour on the island (Chapter 5) have very different structures. In Lesvos, the overwhelming majority of international humanitarians are volunteers and either unpaid or paid very little. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of local humanitarians are professionals, paid, and paid more than most internationals (who are volunteers). Apart from the official staff members of 'grassroots' organisations (who tend to be the organisations' founders and immediate associates, and are relatively few in number), most of the international personnel are volunteers who usually pay (rather than are paid) to provide their humanitarian services. Most of these volunteers buy their own plane tickets, pay for their own rent, food and drink, transport, and, in some cases, also pay an administrative fee to the organisation for whom they are volunteering, either paying from their own (or their parents') pockets or through fundraising campaigns their personal networks and social media.

In contrast to the volunteering internationals, local staff are usually paid. Most international 'grassroots NGOs' do not have any Greeks on their teams and, in the few cases where they do, they usually have administrative roles (rather than 'life saving' roles) and are paid for their services in one way or another. Payment methods include as a staff member or consultant but, more commonly, as a 'volunteer on a stipend' in order to avoid heavy tax and national insurance costs for both organisation and individual. Stipends are commensurate with local salaries and payment can also include support with accommodation, particularly for non-Lesvian Greeks. The other key group of 'local' staff include refugees who constitute the remainder of the labour force. While many refugees are not paid for their services, those in coordinating roles do tend to be paid, usually via the 'volunteer on stipend' mechanism. Thus, in Lesvos we have a situation where most international personnel are not only *not* paid for their services but, in most cases, actually pay from their own pockets in order to be a part of the humanitarian response while, on the other hand, locals and refugees are paid a salary/stipend and have most of their project related expenses covered by the organisation.

In the structure that emerges, and in contrast to "traditional" humanitarian responses,[30] most locals and refugees are paid more than most international humanitarian personnel in Lesvos.

Despite this quite different structure, there is not much difference in the outcome of power relations. The internationals from the global north arrive in Lesvos already endowed with the power and privilege that manifest in pre-existing patterns and relations of global mobility. First, as discussed in Chapter 5, the presence of the salaried international professionals of the formal humanitarian sector – who usually are paid more than their local or national colleagues – is often framed in terms of Greece's geopolitical power relations with the global north. The historical and current political and economic power relations represented by the roles of the northern Europe and America in Greece during WW2, the Junta, tourism/labour mobility patterns, austerity, etc., can be seen as evidence to support arguments concerning neocolonialism and comments that aid workers 'think they can tell me what to do on my own island/in my own country'. Second, in contrast to their humanitarian colleagues on the island, international volunteers from the global north, by definition, have the time, money, and ability to engage in international volunteerism. With the anthropologist of tourism Valene Smith's (1992) defining components of tourism as discretionary income, leisure time, and social sanctions permissive of travel, this type of volunteering can also be understood as a type of tourism (Chapters 2, 7 & 8). Indeed, locals often label them as tourists and see them as 'young people who have nothing better to do with their time' (Chapter 7). As Jamie Gillen and Mary Mostafanezhad (2019) well note, the volunteer tourism encounter is frequently based on unequal political-economic relations among regions or states. Coming from places and positions of relative political-economic privilege, this is also the case with the international volunteers of the global north in the humanitarian encounter in Lesvos. The locals of Lesvos and Greece, reeling from the effects of austerity and the highest unemployment in Europe of recent years, especially amongst the youth (Chapter 5), have a very different relationship with the island's emerging humanitarian economy and its labour market. Meanwhile, their refugee colleagues also have a very different point of entry to the humanitarian labour market. With reference to social sanctions permissive of travel (V. Smith 1992), rather than arriving on the island *regularly* by plane with few bureaucratic (and no

[30] See Elisa Pascucci's (2018) excellent discussion of the humanitarian labour market in Jordan and Lebanon.

military) hurdles, they typically arrive *irregularly* by boat, without a visa or comparable access to a work permit, and under threat of being pushed back to Turkey by state-sanctioned forces. Presented in this way, there is a stark contrast in power relations between the humanitarians from the global north and their various colleagues on the island regardless of who is paid a salary or stipend. As such, the resulting power structures between 'international humanitarian', 'local' and 'refugee' populations are not too different from the traditional humanitarian responses that take place outside of Europe.

6.7.3 Producing labour and experience in Lesvos

Beyond saving lives and alleviating suffering, humanitarian action serves several purposes. One of them, according to Antonio De Lauri (2016:5), is its role as an 'employment outlet for a huge number of graduates and professionals from donor countries'. This section examines Lesvos' role in providing experience for those interested in the humanitarian sector while, at the same time, producing a pool of candidates for its labour market.

Noting how we hear much more about how people in the global south need humanitarian aid than we do about how much the global north is in need of delivering it (cf. Malkki 2015; see Chapter 8), De Lauri points to the work of James (Petras 1999) who argued that 'The NGOs world-wide have become the latest vehicle for upward mobility for the ambitious educated classes'. Like Farah (2020), De Lauri also frames international professional humanitarians as economic migrants. He notes how engineers, architects, doctors, nurses, lawyers, agronomists, analysts, project managers, accounting managers, consultants, researchers, IT specialists, security staff and others are able to command a far higher salary abroad than they could at home. In Lesvos, however, while there were indeed many instances of people with such professional skills providing humanitarian services, they were mainly doing so on a volunteer rather than professional basis. Moreover, with key tasks including sorting second-hand clothes, distributing food, putting up tents, etc. most activities did not necessarily require high levels of skills or qualifications. As a result, these tasks were conducted by relatively young and unskilled people with an interest in work and/or experience in the humanitarian sector. In this respect, the humanitarian arena in Lesvos serves as more of an 'internship outlet' or simply an 'experience outlet' rather than an 'employment outlet'.

Regardless of education levels, finding the first assignment in the aid sector can be very challenging (Roth 2015). One of the key challenges (common in many industries beyond the aid sector) is that organisations are reluctant to hire people who do not have experience. A recent study on the state of the humanitarian professions (Dalrymple et al. 2021) noted that employers regarded humanitarian experience as the most important factor when recruiting (ahead of 'demonstration of professional skills') and that new candidates were more likely to be hired from within the sector. Human Rights Careers (2017) notes that 'getting an internship at an international organization or NGO can be quite challenging' and, according to Forbes' *Seven Tips for Becoming an International Aid Worker* (2013), '[u]nless you have extensive volunteer experience, a master's degree is a "must"…[yet]…even with a master's degree, it is close to impossible to land your first job without some internship experience on your CV'. Regardless of whether a master's degree is or should be necessary to enter the humanitarian sector, the conundrum is nevertheless self-reinforcing: how to gain experience without experience? The humanitarian context of Lesvos helps to solve this problem.

Europe's refugee crisis has provided a safe and accessible site for people who wish to gain experience in humanitarian work or add the experience to their CVs. According to one senior local humanitarian (L/H,M,31,SI:8/10/19) who had a key role in coordinating humanitarian organisations over the past four years in one of the main camps on the island, 'one of the basic reasons that people are coming [to Lesvos] is to get a certificate [from a humanitarian organisation] which they can add to their CV. As I understand, it's very important for the CV so they can find a job in their country'. Indeed, this observation is supported both in the above paragraph and also by research on university student and recruiters (McGloin and Georgeou 2016). Whether looking for a job in their home country or elsewhere, experience in Lesvos can serve as a springboard to other opportunities in the humanitarian sector. According to a volunteer coordinator who had been on the island for around three years, 'Lesvos is not the big, crazy Middle East, it's Greece, so many people started here and were here for a year or whatever and then went further down the road to Lebanon or Jordan or Palestine'. In addition to combining a classic orientalist trope about the Middle East (Said 1978) with a white saviour narrative (Spivak 1988; Abu-Lughod 2002), her comment highlights the high income background/disposable time and money that is often necessary to volunteer, conduct an international internship and access the humanitarian labour market. In her case, she left

Lesvos to volunteer in Lebanon until her funds ran out before returning to her country and later securing a volunteer-on-a-stipend position back in Lesvos.

Meanwhile, others have also gone on to work for (and get paid by) large international humanitarian organisations elsewhere. For example, one northern European with no experience in the humanitarian sector travelled to Lesvos to volunteer in 2015, established an NGO in 2016 and, in 2018, resigned in order to mitigate the conflict of interest that it posed in his new job as a camp manager for a large international NGO in East Africa. While his NGO has since wound down like many others established during the early years (Haaland and Wallevik 2019), he explained (H,M,53,II:31/7/19) that, in addition to his own experience, 'many of my volunteers [from his NGO in Lesvos] are now working in the sector' and listed several people, countries and organisations where they worked.

In keeping within an economics framework, it can be said that the supply of humanitarians from the global north to Lesvos is often greater than the demand. In addition to long-termers complaining that there are too many volunteers who end up 'standing around doing nothing' or 'just playing with cats in the camp all day' (H,F,27,II:29/9/19), volunteer and professional agencies have occasionally requested volunteers to stop coming to Lesvos. One occasion was Christmas 2015 when '[the refugees] stopped coming, there was only one [refugee] in [the camp]!' (L/H,F,29,II:2/9/19). Another occasion took place just after the signing of the EU-Turkey deal (*ibid.*) where Alexandra Knott (2018:351) observed a 'hunger' for refugees 'and a pervasive sense of disappointment amongst volunteers, who had anticipated saving, interacting with, and caring for arrivals'. Indeed, Knott (*ibid.*) deemed the camp where she volunteered and researched to bear 'a lot more similarity to a summer camp as there were many more volunteers staying than the number of refugees in any given week'. One senior professional aid worker (H,M,47,SI:29/9/19) with wide experience in the global south questioned 'Why don't they go to the [camps on the] mainland where there's a real need for them, or go to Chad or Somalia?'. His comments call into question the stated motivations of the international volunteers in a survey of 107 international volunteers in Lesvos (Trihas and Tsilimpokos 2018) which found that the most important factors in choosing a destination for volunteering were the 'level of need in the destination' followed by 'safety in the destination'. While assumptions about 'safety in the destination' may explain why volunteers might prefer

to travel to Lesvos rather than Chad or Somalia, they do not explain the ongoing demand for volunteers in the remote camps in the hills of mainland Greece compared to Lesvos. In the end, the aid worker answered his rhetorical question and concluded that 'most people are here for the lifestyle' while referring to the beaches and other benefits of being on a Greek island versus a camp in the hills.

As such, the humanitarian arena of Lesvos not only provides opportunities for people to gain experience in the humanitarian sector, it also provides a pool of candidates from which humanitarian agencies can recruit. Along with Calais (France), Lampedusa (Italy) and Greece more broadly (including remote camps in the hills), Lesvos is bureaucratically, geographically, and culturally accessible for people from the global north. Noting that most international humanitarian responses take place in or near conflict and disaster zones where visas or relevant permits are not always easily obtainable and access may be politically sensitive for people from the global north, as well as volunteers' stated preference for 'safety in the destination' (Trihas and Tsilimpokos 2018), Lesvos provides a comparatively easily accessible – and, due to its plethora of bars and beaches, enjoyable – entry point to the humanitarian labour market. As a result, people wishing to gain experience in the humanitarian sector are able to do so in Lesvos and recruiters looking for experienced candidates (from the global north) have a larger pool to select from.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have taken the 'peacekeeping economy' from peacekeeping studies and adapted it to the humanitarian economy in Lesvos to analyse 'economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence' (Jennings 2014:315). In doing so, I have showed how property prices, urban development, rents, the hospitality sector and the labour market have all been affected by the humanitarian presence. The chapter has demonstrated how different actors employ the language and discourse of humanitarianism to further their own interests. At the same time, I have avoided (as much as possible) discussion of project activities that include, for example, the monopoly of catering companies whose owners compete fiercely for funds that are filtered through humanitarian organisations. Examining the interface of the aid industry and the tourism sector in Lesvos has demonstrated some of the ways in which social actors

have negotiated, shaped and coproduced not only humanitarian action in Lesvos but tourism as well. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010:1121) note that 'in an arena approach, the kinds of actions or actors considered to be humanitarian are not predetermined'. Similarly, as demonstrated by this chapter's analysis of the similarities between humanitarians' and tourists' social practices, the kinds of actions or actors considered as 'tourist' should also not be predetermined. Such a finding may be as useful to the study and practice of tourism as it is to the study and practice of humanitarianism.

While the previous chapter introduced some of the broader groups of actors who make up the humanitarian arena of Lesvos, this chapter has provided some more depth. Amongst the broadly defined 'locals', we have met: business owners engaging with the island's newcomers in order to profit, many of whom may harbour varying degrees of resentment against their new customers for the effect their presence has on the island (see Chapter 5); property owners also motivated by profit (although this is often limited by social pressure preventing refugee tenancies); entrepreneurs sympathetic to refugees adopting the language of humanitarianism to market their products; youth who had previously never considered working in the humanitarian sector but, due to the availability of much needed jobs in a struggling economy, are learning the language and practice of humanitarianism; university students who, like other renters (civil servants, police, soldiers, etc.), face increasing rents and, indeed, varying degrees of displacement; entrepreneurs and job-seekers from elsewhere in Greece motivated by the new opportunities on the island; local NGO workers, solidarians, and, indeed, academics who have seen their status rise as the international media and humanitarian system focus their attention and resources on the island; and others. A basic 'typology' of some of the key actors of Lesvos' humanitarian arena discussed in this thesis will be presented in Chapter 9.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian presence on Lesvos has affected economic changes that have produced both winners and losers (Chambers 1986; Maystadt and Verwimp 2014). While Loren Landau (2004:31) found 'little evidence of that the influx [of refugees and aid workers] has effected a transformation of citizens' economic lives' in western Tanzania, I have found a lot of evidence suggestive that is *has* transformed the economic lives of many in Lesvos. Overall, the evidence indicates that it has been an economic boon to the island and its

markets, particularly the tourist sector which, despite claims to the contrary, has benefited significantly. People have travelled from other parts of the island, the country, and indeed the world, to benefit from these new opportunities. Despite growing opposition to the humanitarian (and refugee) presence, humanitarian actors as a group appear to have become a permanent feature of the island's new social make-up even if their individual members are somewhat more transient. Meanwhile, the economic geography of the island is tied to its humanitarian geography and the extent to which both the humanitarian presence and the economic activity it generates continue into the future remain to be seen. Like traditional tourism, its permanence or transience will depend on factors as diverse as fashion, local safety and security, politics, currency exchanges and – much less like traditional tourism – a continued refugee presence. Having begun to identify some of the links between humanitarianism and tourism in Lesvos, the next chapter examines processes of labelling and interpellation on the island with a particular focus on the ways in which the "tourist" label is mobilised.

CHAPTER 7 – Labelling the Humanitarian 'Other'

7.1 Introduction

Building on Chapter 2's discussion of conceptualisations of humanitarian and local actors, this chapter examines how different actors in Lesvos self-identify and are identified by others. It analyses who labels whom as "humanitarian", "tourist", "volunteer", and "voluntourist", how these labels are co-produced, negotiated and mobilised in Lesvos and beyond, and how they are deployed in relation to other groups and labels. While Richard Jenkins (2008:3) rightly argues that 'who we are, or who we are *seen* to be, can matter enormously', analysis reveals a discrepancy between many of those who travel to Lesvos and identify as "humanitarians" and many of the pre-2015 population who label them as "tourists". It reveals how and suggests why different people embrace or reject such labels at different times and in different spaces. The key argument of this chapter is a twist on Joy Moncrieffe and Rosalind Eyben's (2007) overarching argument in their edited volume *The power of labelling: how people are categorized and why it matters*: that labelling processes involve relations of power. However, while the editors and contributors to this book rightly argue that it is the 'more powerful actors' such as state bureaucracies, NGOs, political leaders and others who 'use frames and labels to influence how particular issues and categories of people are regarded and treated' (Moncrieffe 2007:2), I argue that "less powerful actors" also use frames and labels to such ends in their everyday interactions. This argument is developed using analysis of observations and interview excerpts from fieldwork in Lesvos. It builds on previous research on labelling in development and humanitarian contexts by inverting the labelling gaze from 'researching down' on development and humanitarian subjects to 'studying up' on humanitarian actors (Nader 1972; Farah 2020; Chapter 4).

Previous research on labelling in displacement contexts has largely focused on refugees. Much of this body concerns the top-down classificatory labelling practices of state and non-state actors in managing refugees (Chapter 2) while other works, such as Toni Wright's (2014) examination of the ways that refugees label, categorise and/or judge other refugees, also continues the focus on the displaced. This chapter takes a different approach. Rather than focussing on the displaced, it focuses on humanitarians; rather than focusing on the labelling practices of *institutions*, it is focuses on the practices of *individuals*; rather than focussing on

the labelling practices of the 'more powerful actors' (Moncrieffe 2007:2) of state bureaucracies, development and humanitarian agencies, or political leaders, this research is more concerned with a micro-analysis of the labelling practices of "less powerful" actors, namely the volunteers, subordinate humanitarian professionals (cf. Heathershaw 2016), and members of the pre-2015 population (rather than their political leaders). Doing so allows for an interrogation of the subjectivities and processes of identity formation in the humanitarian encounter. Through analysing the everyday or vernacular forms of labelling that govern social relations in the humanitarian encounter, I shift the focus away from the labels defined and reproduced in the policy documents of state and non-state humanitarian bureaucracies or, indeed, in the research outputs of the social sciences. While the three are inextricably linked, reciprocal, reproductive and reconstitutive of each other (see Bakewell 2008 and Van Hear 2012 for different but excellent discussions of this phenomenon in relation to refugees, forced migration policy and research), a key contribution of this chapter is to shift analysis away from the labelling practices used by and for policy and research purposes and towards the everyday labelling practices of individual social actors.

Before proceeding, it is important to make a brief comment on my own labelling practices in this thesis. With the authoritative power invested in me as a researcher I have grouped the population of the Lesvos into three broad categories: humanitarians, locals, and refugees. As discussed in Chapter 4, however, I am keenly aware of the symbolic and epistemic violence that doing so involves, not least in reducing someone's life to a single label and over-simplifying the heterogenous lives people live, but also regarding the significant overlap and fluidity amongst these groups and identities. Nevertheless, while concerned that the use of such labels runs the risk of simplifying and fixing these groups, I hope that the analysis contained within these pages interrogates these labels effectively and sufficiently exposes the limits of such bounded analytical categories.[31] With this in mind, this chapter focuses on the ways in which humanitarians self-identify and are identified by others with a particular focus on the hierarchy of morals associated with the labels of "humanitarian" and "tourist".

[31] Indeed, the conclusions of the previous chapter, this chapter, and the thesis take the practice a step further by breaking down these categories and making some generalisations.

7.2 Self-identifying humanitarians

7.2.1 Volunteers, professionals, and politics

As noted above and in Chapter 4, I initially set out my research by grouping my (semi-structured) interviewees into three categories: humanitarian, local, or refugee. Having realised some issues with the process (see Chapter 4), I then asked interviewees to identify themselves. While I later came to question the value of this exercise, one of the results was that the overwhelming majority of people who had crossed borders to support or stand in solidarity with refugees identified themselves as 'humanitarian'. There were a few exceptions to this including some who preferred to identify themselves as 'volunteer humanitarians', largely in order to distinguish themselves from 'professional humanitarians', and others who rejected the 'humanitarian' label completely, instead preferring 'activist' or just 'volunteer'. Nevertheless, with slight variations on the theme, all volunteers interviewed during fieldwork explained their presence on the island and identified themselves primarily in the language and discourses of humanitarianism, solidarity and 'helping'.

Tess (H,F,23,SI:19/9/19) first went to Lesvos to volunteer for an NGO during the summer of 2016 when she was twenty years old. She did not know how long she was going to stay for when she left her village in northern Europe and ended up staying for eight months until her funds ran out and she returned home to volunteer with a local NGO that supports refugees. She then spent a brief stint volunteering in Lebanon during 2017 before returning to Lesvos as a paid coordinator of a volunteer programme. With most volunteers spending between just a few days and a few weeks on the island, her experiences may be different to others although her explanation of the chain of events that led her to leave her country and volunteer in Lesvos is typical of most volunteers and former volunteers interviewed during fieldwork:

> I think it always starts, not necessarily just for me, for everyone, with one moment [clicks fingers], mostly existing out of one second where you're like, "oh shit, I can't *not* do anything anymore". I think every single human being that ends up on the island of Lesvos has this, no one is here by coincidence. Well, possibly a few okay.

Indeed, this sentiment, as expressed by Tess above, has led to the mass migration of primarily northern Europeans and Americans (and also others) to and from Lesvos and Greece since the summer of 2015 (Chapters 2 and 5). It is also identified as the main motivating factor in research on voluntourism more generally (E. Raymond 2008; Mostafanezhad 2014a) and humanitarian volunteering in Greece more generally (Knott 2018). In another case, a North American music teacher and football trainer (H,F,41,SI:31/8/19) explained, ‘I was angry at my country about how it was shifting and I wanted to find way to help and I answered an ad for [a volunteer]’. Or, as Fatma, a northern European volunteer and Masters student (H,F,23,SI:26/4/19) explained:

> [I]t's like I know what's happening and I can't just sit and read about it on the news. I really want to be here just so I'm not sitting and reading about it on the news and so that I'm witness to the reality of it. So then I’m not just helping out right now while I'm here, but also being a witness to it, and then being able to go home and then whenever people have conversations about what's happening, I can be like ‘Well, I was there, so let me tell you what I experienced in my six weeks.

The above quotes are representative of a common theme in international volunteers’ accounts which emphasise a perceived injustice, an ethical imperative to act ‘now’ to change the situation and, in the latter case, a sense of duty to bear witness and inform others “back home” about what, in her view, is actually happening in Lesvos.

The accounts of international professional humanitarians were somewhat different. Without wanting to reduce the island’s humanitarian community to a professional/volunteer binary (Chapter 5), it is worth noting some key differences in their responses during semi-structured interviews when asked why they came to Lesvos. International staff from the “traditional” agencies of the formal sector tended to use a discourse more associated with “just doing my job”, the below exchange with a northern European professional (H,M,47,SI:29/9/19) being fairly typical:

> A: Why did you come to Lesvos?

I: I came to coordinate humanitarian efforts to support with the refugee influx to Lesvos.

A: Why Lesvos?

I: I was asked to come here on behalf of [an organisation] on secondment from [another organisation].

Further discussion with him and other international professionals would often – but not always – reveal discourses of solidarity although, for the most part, the language of professionalism was used.

Not everybody who had travelled to Lesvos in support or solidarity with refugees identified themselves as a 'humanitarian'. For example, some participants who worked in search-and-rescue rejected the 'humanitarian' label arguing that 'we are a political group', not a humanitarian group. Keen to distance themselves from the 'humanitarian' label, some of these participants preferred the label of 'activist' or 'solidarian' and framed their activities and identity more in political than humanitarian terms. Indeed, this difference was clearly reflected in analyses of interview transcripts which revealed much more frequent use of the word 'political' and associated words rather than references to 'helping' or 'supporting' refugees when compared with the transcripts of volunteers working in the camps. Despite the desire to differentiate, however, observations during fieldwork revealed similar profiles and social practices between the two groups, both of whom originated mainly from the global north and otherwise worked, shopped and socialised in similar spaces and patterns as self-identifying humanitarians.

7.2.2 Short-term vs long-term

The labels of 'short-term' and 'long-term' were consistently used in the international humanitarian community, particularly between and in reference to volunteers. Definitions of these labels are not codified, and most interlocutors seemed to agree that 'long-term' is defined as a stay of three months or more (sometimes two months or more) while anything less is generally considered as 'short-term'. Some volunteers stay on the island for periods as short as a few days. Indeed, on several occasions, I met volunteers who came for three or four days before either returning back to their country or moving on to another island for a

holiday. While the use of 'short-term' and 'long-term' labels has a very functional, seemingly apolitical, purpose in distinguishing between different members of the most transient group on the island, the labelling process is of course embedded with power relations. According to the training materials used by some of the volunteer-dependent 'grassroots NGOs' (Humanitarian Designers n.d.; Chapter 5):

> 'People just arriving on Lesvos are generally joyful, extra motivated, asking tons of questions, having money and expecting to make new friends. On the other side long term volunteers (coordinators, …) are a bit more tired, exhausted, stressed, have to answer tons of questions –and always the same ones– may not want to be friends with someone leaving in two weeks and have limited budget to live with. This difference which might not be visible at first sight can bring some frustrations on both sides. Realizing that someone else might have different expectations is a first step to a better communication.'

Often read by volunteers before they have even stepped foot on the island, the distinction between short-termers and long-termers is made early. Closely linked to the short-term/long-term identity distinction is the identity of 'coordinator' as a sub- or uber-category of volunteer. Coordinators often receive a subsistence stipend (if not a salary – see Chapter 6) with most paid (and unpaid) coordinator positions involving a minimum commitment of 3 months. Thus, coordinators are usually long-termers even if not all long-termers are coordinators. Also, as alluded to in the training, the length of their stay over a long period often means they have relatively less money to spend than volunteers who come for short periods.

When I asked Tess (H,F,23,SI:19/9/19) to describe the difference between long-term and short-term volunteers, her explanation echoed that of many other long-term volunteers:

> For me it's very black and white. I can barely invest a lot of energy in short term volunteers anymore. If you're here long-term and surrounded by short-term people, you have to pick your people. I mean short term people, they're still my friends sometimes, because sometimes they can be really cool...but I barely invest in short

> term volunteers anymore…What many short-term volunteers sometimes have, what I had myself, well what everyone has, is that in your free time you still talk about everything [related to refugees] 24/7 – at night, on the weekends, whenever. Like in the [NGO] house when I first came, after two or three months I understood how bad Moria is already and I'm tired of speaking about it every day, every night, every moment. I need to speak about boys, or I need to speak about makeup – I don't actually wear makeup anymore – but I need to speak about other things.

According to Tess and many other long-term volunteers, they just simply do not have enough time or emotional energy to invest in personal relationships with people who arrive and leave the island so quickly. This is quite understandable given the often intense emotional demands of humanitarian work/volunteering whereby short-termers, many of whom are volunteering in a humanitarian context for the first time, can often feel this intensity more intensely. Furthermore, the complexity of the humanitarian and political contexts is such that most short-termers will have left the island by the time (or most probably before) they have begun to grasp the situation and its complications. Her account does nevertheless reveal an insight into how power relations manifest and identities are formed via these labels. For example, she notes that in her early days of volunteering she – like other short-termers – would spend all of her time talking about refugees and the refugee situation but, after the making the transition to a long-termer, began to find the need to talk about more 'other things' such as boys and makeup. Having spent around three years on the island and seen many short-termers come and go, her criteria for developing personal relationships had become 'very black and white': long-termers, not short-termers. Furthermore, the statement that 'they're still my friends sometimes, because sometimes they can be really cool' implies that not only are short-termers rarely her friends but they are also relatively less 'cool'.

These relations are also expressed spatially. Groups of short-term volunteers, often newly made friends/colleagues from the same NGO, socialise together in bars, cafés, restaurants, beach gatherings and other spaces frequented by members of the humanitarian community in their free time. Meanwhile, groups of long-term volunteers, not only from the same NGOs but also from different ones, tend to socialise together united by their long-term status and their related and overlapping experiences on the island. Similarly, coordinators from different

NGOs meet each other at sectoral coordination meetings and, like other groups of long-termers, often spend their free time together. In a further expression of spatial differentiation, short-term and long-term volunteers tend to frequent the same venues (the 'golden triangle – Chapter 5) although they often sit at different tables. There is, of course, some mixing between tables and groups but the repeated observations can be considered a pattern. In the model outlined by Tess and the training, the combination of long-term and/or coordinator status provides the experience, gravitas and, apparently, 'coolness' emphasises these patterns of spatial separation and power relations with other volunteers.

7.3 Labelled by others

7.3.1 'They're not volunteers'

Many of the island's pre-2015 population had different labels for the international humanitarian community. This section looks first at the commonly used and seemingly apolitical labels of 'humanitarian', 'volunteer', and 'NGO', then follows with a longer discussion of the label of 'tourist' which many locals used to describe humanitarians and which humanitarians tend to avoid.

Of the various direct translations into Greek of the word 'humanitarian', none was commonly used by members of the island's pre-2015 population to describe the international humanitarian community in Lesvos. More commonly used as a generic label was the Greek word for 'volunteers' (εθελοντές/*ethelondes*) regardless of professional status. At the same time, it was not uncommon to hear the English word 'volunteer' in the middle of a sentence spoken in Greek (for example, ''Ένας από τους *volunteers* το αγόρασε' - 'one of the volunteers bought it'). This arguably demonstrates the extent to which this 'international' label and concept is mobilised and has been integrated into common parlance amongst the pre-2015 population, particularly amongst English-speaking locals who work in close with or around the international humanitarian community.

Meanwhile, the Greek word for "NGO" ("MKO", pronounced Mi-Ki-O) was commonly used to refer to formal/professional organisations and their staff. This was applied to both international and national NGOs and their staff, the overwhelming majority of whom were of

Greek origin but also included some internationals (Chapter 5). 'MKO' was also the "funny-but-not-so-funny" nickname amongst the friends of Costas (Chapter 5), the only born-and-bred-islander I met in Lesvos who volunteered for an international NGO without any pay/volunteer stipend (Chapter 5). A crude distinction was made by many locals in everyday practice whereby, despite the overlaps, international humanitarians were labelled 'volunteers' while Greek humanitarians (and the organisations they worked for) were labelled 'NGOs'.

These labels were also subject to various critiques, often by the same people who used them. For example, it was not uncommon to hear comments such as 'I don't know why we call them volunteers, none of them are actually volunteers – they're all getting paid'. The sources of volunteers' income would often be attributed to the European Union, various individual governments or 'shadow organisations'. Although widely believed, none of the many people who made this claim were able to provide any evidence to support it. Regarding the accusations that the volunteers 'are all spies' (Chapter 5), however, I did find one case. Originally from outside Europe but had lived on-and-off in Greece for over two decades and spoke fluent Greek, this volunteer-cum-NGO director (H/L,F,50s/SI:18/9/19) candidly explained:

> 'My first time to come here was in 2015 when I came with a delegation from the [xxxx] government. It was a covert mission though, it wasn't official and nobody knew we were from the government. I came because I would fit in and then some friends joined us. We stayed for three weeks helping driving people from the shores of the north to the camps in the south. We just came to see what was going on with the refugees and everything. And to find people that we can work with for the future...And then I decided to come back in January 2016.'

Despite this outlier, the vast majority of international volunteers I encountered during fieldwork had come to Lesvos representing themselves (rather than a government) and using varying combinations of their own money, their parent's money, and/or money raised through personal fundraising campaigns via social media and family and friends back home. I was aware of one grassroots NGO that was in receipt of government funding although,

according to its director (H,M,37,SI:23/8/19), this only represented a small portion of its overall funding; and these funds were earmarked for project activities, not for volunteer stipends. In contrast, most of the international NGOs on the islands were funded by (mainly global northern) governments and/or the European Union while their staff were mainly Greek (as well as some refugee employees and volunteers), while locals tended to label these human resources as 'Mi-Ki-O's rather than as volunteers. This level of detail on funding mechanisms was not widely known amongst locals, however, often rendering the differences confusing or unintelligible.

Locals critiqued the "volunteer" label in other ways too. One common refrain expressed to me by, amongst others, a farmer in a coffee shop (L,M,50s,II:15/7/19) and a professional humanitarian in a refugee-hosting site (L/H,M,50s,II:5/4/19) was: 'They are not volunteers. I am a volunteer because I donate blood every year' in reference to blood donations for cases of thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder common in the Mediterranean region. Or volunteers' activities were often compared unfavourably with the volunteering activities of locals during period before the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016 for which the people of Lesvos were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. According to the owner of a beach bar (L,M,57,SI:1/9/19) who says that he does not allow refugees into his establishment despite this being against the law:

> In the beginning in 2015 we were helping with everything: with blankets, with water, with food, with everything. Me, I took food to the port for the people. We were helping them, we did this out of love. But now the people who come here to help, they're not coming to help, they're not doing it for love. They have their own reasons. They are not getting paid? Of course they're getting paid!

The comment highlights the moral claims associated with practices of labelling and identify formation. His and many other similar such comments make the distinction between the selfless volunteering activities of the pre-2015 population prior to the EU-Turkey deal and the volunteering of internationals who, according to many, are 'coming here to help themselves'. Whether he was aware that they were not all getting paid, his comment builds on the Guribye and Mydland's observation (2018:355) regarding local frustrations in the early stages of the

crisis that internationals seemed to 'make a career from the crisis, with little concern for local laws and regulations, and while partying hard after sundown'. This sentiment was clearly present at the time of my fieldwork as many mentioned that that the volunteers were benefiting one way or another from their time in Lesvos: either they are getting paid, having fun on their holidays, adding to their CVs or some combination or all of these activities. Inherent in these types of comments is a moral superiority that feeds into a group identity of "us" the selfless good local volunteers who were doing it for love, and "them" the selfish bad international volunteers who have other reasons apart from love to volunteer (and – even worse – who are not actually volunteering because they are getting paid!). Some might argue that there is a certain irony in the case of the above beach bar owner who expressed open racism against both refugees and international volunteers (and others) while simultaneously claiming moral superiority over people who leave their countries to help refugees. However, as far as he (and many others) see the situation, the suffering locals have the moral high ground while the internationals who are paid to holiday on Lesvos do not.

In another case, the local professional staff working in one of the camps referred to certain volunteers as 'investors'. For example, when a group of unknown northern Europeans were seen entering a camps, staff members could be heard referring to them as 'volunteers' until it became apparent that they were bringing money and resources that they had mobilised back home for activities in the camp; at this point, the professional staff began referring to them as 'investors' (FN:17/4/19). While it was clear what they were contributing to the camp, the return on their investment was less clear. According to many of those who use the term, the return included both the self-gratification that comes from providing humanitarian aid to refugees and a financial profit that is at least sufficient to cover the time and money needed to travel to Lesvos, and at most enough to sustain a livelihood and/or profit personally from the endeavour. While the above examples represent some of the ways that locals have deployed, mobilised, and critiqued the labels of humanitarian, volunteer and NGO, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the most commonly recurring label to describe humanitarians/volunteers: tourists.

7.3.2 Humanitarians or tourists?

The label and concept of “tourist” and “tourism” emerged very prominently in interviews and observations in Lesvos. They were used by both locals and humanitarians to describe other humanitarians, and were typically deployed to denigrate those to whom they were applied.

Maria (L,F,62,SI:27/8/19) was born-and-raised in Athens and is married to a born-and-raised Lesvian who she co-owns a hotel with a few kilometres outside of Mytilene. Although she has spent decades of summers on the island, she does not consider herself a local of Lesvos. She and her husband prefer not to take guests from the humanitarian sector (although they often do), and she claims that ‘the locals, the only thing that they see is that there are some young, some youth who have nothing to do and so they came here to make some holiday’, referring to the largely 20-something year-old volunteers from northern Europe and America who make up the bulk of humanitarian community in Lesvos.

References to holidays were also made about international professional staff. For example, a born-and-bred Lesvian who now lives in Athens but returns several times a year to see family and attend to business and other interests (L,F,36,SI:2/5/19), comments on the attitudes and behaviours of staff from an international agency. Every three months a new team rotates into Lesvos and, over the past few years, each new team has rented an apartment in her friend’s building. She explained as follows:

> I’ve seen many of them come and go over the years. They’re having holidays here as far as I understood. Okay, it's their job, so they just do their job and then the time they have out of the job, they just have a good time on an island and they see themselves as very fortunate to be able to work here.

Here my interlocutor was referring to the beach-going, beer drinking and restaurant-dining activities of international professional staff during their off-duty hours. In a separate case, a waiter from a neighbouring island (L,M,30s,II:30/9/19) who works in one of Lesvos’s more expensive hotels during the summers commented on the behaviour of a group of professional NGO workers during what he considered to be their on-duty hours:

> It looks like most of them just come here to have fun…we had a [refugee-related] conference here just last week there were people from [Europe], from America, from different countries and it was obvious you could see they were just here like making holidays, you know, they were drinking and enjoying…they weren't serious, they're not really here to help the situation.

While each of these three examples refers to different groups of the international humanitarian infrastructure in Lesvos, the comments are indicative of a general perception held by many of the island's pre-2015 population that the activities of humanitarians on the island are similar to those of tourists. The theme running through their comments, and those of many others, were that the people claiming to come for work-related humanitarian activities were more likely coming for leisure-related or holiday purposes.

Even those who work more directly with the humanitarian community in Lesvos come to similar conclusions. Discussing in his office after hours over a coffee, one island-born-and-bred professional in the accommodation and real estate industry (L,M,29,SI:7/3/19) described the difference between tourists and volunteers:

> I don't see a difference. The difference is that they come, the volunteers that I met, they came from an NGO to find a place to live. They have some amount [of money/funding] from the NGO to eat and, also, I know that the NGO paid for their tickets to come here. So, and I know that they had some money to spend because they help the refugees, and maybe they go out to drink, to eat, or to do like tourists do. So the difference is that – that volunteers came for free tourism [laughs] free! They come here for free tourism! Ok, there are some guys who spend their own money but I know they had a lot of free things so why go there. That's why they are polite also, friendly, they are [getting it for] free. If someone told me to go, for example, to Spain, everything for free, apartment free, and, ok, you have to go for three hours a day to help some people, will you go? Fuck yeah! Why not? All free? OK!

As discussed, not all international volunteers (or professional staff) receive money from their NGO for food, drink, accommodation, flights and, indeed, not all volunteers are polite and

friendly, nor do they work/volunteer just three hours per day. The above quotes do, however, reveal how international humanitarian actors' eating, drinking, accommodation and other social practices might be considered similar to those of tourists.

Meanwhile, another born-and-bred islander (L/H,M,32,SI:29/8/19) who has worked even more closely with the humanitarian community since 2015, and who volunteered during the pre-EU-Turkey deal period and has since worked as an employee (in addition to working some evenings in bars in town,) comments on the different profiles of the volunteers he has met over the years:

> Some are more intense, 'I'm going to help no matter what', even if they hurt themselves, and there are others who are more touristy…. Some people just want to party, you know, and this is a way of like saying that I went to Greece to volunteer but I also need to party all night. Because, you know, they're young people most of them, early 20s. But there are also some people who really get the situation.

This interlocutor also comments on the demographic profile of these newcomers and also engages with the tourist label. Even so, while he creates a binary between those who are more 'intense' and those who are more 'touristy', he also recognises that the two are not mutually exclusive.

In addition to locals, other actors in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos also label and identify in terms of tourism. For example, according to a West African asylum-seeker (R,M,34,SI:1/10/19) who had been on the island for ten months and was working/volunteering-on-a-stipend alongside a high turnover of volunteers and staff from different organisations and countries, 'they just come to, some of them for holidays, most of them I think for holidays'. Meanwhile, after stating that there were definitely more tourists in 2019 than in 2016, a senior professional aid worker from northern Europe with wide humanitarian experience in central Africa and the Middle East (H,F,39,SI:1/10/19) reconsidered her initial observation of a group of people on their way to the beach:

> I don’t know, they were people who were going to the beach. It could be aid workers, but it was still, er, maybe, I don’t know. Yeah, I don’t know how they look like. They are not locals. No, definitely I can say also that aid workers [pauses] The tourists in Lesvos they come for a certain time, I mean its seasonal, while the aid workers they are here all year.

Recognising the difficulties in distinguishing tourists from volunteers (or other humanitarians or indeed other human beings) on their way to the beach, she settled on a temporal distinction. While this conclusion is challenged by, for example, the flow of Mennonite construction workers from the US who volunteer in Lesvos during winter seasons when there is less work and more “leisure time” back home, as well as other examples such as retirees who tend to volunteer in the winter, the beach example nevertheless demonstrates the difficulties in both visibly identifying people and categorizing them into social groups in Lesvos (Cabot and Lenz 2012) and indeed elsewhere.

The above testimonies highlight the difficulties in distinguishing between humanitarians and tourists. One possible explanation for this confusion is related to the overlap of their demographic profiles. Most of the international volunteers, international professional staff and international activists/solidarians are mainly northern Europeans and Americans (and predominantly white), constituting a profile similar to the “traditional” international tourists to Lesvos and Greece over the previous 40 years or so: if they look like tourists and behave like tourists, they most probably are tourists. Parallels can be drawn here with the work of Delores Martinez (1996) whose examination of the impact of domestic tourism on a small village community in Japan revealed a world in which tourists were seen as strangers and, as such, linked to older traditions regarding the treatment of deities who are given a similar classification. Or with work that links the profiles and practices of development practitioners with those of colonial administrators in the post-colonial period (Baaz 2005), some of whom were exactly the same individuals but with new job titles (Kothari 2006). Rather than being regarded and treated as deities or colonialists, however, it could be argued that this group of newcomers are regarded and treated according to the frame to which Lesvians are more accustomed to seeing northern Europeans and Americans on the island: as tourists.

7.4 Embracing and resisting the tourist identity

A consistent pattern that emerged in the analysis was that international volunteers were much more likely to distance themselves from the touristic benefits of the island while professionals who had come to the island because of the refugee situation were more likely to embrace and comment on them. 'Most people just want to stay here for the lifestyle' commented one long-term international professional aid worker (H,M,47,II:5/9/19) referring to both professional and volunteer humanitarians during a mid-morning, mid-week coffee after a late-night tennis match. He continued on the subject in a separate interview (SI:29/9/19), 'You know how it is', referring to my own experience in the aid world, 'we're usually stuck in a guesthouse or some shithole in the arse-end of nowhere with nothing to do. This is much better!'. I nodded to indicate that I understood. Of the few professional international humanitarians remaining on the island (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion, including the "Hellenisation" policies of the formal humanitarian sector), this kind of comment was fairly typical.

In another case, a policeman deployed from mainland Greece to Lesvos to support camp management lived with his girlfriend and dog in a village near to Moria camp and was fairly candid (H/L,M,28,SI:31/7/19) about his reasons for seeking deployment (and extension) to the island: 'extra salary', and

> [H]oliday!…It's a, it's a different place, I'm making new friends, there are less people from my work, I visit different places, I go to the sea for swimming five, six days in the week, I go to museums, the castle, other parts of the island, Chios [a neighbouring island] for the weekend, and Turkey too. Nice. Simple.

In another case a Greek project manager working for an international NGO (H/L,F,39,II:18/8/19) compared her current job to her previous work in Athens: 'Are you kidding? I can answer my emails from the beach here - no comparison!'. Both international and Greek professionals from outside the island tended to speak more freely about their touristic activities than international volunteers. For example, Beatrice, a northern European student of social work who volunteered for one week with a grassroots NGO

(H,F,23,SI:12/5/19), compared this trip to the last time she travelled abroad (which happened to be for a holiday):

> Oh, it's totally different. Because there was no time to relax here. We had some hours but…we're, after this [trip to the Lifejacket Graveyard] we're going to chill and relax at the beach. But it feels a little bit strange because there are so much people who can't chill and relax like us, but it's totally different from a holiday because you're working all day from 9.30 to 11.30 in the evening and there are people who can't chill and relax so it was different, yeah.

While Beatrice touched on a feeling of guilt regarding her upcoming relaxation, she did not mention the many hours of breaks that are included in her particular NGO's daily schedule, many of which were spent with her colleagues (and sometimes with me) in a café near the camp. Nor did she mention that working until 11.30pm (after a five-hour break) happened every second day during her week's stay rather than every night. Nor did she mention that she went wining and dining with her colleagues (and once with me) on her nights-off, a practice that she admitted she did not do regularly "back home" because she could not afford to. I do not think she was aware of various long-termers' comments about people from her particular NGO regarding 'blonde girls standing around doing nothing' or 'just playing with cats in the camp all day', according to one volunteer-on-a-stipend (H,F,27,II:29/9/19) who spent much of her days struggling with latrines and the camp sewage system. Of course, Beatrice cannot be blamed for a poorly designed programme and, moreover, I learned from our time together that she believed very strongly in the work that she was doing in Lesvos and was convinced that this trip outside her country was indeed 'totally different from a holiday'.

Whether unable or unwilling to identify themselves as tourists, some volunteers nevertheless viewed and accused other volunteers as being more motivated by tourism. One former volunteer from northern Europe who had since set up an NGO, lived on the island for the past

three years and considers herself local,[32] notes (H/L,F,38,II:10/3/19) 'how people are a lot keener to save refugees when the sun is shining and the beach is just down the road'. In another case, Max, a self-funded northern European volunteer in his 50s (H,M,58,SI:12/5/19) recalls his first of four volunteering experiences to Lesvos (just a year earlier) which left him considering his and other volunteers' identities and roles as tourists in Lesvos. Not unlike the locals in Maria's account, Max questioned the motivations of some of his colleagues:

> I'm thinking these people, I thought they were here just as tourists or something so they can say, 'I was working with refugees blah blah blah' down at a party or, something was going on, something really fucking false was going on, right? Their heart wasn't in it, there wasn't any empathy, and I was fucking crying every night. They weren't. They were out partying and stuff and I'm thinking, and I was sitting and doing that night duty, spotting and stuff, I was questioning myself because I was seeing this thing and I could feel it but it wasn't spoken about. And I'm questioning myself about why I'm here and what I'm here for. I says to [a colleague/friend] "I feel like a tourist, I'm seeing all this shit that I've never seen before and I'm kind of sensationalising it in my mind". I don't know. I was completely mixed up emotionally with what was going on, cos I knew that some of the people I was working with, they weren't there, here, for the same reasons as me. It seemed like they were there so they can go home and say they'd done two weeks on a refugee camp I think or, or a "self" thing, for selfish reasons. It wasn't to help others really.

Max's comments highlights at least four points relevant to the discussion on the blurred boundaries between tourism and humanitarianism in Lesvos. First, he directly describes his humanitarian colleagues as tourists and argues that they appear largely motivated by the pursuit of hedonistic activities. He contrasts this, here and elsewhere, with his own motivations and activities which he claims (H,M,58,SI:20/9/19) are 'totally focused on the refugees and the camps…it's house, camps, house, camp, house, camps'. Indeed, in addition to a daily post-camp fresh juice to 'detox' (H,M,58,II:23/9/19) and a few (completely sober)

[32] It is worth noting how this northern European's readiness to self-identify as a local contrasts with hotel owner Maria's reluctance to identify as a local of Lesvos.

dinners in the evening, I observed this to be an accurate description of his activities. Second, his own description of himself as 'a tourist' was meant somewhat ironically (and negatively) and more in reference to his first-time witnessing (or sightseeing) of mass displacement than to a suggested pursuit of sun, sea and sex in Lesvos. Taking the analysis further, it could be understood as a crisis of identity: he certainly had not left his country for a holiday yet he somehow felt like a tourist as he 'sensationalised' these images while surrounded by other tourists. Third, his account gives away his conception of a humanitarian, as distinct from a tourist, how his conception of a "proper" humanitarian should behave. As discussed in more detail below, the figure of the "good" humanitarian has been socially constructed in the global north in much the similar manner to missionaries who are expected to work tirelessly while making personal sacrifices to help others rather than partying hard and having a good time. Linked to this is his stated concern over whether he was thinking and behaving appropriately while, at the same time, distinguishing himself from others whose behaviour he considered inappropriate and lacking visible empathy. Fourth, he twice indicated that he thought that a key motivation of some of his colleagues was to collect stories to recount 'back home'. Alongside Fatma's comment about bearing witness in Lesvos, this point is particularly salient when considering tourists' well-noted practice of story-telling upon return from travel (Scott and Selwyn 2010) and the idea that returning travellers also experience 'status elevation' (Turner 1969, 1977) as a result of their travel. While this line of argument was initially developed to understand travel for the purposes of pilgrimage and tourism, it can also be applied to humanitarian travel. While a lot of self-making takes place in Max's account (and, indeed, those of others), not least in efforts to distinguish between humanitarianism and tourisms, these points capture some of the key areas where the boundaries are particularly blurred.

7.5 Discussion

7.5.1 Why do volunteers resist the tourist label?

So why were international volunteers in Lesvos more resistant to considering themselves and their activities in terms of tourism than professional humanitarians? One possible explanation could be related to the "just doing my job" factor referred to above: leisure time begins when work hours are over as it would in a "normal" European cultural working context. In this

respect, there is no shame in enjoying oneself outside of formal working hours. On the other hand, short-term volunteers who have paid (rather than are paid) to go to Lesvos to engage in humanitarian activities tend to have a different approach to how they should spend their time and energy on the island. Indeed, as a former country director of an NGO with a high turnover of short-term volunteers (H,M,41,SI:24/3/19) reflected after three years on the island, the mindset of people who are planning to return home after a short period is quite different from those who live and work on the island:

> So I've paid money to come here. I'm definitely not gonna live here. I'm from Alabama or wherever, put me to work and put me to work now! Make it worth my money as Americans would say! And with that mentality you can't just sit there and enjoy the seagulls, or it's a little harder to do anyway. But if you're living here, you're actually living here, this is your home, this is where you live. Sure, camp is sad, yes, the refugee crisis is so awful, yes. But guess what? I have a house and I have family and I have friends and there are other things I need to do with my life…All of this contributes to a low-risk avoidance culture – it's cool to get burned out and get in danger. To put it in very simple terms, if you worked for two days straight with no sleep and someone threw a rock at you, you're pretty amazing…I would say that people who are able to stay here very long do not think like that. But when you're here for a three-month stint, why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you see this as an amazing bungee jump experience?

His comments raise at least three key points related to the discussion. First, his analysis of the difference in mindsets between professionals and volunteers speaks to the differences between long-termers and short-termers discussed above. Second, it highlights the difference in starting points between people who pay to go to Lesvos and those who are paid to stay there: while the former are keen to maximise the value of their time and experiences in humanitarian work on the island before returning home, the latter are more focused on maintaining a healthier work-life balance from outset. Of course, this was not always the case and I witnessed several cases of burnout amongst people who had stayed longer than three months. While extended periods of intense humanitarian work can have this effect (Eriksson et al. 2009), I found this phenomenon to be particularly prevalent amongst volunteer

coordinators who had “graduated” from volunteer to volunteer-coordinator. In this respect, it could be argued that their burnout resulted from the extended continuation of the volunteer mindset to which he refers in his interview. Entering a new position with more responsibilities and, presumably, the same level of passion that they had as a volunteer is likely to lead to an overload of some kind. The challenges in balancing these activities and mindsets could be considered as part of the transitional process from volunteer to professional. Third, his reference to the ‘bungee jump experience’ once again speaks to a relatively high-risk and intense activity largely associated with adventure tourism which, once again, invokes the tourist label.

Another possible explanation concerns the imaginaries associated with Greek islands. At risk of generalisation, “going to stay on a Greek island” can carry different meanings for northern Europeans to those for Greeks (who make up the majority of humanitarian professionals on the island). For many northern Europeans (who make up the majority of short-term volunteers), international tourism often provides the main frame of reference for Greek islands, a summer holiday destination where one relaxes for one or two weeks in between much longer periods of work. For many Greeks, however, the islands are part of the national geography, identity and culture and are often associated with a different set of meanings in addition to tourism. Amongst other things, it is quite common for Greeks to travel to an island for work (including in the tourist sector as well as agriculture and, more recently, humanitarian sectors) as well as for other reasons. In this respect, islands may just as easily be associated with steep hills, rain, cold, and cousins as they are with idyllic beaches, sun, sand and sex which is typically not the case for northern Europeans. In conjunction with the above, it is understandable that Greeks humanitarians on the island, most of who are professionals, and international professionals, might feel more comfortable discussing their touristic activities than the northern Europeans who travel to Greek islands during the summer. Given that the two acts of mobility could appear similar, it is perhaps more urgent for northern European volunteers to distance themselves from or outright deny the activities and identities associated with tourism while foregrounding the much more serious activities and identities associated with supporting or standing in solidarity with refugees. Indeed, how could the important ‘life-saving’ work, profile and identity of a humanitarian be confused with those of a tourist?

Established identities, age, experience, and life-stages and also play a role in this distancing. For example, the professionals can justify their presence on the island to themselves and to others in terms of a job, a contract, funding and, so the logic goes, a need. The volunteers, on the other hand, are in a more precarious position in terms of their role and identity. After all, booking a ticket to a Greek island using one's available time and money can appear quite similar to the activities of someone going on holiday. The identities of many of the younger volunteers are often not as well established as those of their elder peers and, unlike humanitarian professionals, they do not necessarily have job title (beyond "volunteer") or a contract to frame their identity. As a result, volunteers construct their less-stable identities through their volunteering and humanitarian work on the island, and perhaps some feel the need to work harder to distance themselves from the tourist identity.

While the label of "humanitarian" is widely regarded as something positive in the Western imaginary, this is rarely the case for "tourist". Greg Beckett (2019) describes the imagined figure of the humanitarian as 'an ethical figure who cares about the world and who cares for people around the world', 'a model of virtuous character [that] stands as the emblem for an emerging global ethics of care that has become especially popular among those who would identify (as many of my college students in my courses would) as Westerners and liberals' (*ibid.:*162), who 'stands out as a strange and revolutionary moral figure precisely because humanitarians routinely provide care for strangers'. As we have seen, most international volunteers explained and justified their presence on the island almost exclusively in humanitarian terms, speaking of their contributions to supporting or relieving the suffering of others, making right where they consider their government has done wrong, making sacrifices to make the world a better place, etc. On the other hand, being identified as a "tourist" (even if one does enjoy the beach and evenings out), not only belittles the "hard work", "selflessness" and "sacrifices" ostensibly associated with volunteering one's time, money and energy for humanitarian purposes, but it also diminishes the more serious and important social status associated with being identified as a "humanitarian". While the activities of the humanitarian are constructed as life-saving, those of the tourist are constructed as leisure oriented. Jenkins (2008:12) argues that 'groups are real if people think they are: they then behave in ways that assume that groups are real and, in so doing,

construct that reality'. In this respect, it could be argued that the tourist label is rejected by self-identifying humanitarians in these ways precisely in order to avoid a constructed reality where they are identified as – and might have to consider the possibility of self-identifying as – "tourists" rather than as "humanitarians".

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that very few of the volunteers interviewed during fieldwork would talk about their presence in terms of tourism and, when they did, would frame tourism negatively. This pattern is also noted in the literature. For example, MacCannell argued (1976:94) that the term 'tourist' is 'increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his [sic] obviously inauthentic experiences' and, in turn, built a thesis surrounding the tourist's quest for 'authenticity'. The late anthropologist and former tour guide, Edward Bruner (Bruner 2005:7), commented that '[t]ourism is a mystifying subject because being a tourist is deprecated by almost everyone. Even tourists themselves belittle tourism as it connotes something commercial, tacky, and superficial'. Anthropologists have also been noted to react similarly when compared to tourists despite their many similarities. Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn (2010) note that anthropologists and tourists both 'travel, spend temporary periods of time away from home, gather experiences and souvenirs, and tell stories about them when they get home'. Indeed, framed in this way, it is easy to extend the argument to international humanitarians who engage in similar, if not identical, practices. Interrogating the connection as 'Avoidance relationship or Unholy Alliance?', Scott and Selwyn (*ibid.*) draw on the work of the late great iconoclast, Malcolm Crick (1995:206-7) who suggested that the comparison with tourists is no less than threatening for many anthropologists:

> …the idea cannot be held in consciousness. Thus, in a discussion of anthropology in the context of other adventurer/travel roles, Peacock [an anthropologist who discusses the overlap between anthropologists and other travellers] can list 'spies' and 'missionaries' but fails to mention tourists….what is so forgettable or appalling about tourists that provokes these overreactions and avoidances? After all, in our recent reflexive phase, we have been likened to other identities such as con-men, voyeurs and clowns…which might, on first glance appear to be even less palatable than the tourist comparison.

Indeed, although I may not have realised it at the time during fieldwork, I was also keen to distance myself from being “mistaken” for a tourist. For example, on one July evening walking through the centre of town after a meal with my family, I heard two British women in their mid-twenties speaking with each other and, based on our shared Britishness, I initiated a conversation about why they had come to Lesvos. Having recognised a lack of “actual tourists” in my research sample, I was hoping that they might fill this gap. However, before they began explaining the different types of volunteer work they were doing with refugees in Lesvos, one of them expressed her surprise at seeing me with my kids and said ‘I didn’t realise this was a place for tourists as well’. While jumping at the convenient opportunity to explain that I am a researcher and not a tourist, upon reflection, I later realised that I was equally keen to distance myself from this kind of label. On another occasion during the summer, I caught myself experiencing a similar reaction when two colleagues from the UK passed through on their way back from a two-week beach holiday on the other side of the island. When one whipped out a long-lensed camera and started snapping happily away around “my” fieldsite, I was surprised at how uncomfortable I felt. I wondered what effect their presence might be having on my own multi-sited positionalities and identities as a researcher, as a local, as a (former) professional humanitarian, as a (then) volunteer, but certainly not as a tourist! Apparently, I was also offended by the possibility that my presence on the island would be associated with tourism although probably I did not become as consciously aware of this phenomenon until I started writing up my findings in earnest.

As the theme of tourism increasingly emerged during fieldwork and analysis, I adapted my methodology accordingly. I began to ask participants more directly on the relationship of their presence in Lesvos to tourism and, specifically, to “voluntourism”, a concept I had not heard of before beginning fieldwork and one that I was increasingly familiarising myself with. However, I soon encountered similar reactions and again adapted my methodological approach. Common responses included ‘I’m here to work, not to enjoy myself’ and ‘I’m here because I care. I have to be here because the EU doesn’t care’, sometimes accompanied by expressions of indignation. On a summer evening in a café, chatting with a volunteer after a week of their two weeks’ volunteering trip, I asked in what ways they thought their time in Lesvos was different to voluntourism. On this occasion I received one of the more extreme

reactions: they physically turned their back on me and started up a conversation with the person next to them. By the time the data was saturated regarding this point, and not really wanting to cause offence to anyone, I changed my methodology and ceased asking direct questions about voluntourism.

While very few participants made explicit reference to "volunteer tourism" or "voluntourism", Fatma (H,F,23,SI:26/4/19) did make direct reference. On the last day of her five-and-a-half weeks of volunteering, we sat on the roof of the building where she rented a bed in a shared room with other volunteers, she spoke of her previous two experiences with international volunteering. She had once volunteered in an orphanage in east Africa where she was 'just as an extra pair of hands to doing anything that they needed doing', and the other in a primary school in southern Africa 'just as a teaching assistant'. Compared to Lesvos, she said that her previous experiences 'I now realize were pretty voluntourismy rather than this'. For her, Lesvos is 'like a political, humanitarian, whatever situation that's happening right now that we're in, and it doesn't feel voluntourismy at all'. In contrast to her previous experiences, she did not use a voluntourism agency where she chose from a drop-down list of countries and technical sectors to be picked up at an airport on arrival and whisked away to pre-arranged accommodation. Instead, she conducted her own research on which specific charities needed volunteers in Lesvos during the time that she was available between her university commitments and arranged for her own accommodation online. Furthermore, during another break from university a few months after leaving Lesvos, she told me (II:19/11/19) how she returned to Greece to volunteer on another, smaller, less well-known island with a 'more grassroots NGO' where people 'had a better idea of what was going on'. Having had this experience on the second island, she commented on the 'high turnover of volunteers on Lesvos compared to [the other island]' and that 'a lot of the people who go to Lesvos to do volunteering are doing it for their first time'. She said that she preferred her experience on the second because, amongst other reasons and unlike Lesvos, the organization she was with 'allowed' volunteers and staff to socialize with refugees outside of work hours, noting that 'we want to hang out with them, you know, let's not go to some super expensive restaurant but let's go to the beach and have a picnic…way more inclusive'.

Fatma’s narrative raises four key points that shine light on why volunteers tend to distance themselves from the tourist label. The first concerns how voluntourism, like tourism, is consistently represented as something negative, something to avoid rather than embrace. The second is related to how understandings and positioning can change over time and space. In Fatma’s case, each step of her travelling journey to help distant others led her to re-evaluate her understanding of each previous trip as well as her positioning of and in relation to voluntourism itself. While she presented her teaching experience more favourably than volunteering in the orphanage where she was ‘just’ an extra pair of hands, in Lesvos she felt that she was part of something ‘political, humanitarian’, something bigger. However, following her experiences on the next island she then came to view her experiences in Lesvos as more ‘voluntourismy’. Each trip along her humanitarian journey becomes more meaningful and less ‘voluntourismy’ as Fatma, and many others, to differentiate from this label. The third point concerns MacCannell’s thesis regarding the tourist’s quest for authenticity in which Fatma’s journey from orphanage in eastern Africa to primary school in southern African to Lesvos and on to another island might be considered as a quest for a more authentic humanitarian experience. Furthermore, with regard to her last point, it could be argued that she was also searching for more authentic relations with an exotic other: whereas the tourist quest refers to relations with “locals”, the humanitarian quest refers to “refugees”. Finally, throughout her narrative (and, indeed, those of others), we note a consistent pattern whereby the tourist and – voluntourist – label is understood as something negative.

While reactions to the tourist and voluntourist labels were consistently negative during my fieldwork in 2019, findings from Nancy McGehee’s (2014) long-term research on voluntourism suggests that self-identifying practices may change in the future. McGhee began her long-term exploration of voluntourism in the late 1990s, the CEO of Earthwatch, an international environmental charity, agreed to help but he and almost everyone else ‘*balked* [my emphasis] at the idea of calling what they were doing “volunteer tourism”. They felt their work was much too serious to have anything to do with something as frivolous as tourism!’. As noted, most volunteers in Lesvos placed similar emphasis on the importance of their work, with some even taking offence at the suggestion that they were engaged in or motivated by some form of tourism. Twenty years after her initial findings, however, Earthwatch is now heralded by the National Geographic (2019) as an example of best practice

in voluntourism. According to McGehee (2014:847), Earthwatch, 'along with innumerable other organizations, embrace the term [voluntourism], recognizing its appeal to those that they most want to reach' (McGehee 2014:847). While not necessarily wishing to imply a universally applicable, linear or evolutionary process of voluntourism development, the volunteers of Lesvos could, for the most part, be said to be at a "balking" stage similar to that described above – they reject the idea that what they are doing is volunteer tourism. While McGhee argues that the phenomenon of volunteer tourism in the development contexts has 'morphed and grown much in the same way as its older sister ecotourism did in the 1980s and 1990s' (*ibid.:*848), perhaps volunteer tourism in humanitarian contexts will grow similarly.

7.5.2 Why do locals apply the tourist label?

If the above sheds some light on to why so many international volunteers distanced themselves from the tourist label, another key question is: why do so many of the pre-2015 population label them as such? In addition to suggesting that tourism provides a familiar frame to understand the presence of these newcomers (Martinez 1996), I also argue that power relations play a key role. However, instead of the "top-down" labelling practices of the 'more powerful actors' (Moncrieffe 2007:2) of government/humanitarian agencies, I argue that the above examples relate more to the bottom-up labelling practices of "less powerful actors". Instead of humanitarian actors categorising individuals and populations in order to transform them into objects of humanitarian government (Fassin 2007a, 2007b; 2012; Rozakou 2012; Barnett 2013), individuals and populations (specifically the locals of Lesvos) are categorising humanitarian actors into objects of their resistance. I argue that the chants of 'We want our islands back, we want our lives back' during the thousands-strong protests of early 2020, the violent attacks on aid workers and other, less violent, forms of micro-resistance can be understood as expressions of resistance in relation to a perceived sense of "powerlessness" felt by the pre-2015 population with regard to the humanitarian and refugee presence. Regardless of my crude categorisations of humanitarians/locals/refugees and potential debates concerning who is more powerful than who in Lesvos (and, indeed, how to measure such power), suffice to say that, in line with the social constructionist assumptions of this thesis, the thousands who attended these protests (and, presumably, many more) considered themselves increasingly and relatively "less powerful actors" in the context of

their perceived occupation. I argue that the pre-2015 population assign the "tourist" label precisely in order to denigrate the humanitarian community. Very much aware of the contrast between the socially constructed and expected moral superiority of the figure of the humanitarian over the figure of the tourist, locals assign this label as an act of resistance and to force an identity that contradicts and devalues their purpose on the island: humanitarians are important and life-saving, tourists are frivolous and leisure-seeking. In contrast to Moncrieffe's (2007:2) argument that 'more powerful actors' label less powerful actors as an act of governance, it could be argued here that the above examples are evidence of "less powerful actors" labelling 'more powerful actors' as an act of resistance. Here, it is important to point out that I am by no means suggesting that twenty-something-year-old volunteers are "more powerful" than Lesvian local landlords, business owners or others on the island. I am, however, arguing that the humanitarian presence on the island is representative of a global north-dominated power structure that, from the perspective of many locals, has not only filled the island with refugees and kept them there, but is also responsible for austerity measures and a recent national history of political, economic and cultural domination (Chapter 5). Labelling in this way both challenges the legitimacy of this structure while inverting top-down processes of labelling.

Following this line of analysis, labelling humanitarians as tourists can be considered an act of resistance against the humanitarian presence. The political scientist James Scott's (1985) *Weapons of the Weak* provides some useful insights. In his reconceptualisation of the nature of resistance to economic and political domination, he argues that too much scholarly attention is paid towards the rare occurrences of open revolt by peasants and too little toward everyday acts of resistance. Based on archival research and two years of ethnographic fieldwork in a Malaysian village following the modernisation of agricultural production methods, he identifies everyday acts of resistance that include petty theft, vandalism, gossiping and ridicule as well as laziness, foot-dragging and unreliability at work. He makes the distinction between open and covert resistance whereby the former includes striking and rebellion which requires effective coordination and can involve large risks, and the latter which avoids risks and often even fails to register as resistance. He argues that in between periods of revolutionary upheaval there is a slow, hidden resistance taking place behind the scenes, what he terms (1985:350) 'the steady grinding effort to hold one's own against

overwhelming odds'. Following this line of argument, local labelling practices of humanitarians as tourists can be considered an everyday act of discursive resistance. While the thousands-strong protests of 'We want our islands back!' and the clashes between locals and police from Athens can be considered open acts of resistance which carry risks of damaging relations with central government and humanitarian actors, the practice of labelling humanitarians as tourists – along with other acts of micro-resistance (see Chapter 5) – can be considered as a covert act of everyday discursive resistance with minimal risks.

Making such an argument raises further questions about the relationship between labelling practices and power. For example, much of the work on the labelling practices of development/humanitarian institutions in Moncrieffe and Ebyen (2007) and Zetter's (1991, 2007) work focuses on the disempowering, controlling and dependency-creating consequences of institutional labelling practices (as does much of Foucault's work). With regard to locals labelling humanitarians as tourists, there is little evidence of such consequences. There are several explanations for this. First, this chapter has focused on individuals rather than institutions whereby the labelling practices of the latter are typically more widespread and pervasive in their effect and scope, not least in coming from a relative position of power. Second, due to a combination of limited interactions with locals (Chapter 5, 6, 9) as well as a limited capacity to speak Greek, many international humanitarians come and go largely unaware of this labelling practice. This combines with the first point in limiting its pervasiveness and power. Third, one of the key areas where this labelling practice does affect the incoming population is with regard to the inflated prices they are often charged for, for example, rent, meals, and with certain suppliers (Chapters 5 and 6). Labelling humanitarians as tourists justifies charging them at "tourist rates" or, indeed, grossly overcharging them at "unwanted guest rates" (see Chapter 5 on micro-resistance). While this practice could be considered simply as a market reaction to supply and demand, the effects of the practice tend to pass unnoticed by members of the international humanitarian community, particularly by short-termers, who either are not on the island long enough to understand the market, consider the prices cheap compared to back home, and/or are happy to pay the price as a humanitarian gesture towards refugees and/or the "suffering" local economy. Fourth, importantly, another reason that the practice has little effect on the target population is because the intended audience is other locals, not the international

humanitarians who are being labelled. Indeed, one of the most powerful effects of labelling international humanitarians as tourists is to reinforce local identity – "us" and "them" – and, specifically, a local identity that is in opposition to the international humanitarian presence.

7.5.3 'I'd rather have tourists here than these people'

Related to the above, another possible explanation as to why so many of the pre-2015 population label humanitarians as tourists is due to the changing identity of the island since 2015. As discussed in Chapter 5, the island has taken on many different identities over the years. These include the 'Island of Poets', the 'golden isle' and 'the garden of the Aegean' and, more recently, the 'Olive Island', the 'ouzo island', the 'red island', an island of religious pilgrimage, and the less popular 'lesbian island'. More recently, however, it has become known in Greece and abroad for the refugee presence, a reputation that is deeply unpopular with the majority of the island's population. While tourists have never been particularly popular on the island, I found that most of the pre-2015 population would much prefer their island's identity to be associated with tourism than with refugees and international humanitarians.

I first encountered an anti-tourist sentiment in Lesvos during my first visit in 2007. When I asked a table of retired locals whether tourists come to the island the main thrust of the response was: 'unfortunately'. While I was then being welcomed more as a local than a tourist – or, at least, the spouse-to-be of a local – I soon came to understand that tourists were considered somewhat as a necessary evil for some people's livelihoods on the island. The observation of one local working in the humanitarian sector (L/H,M,31,II:26/7/19) is representative of many: 'This is a beautiful island with a lot of natural beauty but we do not do anything with it because the people here they don't want strangers to come here'. While he was referring to a broad range of 'strangers' (including tourists, students, and other "non-locals" as well as refugees and humanitarians), I have often encountered such comments over the years. Indeed, the Vice-Mayor for Cultural and Tourist Affairs himself (L,M,50s,SI:19/8/19) also noted this attitude and cited two reasons as to why the tourism infrastructure of Lesvos has not been developed to the extent that islands such as Kos, Mykanos, Corfu, Rhodes, and others have. First, because of the rules associated with the island's status as a UNESCO Global

Geopark which prohibit large developments; and, second, because ‘the people are not interested in doing something better…the people here don’t want tourism’. Such a statement from a municipal official for tourism is significant. He went on to provide examples of occasions when ‘mixed’ (protected and unprotected) areas of land had been identified and sanctioned for development and where legislation could legally be circumvented to develop tourist infrastructure there, but local opposition restricted these activities and development could not proceed. Meanwhile, one northern European non-Greek local with over twenty years of experience of being an outsider in Lesvos (L/H,M,56,SI:22/8/19) suggested that ‘They don’t really like to see you come but they definitely love it when you leave’. Indeed, apart from representatives from the tourist industry, most local participants did not refer to or consider Lesvos as a tourist island and, as discussed in Chapter 5, it is as much an agricultural island as it is a tourist island. However, unlike the agricultural identity of which many islanders speak proudly, many openly lamented the island’s associations with tourism with several indicating that they would prefer that tourists would not come to Lesvos at all.

Of course, not wanting a large hotel complex built next to your house does not mean that you or your island are inhospitable. However, some locals did suggest this. One who works in the humanitarian sector (L/H,M,41,II:27/4/19), but is by no means happy with the humanitarian and refugee presence on the island and would prefer that ‘all these niggers would get the fuck off my island’,[33] also claims that the people of ‘his’ island are not receptive to tourists (L/H,M,41,II:6/4/19):

> When people say refugees ruined tourism – no they didn’t. We did that ourselves cos we’re not hospitable. You go to the islands of the southern Aegean and people are happy to see you, they provide services, ‘come into my shop’ and all that. You go into a shop in Mytilene and they’re like ‘Oh so I’ve got to stand up now?’ We did that to ourselves, it wasn’t the refugees.

[33] To clarify, his use of the N-word was in reference to both humanitarian and refugee populations.

The point here is that, despite a general antipathy towards tourists and tourism, such an identity or label for the island is much more palatable for many locals than one associated with refugees.

Even those who have benefited financially from the humanitarian and refugee presence told me that they would prefer the island to return to how it was before 2015. These include a real estate professional (L,M,29,SI:7/3/19) who complained that he had lost friends because he had 'profited' from the situation and would rather 'not have this money', as well as the owner of a car rental business (L,M,54,II:22/2/19) who explained that he'd 'rather have tourists here than these people'. Indeed, I found the sentiment that resulted in the 2020 protests demanding 'our islands back' indicate was quite pervasive. As the island has become increasingly known for refugees, the once spurned tourist identity that is fading in the shadow of refugees and humanitarians has become more attractive to the local population when juxtaposed with the current situation. Perhaps, on some level, labelling humanitarians as tourists allows them to feel better about the newcomers: they are "just" tourists rather than part of a process that is transforming 'their island into a "Third World" country' (Rozakou 2017:102). It allows them to entertain a fantasy that everything is ok and that pre-2015 trends of tourism are still present. Or perhaps labelling humanitarians as tourists can be understood as a coping strategy employed by locals during the transformation process of their island's identity into a "refugee island". This maybe taking Jenkins' (2008:12) argument that 'groups are real if people think they are' a step too far but a tourist presence is certainly considered the lesser of two evils in comparison with refugee/humanitarian presence. Perhaps, in addition to denigrating humanitarians behind their backs, reinforcing a local identity and justifying certain behaviours, locals take some level of comfort in labelling humanitarians as tourists in the face of such upheaval on their island.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter contributes to ongoing debates on labelling practices in forced migration. While most previous such research has focused on the top-down processes of government/humanitarian agencies labelling the displaced (Wood 1985; Zetter 2007; 1991; Stevens 2013; Janmyr and Mourad 2018), this chapter shifts the focus to labelling practices of the lesser researched displacement-affected populations of locals and humanitarians (see

Chapter 3). Specifically, it looks at how locals label humanitarians and how humanitarians label each other. Instead of focusing on the official discourses of humanitarian institutions, it focuses on the vernacular labelling practices of the people who populate them. In doing so, it reveals the ways in which "less powerful actors" – rather than Moncrieffe's (2007:2) 'more powerful actors' - 'use frames and labels to influence how particular issues and categories of people are regarded and treated' (*ibid.*) in their everyday actions and interactions. In particular, it has revealed how different actors use, accept, reject, resist, seek and oppose these labels.

In many cases, we have seen how these practices are situated within a hierarchy of morals. These have been presented and analysed in various forms: some locals compared their pre-EU/Turkey deal volunteering which they were doing 'out of love' while arguing that the international volunteers are not and therefore should not be called volunteers; international volunteers compared themselves to professional humanitarians who are often considered to be serving government agendas rather than a purely humanitarian agenda; professionals argue that volunteers lack professionalism and/or are unable find employment in the sector as a "proper" (read: paid) humanitarian; long-term humanitarians are more committed than short-termers; and more. The chapter has shown that the labelling of others is often as much about the identity of the labeller as it is about those being labelled and, in doing so, has revealed insights into the politics of international humanitarianism as well as social expectations regarding what it means to be a humanitarian. The exclusionary powers of identity are well-established and, as in many of the cases in this chapter, this 'troubling aspect' (Gilroy 1997:301-302) has been exactly the purpose: to differentiate between "we" and "they" or "us" and "them". Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) note how different actors deploy discourse as a strategy in their search for resources and authority, to assert their power, gain legitimacy and renegotiate the humanitarian arena's values and structures. My analysis has found that, in Lesvos, there is a particular role for the tourist label in these discursive processes.

While the tourist label is universally used to denigrate the other, its mobilisation and application to actors in Lesvos' humanitarian arena have revealed insights into humanitarian practice on the island and beyond. Social constructions in the global north of humanitarians

as important and life-saving, and of tourists as frivolous and leisure-seeking, are mobilised by different actors to assert their own moral superiority and legitimacy regarding who is more humanitarian is more humanitarian than who. We find young volunteers – often very passionate about their work although perhaps less sure of their identity than their elder or professional peers – particularly resistant to the tourist label. Despite this distancing, however, my interviews and fieldnotes are full of tourist-related references and practices including discussions about booking holiday days/annual leave from work in order to be able to travel to the island, spending time on the beach and/or in cafés (sometimes “working remotely”), partying in the evenings, renting cars, sightseeing and visiting attractions (mainly, but not exclusively, refugee-related), as well as more meta-sociological observations regarding the quest for authenticity (MacCannell 1976). As such, the findings from this chapter raise further questions regarding similarities between the study and practice of humanitarianism and tourism in Lesvos, and indeed elsewhere, which are explored further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8 – Humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage: theory and practice in Lesvos

8.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the argument made throughout this thesis that there are significant links between humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage. While Chapter 2 linked the study of humanitarianism to some of the key works in tourism and pilgrimage studies, Chapter 6 highlighted the similarities and difference between the economic practices of humanitarians and tourists, and Chapter 7 analysed how and why humanitarians in Lesvos are identified as tourists, this chapter analyses the similarities in processes between humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage. After introducing Lesvos as a site of religious pilgrimage, I use ethnographic data to analyse Valene Smith's (1992) pilgrim-tourist continuum in relation to humanitarianism. I then present Lesvos' "Lifejacket Jacket Graveyard" where refugees' disused lifejackets are stored while using a model from Dean MacCannell (1976) to determine the extent to which it can be considered an 'attraction'. This is followed by analysis of authenticity and alienation as driving forces of humanitarian travel to Lesvos, the role of intimacy in the humanitarian encounter, and the communitas experienced while there, before concluding.

Lesvos has long been considered a site of pilgrimage. According to Lesvos.com, Lesvos is 'second only to the island of Tinos for pilgrims' (Lesvos.com) for the thousands of pilgrims who travel every year from all over Greece and Christendom. Christianity was declared for the first time on Lesvos around 25 years after the death of Jesus Christ by the Apostle Paul, Luke the Evangelist and their companions and is mentioned in the Bible (Acts 20:14): 'He [Paul] met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mytilene' whence they travelled on to Chios'. The island hosts 15 monasteries, three of which are famous for their miracles (Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Eirini; Saint Taxiarchis (Gabriel) – Mantamados; and Saint Ignatius/Limonos), and many churches and chapels. Key amongst them is the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin in Agiassos, the destination of one of the island's main pilgrimages sometime referred to as the 'Jerusalem of Lesvos' (https://visitagiasos.gr/lesvos/). Thousands of people travel from all over Greece (and elsewhere) to walk the 25km uphill road from Mytilene to

the small town's church. Lesvos is also considered the birthplace of the poet(ess) Sappho who wrote an erotic poem about women. As such, the village of Skala Eresos has become a key destination for many LGBTQI+ travellers with Venetia Kantsa (2002:48) noting how some representations have taken on 'the characteristics of a place of pilgrimage'. Meanwhile, since 2015, the year-round turnover of thousands of people wishing to support or stand in solidarity with refugees has in many ways transformed the island into a site of humanitarian pilgrimage.

8.2 The Humanitarian/Tourist Continuum

Building on the Turners' oft-cited adage that 'a tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist', Valene Smith (1992) does not take the view that pilgrims and tourists are distinct figures and places them on a sacred/secular continuum with infinite possibilities of combinations in between. As Judith Schlehe (1999:8) noted in Java, Indonesia, 'a considerable number of pilgrims will perform the proper rituals, and then enjoy their nocturnal jaunt to the beach'. Indeed, the same can be said of many of the humanitarians of Lesvos who work hard in support or solidarity with refugees and enjoy the cafés, bars and beaches in their free time. For Smith (1992:4), the positions on the continuum reflect the 'multiple changing motivations' of the traveller whose interests may switch from tourist to pilgrim and vice versa, even without the individual being aware of the change'. While several scholars regard the continuum as one of the most influential motivational frameworks in religious tourism (Timothy and Olsen 2006; Dimitrovski et al. 2020), below I adapt the model to the narratives of three sets of travellers to Lesvos and evaluate its applicability in understanding their motivations.

The following three sets of travellers to Lesvos might identify with or be identified with various points across the continuum. The first is an Australian couple and their toddler child staying on the island for three weeks in September in a comfortable hotel in the north of the island where there are fewer refugees (than the south) and the beaches are established tourist destinations for internationals and locals. They identified themselves as tourists and when asked whether the refugee situation had any effect on their decision to come, they both replied at the same time: one with 'yes' and the other with 'no' before discussing between themselves and eventually agreeing that it was indeed one of the reasons. They said that they had heard about the impact of the refugee situation on tourism in Greece and they wanted

to go somewhere that needed tourism. Either unaware of or disregarding the many locations between Australia and Greece that are in need of tourism, including several areas affected by displacement, they decided on Lesvos, Greece. While they self-identified as tourists and did not engage in any volunteer activities, they did nevertheless frame their motivation in humanitarian terms (namely supporting the suffering tourist economy of Lesvos) and they seemed to enjoy discussing the refugee situation with locals and internationals on the island. Even so, analysis of their narrative and behaviour implies a greater leaning towards tourism than humanitarianism on the continuum.

In contrast, the reasons that Max (whom we met in the previous chapter) stated for coming to Lesvos are quite different. According to him, he only came to Lesvos because his family would not allow him to go to Syria because it was too dangerous. According to Max (H,M,58,SI:20/9/19), his journey started in 2018 when he saw a social media video of a child in Syria eating grass, the only available food, in the basement of his house as he hid with the remainder of his family from the ongoing shelling above. It 'changed something in my thinking that made me say right, I'm going to Syria to help these kids'. Following opposition from his family, who were concerned for his safety, he eventually heard about the situation in Lesvos and found an NGO to volunteer with via a friend of a friend. Following his experiences volunteering on the island (see previous chapter), he developed his own niche humanitarian activity where he could operate largely independently of NGOs, and I met him on his fourth trip to Lesvos (self-funded rather than fundraising) since his first trip a year earlier. He did not go to the beach during any of these trips, rarely went out for dinner and went to bed early each night, physically exhausted. In addition to a trip to south-east Asia, he has since volunteered with an NGO in Lebanon, 'My friend tells me I'm just trying to find that kid [from social media] in Syria. He might be right'; and, in 2020, finally made it to Syria via the Turkish border. Max's narrative and actions imply a greater leaning towards humanitarianism than tourism on the continuum, particularly when posited next to the Australian couple.

If these examples represent two points on opposite sides of the continuum, where would we find Chloe and James from north America? According to Chloe (H,F,20s,II:24/2/19):

> We quit our jobs together in October and we just want to see the world…so [after Lesvos] we're going to Jordan and we plan to spend a few weeks there. We want to volunteer but it seems a little more unorganised there than here.…The plan is to spend about three weeks there before finishing our vacation and going back to [north America].

References to 'seeing the world' and 'our vacation' seem to indicate that sightseeing and holidays – or tourism – appear to be more key motivations for their travels than humanitarianism. Sitting with their recently made friends and colleagues early on a cool Sunday morning in February in one of the 'triangle' cafés (see Chapter 6), then populated with more Euro-American than Greek clientele, following on from yet another goodbye party the night before, the couple explained the different volunteering activities they had conducted during the previous month and a half. When I asked about more local opportunities to volunteer with refugees such as, for example, the so-called 'migrant caravans' attempting to cross from Latin America into the United States during that same period (BBC 2018), James confessed that he had 'not really thought of that before'. While their decision to travel across the Atlantic to support refugees can be understood in terms of a universalistic moral obligation to alleviate 'distant suffering' (Boltanski 1999; Barnett and Weiss 2008; Fassin 2012; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; see Chapter 2), it also implies a greater leaning towards tourism. However, this is not to detract from their commitment to volunteering in support of refugees – I observed them spending many hours enthusiastically teaching English, serving lunches, cleaning up, and other chores in one of the island's refugee community centres. However, regarding the humanitarian/tourist continuum, their narrative places them somewhere between the previous two examples.

While the tourist/pilgrim continuum remains a key concept in the literature on tourism and pilgrimage, however, and neatly applies to the humanitarian/tourist question of this thesis, it falls short in several areas. For example, the model does not address the problems of emic versus etic identification nor does it address the tricky relationship between motivation and practice. Using the continuum in this way is largely an exercise in labelling and reifies the socially constructed categories of pilgrim, tourist and humanitarian. Such a process belies the complex realities and intersecting identities of people who travel to Lesvos and arguably

contributes to the ‘categorical fetishism’ that Crawley and Skleparis (2018) engage with in their work on ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’. Perhaps such a continuum with its dichotomous implications is not a particularly useful way of trying to understand peoples’ motivations and identities. Perhaps analysis would be more productive by conceptualising the continuum as two (or more) overlapping activities that can coexist simultaneously like two aspects of someone’s identity. Later in the chapter, I explore in more detail some of the complex realities and intersecting identities those who engage in humanitarian travel. First, however, is a case study on the ‘Lifejacket Graveyard’, a rubbish dump where refugees’ disused lifejackets are stored, that teases out some of the practical and theoretical links between humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage in Lesvos.

8.3 The Lifejacket Graveyard as a (humanitarian or tourist?) attraction

8.3.1 Setting the scene

In extending the tourism/pilgrimage analogy further, Peter Burns (1999:91) suggests that by including the idea of ‘paying tribute at cultural stations rather than religious ones, then tourists may progress (in a social and intellectual sense) from their leisure consumption to a range of benefits similar to [pilgrims]’. While all visitors to Lesvos engage in some form of ‘sightseeing’, Knott (2018) argues that the camps, dinghies, lifejackets, boat landings and indeed the refugees themselves have become ‘tourist attractions’ in themselves for many visitors. Considering the Lifejacket Graveyard as a cultural station, it is fairly easy to draw similar parallels between pilgrimage, tourism and humanitarianism, particularly when combined with the short-term but often intense nature of their experiences both on the island and at the site.

Based on my observations and interviews, most people who cross borders to help or stand in solidarity with refugees visit the Lifejacket Graveyard at some point during their time in Lesvos. Located in the north of the island, a few kilometres up a hill from the coast at the shortest crossing point from Turkey and at the end of a road where goats graze and chew on what they can find, images of the Lifejacket Graveyard feature prominently in international news reports and humanitarian agencies’ external communications material. It is populated by thousands upon thousands of not very effective lifejackets that are issued to refugees in

Turkey before attempting to cross into Greece and Europe. These lifejackets are abandoned on the beaches upon arrival and then gathered up by people from NGOs and volunteer groups some of whom transport them up the hill to the Lifejacket Graveyard while others take them away to use for their projects.

Far from the most conventionally attractive of Lesvos' sights or sites, the Lifejacket Graveyard attracts a lot of international visitors, mainly from the humanitarian sector as well as journalists, researchers and, indeed, some self-identified tourists. Short-term volunteers typically visit it on their 'days off', often on a trip facilitated by the organisation they are with. Federica Cavallo and Giovanna Di Matteo's (2020) research on volunteer tourism and lived space in Lesvos found it to be the second most visited place among volunteers during their free time on the island after Molyvos, a heritage town with a castle and popular beaches in the north of the island and regarded as the island's tourist capital. Although more people in their study reported visiting Molyvos, a few participants said that the Lifejacket Graveyard was 'the only sight they saw on the whole island'. Situated just a few minutes away from Molyvos, the finding also sheds some light on the humanitarian/tourist balance of priorities among volunteers during their free time.

8.3.2 A well-marked rubbish dump

In his seminal work, *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell (1976:41) outlined his model for an attraction thus:

[a tourist / sight / *marker*]

attraction

According to MacCannell, a sight becomes an attraction through the presence of a marker and a tourist. With the Lifejacket Graveyard framed a sight that people from all over the world travel to see, all that remains is the marker to qualify it as an attraction. For MacCannell, what remains is the 'marker' which is an essential component of an attraction in its capacity both to provide information about a sight and also to project meaning and significance as a place worth visiting. While the Lifejacket Graveyard completely lacks what MacCannell calls 'on-site markers', it is nevertheless rich in equally important 'off-site markers'. For MacCannell, on-

site markers include signs, placards, brochures and the like, that are found at the site itself and he points to examples of well-marked sights such as Napoleon's hat or rocks from the moon in a museum, the tomb of an old dead president, or even entire nation-states that, without the presence of an on-site marker would be otherwise indistinguishable from other hats, rocks, tombs, or pieces of land. At the Lifejacket Graveyard, there are no on-site markers such as signs, placards or brochures indicating it as a site where refugees' discarded lifejackets are stored.

The Lifejacket Graveyard is, however, a very well-marked site in terms of MacCannell's 'off-site markers'. A modern interpretation (Leite et al. 2019) of off-site markers includes 'guidebooks, travel blogs, newspaper articles, websites, maps and even other people's photos and souvenirs'. To this list I also add humanitarian organisations' fundraising campaigns. Indeed, the Lifejacket Graveyard features prominently in news reports, fundraising campaigns, returning travellers' photos, souvenirs such as bags and other handicrafts made from the lifejacket materials, the stories they tell on return, academic outputs (such as this thesis). The site is also recognised as a 'place' on Google Maps . Averaging 4.5 stars from 17 reviewers, the rubbish dump is described as 'impressive', 'highly recommend visiting', and 'like a natural art piece that characterises the refugee crisis'.[34] These reviews are similar to those received by the Upside-Down House, an inverted building in my hometown of Brighton, a seaside resort on the south coast of England, where visitors also like to take photographs and unusual selfies and which also receives 4.5 stars, albeit from a larger number of reviewers. A key difference, however, is that Google Maps describes the Upside-Down house as 'tourist attraction' while the Lifejacket Graveyard is described as a 'garbage dump in Greece'. Indeed, it is, officially at least, a municipal rubbish dump. Nevertheless, according to MacCannell's model, the Lifejacket Graveyard can be considered an attraction as there is a sight, a marker, and people who come to see it. Whether it can be considered a tourist attraction depends on whether the people who come to see it are considered as tourists. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this label is largely rejected by many of those who visit the site. Perhaps more in line with an emic approach and with reference to the

[34] As of 14/12/2021, Google Maps declares this place as 'Permanently closed' and, although the reviews are no longer accessible, I have a collection of screenshots of reviews from 4/9/2020 available on file.

humanitarian/tourist continuum, it might be better understood as a 'humanitarian attraction' or an 'activist attraction'. For most of the island's pre-2015 population, however, it remains quite simply a rubbish dump.

8.3.3 An authentic rubbish dump

Both Beatrice and Fatma managed to visit the site twice during their respective eight-day and five-and-a-half week stays on the island. Although they never met each other during their time on Lesvos, they reported similar experiences. Fatma (H,F,23,SI:18/11/19), however, without any prompting from me, made direct reference to tourism and the site's role as an attraction:

> It was obviously weird to see. It just kind of hits home about how many people have passed through…It's a bit weird when you come to see it as some kind of tourist attraction but, you know, you're still coming from some sort of informed place, as volunteers, but not just actual tourists, thinking "Oh lets go see this thing". But even if you are actual tourists, you're still willing to acknowledge this thing is happening on the island and witness some part of it. I don't know, my friend felt much more weird about it than me saying, 'I don't know how I feel about this, that we're like taking pictures of it and coming to it like it's an actual day out'….but I think it's important to see. There's no point in not seeing it.

Her comments raise three key points relevant to the discussion. First, it recalls the 'multiple changing motivations', and indeed identities, along the humanitarian/tourist continuum above. Second, she uses the Lifejacket Graveyard as a place and experience to distinguish herself from 'actual tourists' (see Chapter 7). Third, while she felt uncomfortable seeing it, she was not uncomfortable enough not to see it again. Beatrice also visited it twice and I interviewed her about it on the penultimate day of her time in Lesvos just before setting off to the north to enjoy the beaches and see it for the second time while accompanying a newly arrived volunteer with her NGO. She described her experience a week earlier:

> We were in Molyvos at the Lifejacket Graveyard and there were two refugees who came with us and told us some things about it like they were told by the smuggler that

> the trip would be for five hours, but it was actually like sixteen hours or twelve or something, I don't know. They were in a boat with like 200 people, you can't move or anything. And it was hard to hear that they're… people die all the time on these trips, you know, and it was hard to hear because they're just like us. And, yeah, it hurt me, it was hard.

With regard to Fatma and Beatrice's accounts, the Lifejacket Graveyard scores highly in terms of Wang's three categories of authenticity discussed in Chapter 2. First, in terms of object authenticity, apart from mainly being fake (i.e. unfit for purpose), the lifejackets are nevertheless *authentic* fake lifejackets as worn by refugees who made the very real and often perilous journey across the sea from Turkey to Greece. As such, the site is very much a real and 'living' site where *real* lifejackets worn by *real* refugees continue to be dropped off on a regular basis. In this respect, the total lack of on-site markers and apparent lack of commodification adds further to its object authenticity. Second, in terms of constructive authenticity, the images, narratives and symbols of the Lifejacket Graveyard reproduced in news reports, humanitarian organisations' fundraising appeals, social media, and/or via word-of-mouth, generate 'various versions of authenticities regarding the same object' (Wang 1999:352) as people continue to read, write, speak and hear about the crisis. With most volunteers (and others) first hearing about the refugee situation from these sources, representations both of the crisis and the Lifejacket Graveyard serve to socially construct and reproduce its authenticity while, in turn, co-producing the humanitarian imaginary of Lesvos.

Their experiences at the site also appeal to Wang's four types of existential authenticity. First, Beatrice described how 'it hurt' her to hear about refugees' journey into Greece while accounts similar to another volunteer who explained that '[i]t's crazy to think that that many people, that many souls, have been through all of this, its just crazy…I cried' spoke to the bodily feelings and sensory perceptions of existential authenticity. Second, there is much self-making in these accounts, not only in differentiating from an 'actual tourist' but also, more generally, through the act of travelling to Lesvos and to the Lifejacket Graveyard in support or solidarity with refugees. As Wang (1999:363) notes '[t]ourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the Other. They also search for the authenticity of, and between, themselves'. Similarly, a humanitarian identity is constructed both through travel and differentiation from

tourists. Third, while Wang refers to family in the literal sense as a chance 'to achieve or reinforce a sense of authentic togetherness and an authentic "we-relationship", I extend this argument to both national/regional and humanitarian communities (cf. Anderson 2006) whereby the primary visitors to the site are almost exclusively volunteers. Despite Beatrice's comment that 'they are just like us', this serves to reinforce their identity in relation to the former wearers of the lifejackets who are exclusively (as far as I am aware) from the global south. Fourth, in terms of touristic *communitas*, both Fatma and Beatrice (like many others) went with friends/colleagues from their organisation, were accompanied by an English-speaking refugee who spoke authoritatively about the experience of crossing the sea and, like many others, were emotionally affected by their experience. This shared experience provides a solid foundation for establishing the sense of communitas discussed in Chapter 2 (and further below). Furthermore, supporting Rickly-Boyd's (2013:683) argument that 'place matters' in existential authenticity', I argue that, compounded with the experience at the Lifejacket Graveyard, simply being in Lesvos – at both Greece and the European Union's border with Turkey – sets the conditions for experiencing existential authenticity for the politically and socially minded people who travel to Lesvos because of the refugee situation.

8.3.5 Not as popular with 'other' visitors

Meanwhile, it is not only northern Euro-American volunteers who visit the Lifejacket Graveyard; and positionality plays a key role in the way that visitors experience the site. For example, Mohamed (R/H,M,27,SI:30/6/19), who might have been exaggerating when he says he's been there 'a million times', says that he does not feel any emotion on his visits there when he accompanies other (usually northern Euro-American) volunteers (and journalists) to the site. '*3adi* (it's normal)', he says, 'it's the same for me'. Like Beatrice and Fatma, Mohamed is also a volunteer in his twenties, considers himself as a temporary visitor to Lesvos and does not identify as a tourist. The similarities, however, end there. Unlike Beatrice, Fatma and most other international visitors to the site, he did not leave his country with the specific aim of volunteering with (or reporting on) refugees, although that is what he was doing when we met. Second, volunteering is more of a livelihood for Mohamed than an activity conducted during annual leave from work or breaks from study (see Chapter 6). As such, he has a very different set of motivations for visiting the site. While it is not in his job/volunteer description to accompany his colleagues on their (and his) days off, he feels a certain amount of informal

pressure from his organisation to go, 'I don't have to but, you know, it's good to go'. Informal pressure notwithstanding, he also enjoys the romantic encounters that sometimes emerge from these visits: 'The girls love it', he winks with a smile. Third, and importantly with regard to (im)mobilities, Mohamed is trapped on the island by the policies of the Greek government and European Union while his non-asylum-seeking volunteer colleagues are not. While Fatma and Beatrice arrived on the island from northern Europe by plane, and paid significant sums of money in order to do so, Mohamed came on a dingy from Turkey, also at significant cost but, unlike the others, at significant risk to his life. Fifth, Mohammed actually wore one of the lifejackets that others came to see, maybe even one that is still there at the site. In light of this, his claim to feel very little sentimentality might seem surprising. While this could be explained by the sheer number of times that he has visited the site that has desensitised him over time, his comments to me two months later implied an attitude more attuned to protective distancing than nonchalance. In this conversation, he expressed his desire to stop volunteering or, rather, working in the humanitarian sector. He was tired of dealing with 'sadness' all the time, he told me, and wanted something more positive in his life instead of listening to, talking about and experiencing refugee suffering. At the time of writing (March 2021), however, he is still volunteering although now with a different organisation, with a slightly higher stipend, and he is still hoping to change his vocation to something different. With a role at the Lifejacket Graveyard more akin to tour guide than tourist, his experiences combine to produce a very different experience to those of Fatma, Beatrice and many other visitor.

While the Lifejacket Graveyard may be a tourist/humanitarian attraction for some, for many locals it remains very much a municipal rubbish dump. Of the 47 members of the pre-2015 population I asked specifically about the site and recorded responses for, only three had visited it, two of whom were of Greek origin (one was a professional from a humanitarian agency and the other was Costas whom we met in Chapter 5). Both accompanied their Euro-American colleagues volunteers with Costas (L/H,M,20,SI:2/2/20) describing his first visit as 'quite heavy' and 'quite intense because there's so many life jackets…and every single lifejacket represents a life that has been saved' while also recognising that many had lost their lives. Costas went on to describe the smell and dirtiness of the site while positioning himself and his feelings in relation to others:

> You know, for somebody who like comes here for like a couple of months or weeks and goes, it's like 'Oh, damn, I've never seen this before'. But I've actually experienced the entire thing. For the past, like six years now, I've seen people come out of boats, people like trying to swim and shit like that. So it was I kind of like, I felt bad actually, when I went there, for those people. But at the same time, I was like, 'Yeah, I've kind of like seen this before'.

In his interview he not only differentiated himself from others who come for short periods to volunteer on the island but, after commenting on the initial intensity of the experience, he went on express his own lack of sentimentality when comparing to the other experiences on the island since 2015. The vast majority of locals I spoke with, however, had not visited it. 'Why the fuck would I go there? It's a rubbish dump!' commented one (L,M,30s,II:12/9/19) perhaps more expressively than others. On another occasion I asked a local scholar and practitioner in the tourist industry (L,M,50s,SI:26/2/21) whether he had visited, he just shrugged and said 'No'. When I suggested that many internationals visit it 'almost like a tourist attraction', he said:

> For sure, attractions can be very different as we speak all these recent years about dark tourism. So going there can be an attraction. For me, it is not. Because we are living this in another way. So I don't feel this as an attraction. Perhaps later on, it is going to be one. I could not imagine that people would be in Auschwitz or another these kinds of places, but they are.

With some encouragement, he was able to see the possibility of the site as a tourist attraction. Mainly, however, in the context of dark tourism,[35] a term first coined by John Lennon and Malcom Foley (2000) and defined by Phillip Stone (2006:146) as 'the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre' whereby sites such as Auschwitz, Alcatraz and Robben Island have become tourist destinations in themselves. Like

[35] Sometimes referred to as 'black spot tourism' (Rojek 1994), 'thanatourism' (Seaton 1996), and 'morbid tourism' (Blom 2000).

Costas above, he positions himself in relation to the site and its international visitors and against his experiences during the rest of the crisis. Noting that 'we are living this in another way', he also suggests that his and other local residents' interpretation of and engagement with the site could change over time. For now, however, in his and Costas' cases, their experiences since 2015 have reduced the desire or need to visit the site as a place of interest.

8.3.6 Commodifying the sight

The theme of commodification emerged from my research on the Lifejacket Graveyard. The materials are used by groups as diverse as 'internationally recognised' artists, NGOs, companies and others for exhibitions, awareness raising, upcycling projects and other activities with the stated objective of benefiting refugees (and the lesser stated objectives of benefiting their organisations, project objectives and their own livelihoods). Some humanitarian organisations run upcycling projects that turn the lifejacket materials into pencil cases, bags and other handcrafts. In many cases refugees are involved in the sewing, transportation and selling of these products. Often promoted as an initiative that brings refugees and locals together, one formerly Athens-based Greek humanitarian professional (H/L,F,32,SI:9/10/19) noted that it is usually the 'expected locals', namely the small minority of the pre-2015 population already sympathetic to the refugee cause and/or associated with the organisation in some way. During fieldwork, I encountered discussions regarding the ethics and potential for re-traumatisation as refugees spend their days (and sometimes nights) working with the same ineffective lifejackets that they wore during the traumatic and often perilous journeys from Turkey. Once produced, these products are sold, mainly to members of the humanitarian community and those with an interest in refugees, many of whom consider their purchase an act of humanitarianism in itself (Gillespie 2018). These products can be purchased either on the island directly or online at what might be considered tourist prices (or should that be 'humanitarian prices'?) and, in some cases, given out for 'free' to those who donate €100 or so to the organisation. In another case, Volkswagen, a German multinational car manufacturer, used an image of the lifejackets from Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei's art exhibition in one of their television commercials, without the artist's permission, which resulted in in a lawsuit and a 1.75 million Danish Krone (USD $260,000) settlement to the high-profile artist (Euronews 2019). Following on from Chapter 6's discussion of the

humanitarian economy in Lesvos, these examples demonstrate further ways that commodification takes place at the intersection of humanitarianism and tourism.

One international NGO worker (H,F,20s,II:28/7/19) suggested commodification of the Lifejacket Graveyard by asking 'why don't they make some money out of it and charge people to see it?'. I put this to Vice-Mayor for Cultural and Tourist Affairs (L,M,50s,SI:19/8/19) who was not so keen. He, like many on the island, blamed the 'decline in tourists from Europe and from Turkey' on the presence of refugees and preferred that Lesvos' image was not associated with refugees. On the other hand, one local business owner-cum-NGO director (who, it should probably be mentioned, has rather benefited from the economic changes since 2015) was asked whether the visits of aid workers and volunteers to this site could be considered as tourism, the response was a resounding '*I* certainly think so!', having previously explained (L/H,F,54,II:7/9/19):[36]

> I've got mixed emotions about [the Lifejacket Graveyard]. You see now people are taking the jackets away from there to use them for recycling [/upcycling for humanitarian projects] which is great and everything but, at the same time, it's kind of diminishing its effect. I mean if you see how many life jackets are there now, I mean it's still powerful but if you imagine that there were thousands and thousands more, it's really powerful. It's good that you're going now cos its changing. The municipality doesn't really like it being there, they tend to shoo people away from there. They think it's bad for tourism. It's all part of pretending there's no refugee problem, that there aren't any refugees coming and all of that.

Of the many lines of inquiry that can proceed from here, the visually 'diminishing effect' provides a powerful entry point. The orange lifejacket has in many ways become a symbol of the 'Europe's refugee crisis' (Yalouri 2019) and, in this respect, images of the Lifejacket Graveyard produce a powerful discourse not only of the site, but of the 'crisis' itself. In his chapter on visual politics and the 'refugee' crisis, Tom Snow (2020) argues that the crisis

[36] This person is the third of the three members of the pre-2015 population whom I interviewed that had visited the site.

cannot be properly accounted for with analysis of visual (re)production and channels of circulation. In this respect, while the image of Alan Kurdi is often credited with mobilising 'ordinary people' into action in 2015, I argue that the bright orange images of the Lifejacket Graveyard used in news reports and humanitarian organisations' advocacy outputs have helped sustain that mobilisation. As noted in the excerpt above, however, the site in 2019 does not look the same as it did in the early years of the crisis. In short, it has become less 'orange' which several of the site's visitors commented on. 'It was different when I first came a few years ago, there were much more lifejackets and the whole scene was much more orange', commented one north American volunteer (H,M,20s,II:23/9/19) over a beef burger. 'Much more instagramable [back then]' quipped a northern European former volunteer visiting a friend on the island.

Figure 5: A photograph of the Lifejacket Graveyard taken by me on 7/9/19

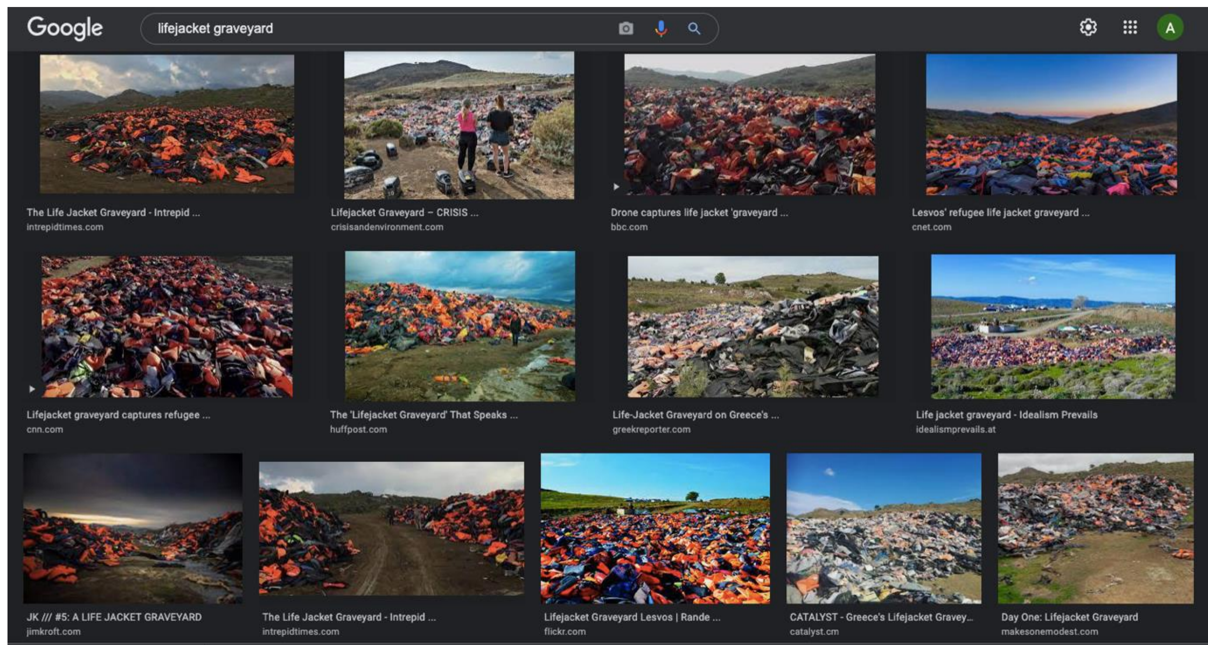

Figure 6: A screenshot from a Google images search of the Lifejacket Graveyard captured on 11/1/22

While this can in part be attributed to the reported increased issuance of grey rather than orange lifejackets in Turkey, commodification-related activities are also responsible for the visually 'diminishing effect' of the site. For example, the orange materials are more sought after than the grey or other colours as they produce the bright orange colour that not only looks good on film, particularly after image manipulation, but also makes for marketable products both as an attractive colour and a symbol of the refugee crisis. As a result, orange lifejackets are 'exported and consumed' at a higher rate than other lifejackets and materials. This, in turn, results in the Lifejacket Graveyard becoming less 'orange', with many visitors commenting on their expectation of orange versus what they encountered at the site. It could further be argued that the lifejackets bear additional visual (and geopolitical) resonances with the orange jumpsuits worn by prisoners in Abu-Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.

The Lifejacket Graveyard ties together the links between humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage. Maximilliano Korstanje and Daniel Olsen (2019:4) argue that both 'dark tourism and pilgrimage can be seen through the lens of history as travel to dark places related to death and in search of meaning'. I argue that humanitarian travel can also be understood in this way. While most volunteers distanced themselves from any association with any form of tourism, Tony Seaton (1996) locates dark tourism within the thanatoptic tradition (the

contemplation of death) which, he argues is a social phenomenon that can be traced back at least to the Middle Ages. Indeed, the phenomenon can be further linked to the 'poverty porn' that development and humanitarian agencies are accused of peddling to raise awareness and funds for their activities (Ong 2015). Meanwhile, as the above analysis demonstrates, different people have different reasons for travelling to the site as some dump rubbish and others do their job and/or seek romantic encounters. Primary interest amongst my interlocutors, however, comes from international volunteers who, already on a humanitarian pilgrimage to Lesvos, travel onwards to the site to conduct a pilgrimage-within-a-pilgrimage (usually before or after a trip to the beach). Despite not always meeting the expectations of its visitors, the site remains very much an authentic rubbish dump or Lifejacket Graveyard and a popular attraction for international volunteers. Building on this section's discussion of authenticity, the next section examines the role of alienation in explaining humanitarian travel to Lesvos.

8.4 Authenticity and Alienation as drivers of humanitarian travel

8.4.1 Alienation in the quest for the authenticity

While much scholarship on tourism has focused on 'authenticity', there is much less on the concept of alienation despite its essential and foundational role with regard to authenticity. Naomi Leite and Nelson Graburn (2009:43) summarise MacCannell's argument on authenticity as argument as a 'radical modification of Marx's concept of alienation' whereby 'tourists, alienated from the shallowness of urban life, travel in search of "authenticity" seeking wholeness and meaning in nature, in history, or in the supposedly simpler lives of other peoples'. Many of the accounts from the international volunteers whom I interviewed and observed also seem to point towards a quest of sorts for greater authenticity, be it a more authentic humanitarian experience, authentic relationships with refugees, other humanitarians or (less likely) locals, and/or other forms of authentic experiences. However, while international volunteer interlocutors unanimously stated that they travelled to Lesvos to respond to the unmet needs of refugees, many also indicated that they were also responding to needs of their own. For example, Chapter 6 discussed how some have been able to build up their CVs through volunteer work. In another case, a volunteer who is not particularly concerned with her CV discussed her love of sailing but 'wanted to do something

a bit better than just sailing around' and found she was able to combine her passion with her political persuasions through volunteering in search-and-rescue operations. At the same time, while many present their reasons for *going* to Lesvos to do humanitarian work, they also presented very personal reasons for *leaving* where they came from (rather than going *to* Lesvos) to do humanitarian work. Developing this line of analysis and building on the previous discussions of authenticity, this section looks more closely at humanitarian travellers' alienation from their lives back home.

Alienation has great relevance and use in understanding motivations of humanitarian travel to Lesvos. For Marxists, alienation can largely be understood in four key ways: alienation from a worker's product, from the labour process itself, from fellow colleagues and, importantly, from the self (Marx [1844]1988). So, in what way are the mainly Euro-American volunteers at the heart of this study alienated from their societies? Regarding work and labour, many commented on the lack of meaning their work provided to them back home compared with volunteering in Lesvos. It was quite common to hear comments such as (H,M,20s,II:13/9/19) 'After doing this [volunteering] I don't think I can carry on selling car insurance anymore' (although he did). Also, Yusuf's observation in the previous chapter of the north American architect who found comfort in cleaning up after lunch in a community centre directly identifies a disaffected relationship with labour back home. In these cases, the argument of David Graeber (2013, 2018) speaks directly to this point. He argues (2018) that 'Something like 37-40% of workers according to surveys say their jobs make no difference' and can be considered 'bullshit jobs' which contrasts sharply with the level of meaning that many of the volunteers attached to their activities in Lesvos. While the extent to which any worker might feel alienated from their product/service or the labour process itself is somewhat subjective, MacCannell's point (1976:6) that 'the alienation of the worker stops where the alienation of the sightseer begins' finds relevance here. Indeed, a significant amount of the volunteer work in Lesvos often consists of little more than sorting clothes in a warehouse, cleaning floors, cooking food and other such repetitive tasks which, when conducted back home, do not necessarily carry the same level of meaning or value. Indeed, Nick Kontogeorgopoulos' (2017a:11) research on volunteer tourism and authenticity in Thailand found that volunteers seek out and cherish the structure of a daily routine as they try to distinguish themselves from ordinary tourists while citing one volunteer's testimony that '[i]t's basically living in everyday

life’. In this respect, volunteering in an international humanitarian response on Lesvos is not only presented as very different from tourism on a Greek island but also carries more meaning through contributing to ‘something bigger than themselves’ (Malkki 2015:12) alongside the comradery (or communitas) of conducting these activities alongside new friends and colleagues who are similarly motivated.

Of course, not everybody is necessarily alienated from their work or the labour process. Fatma, for example, is a postgraduate student doing part-time work which she enjoys, she also enjoys her studies and values the skills she learns, she reports good relations with her fellow students, and is involved in university activism. While volunteering, she switched effortlessly between English and three other languages commonly used by refugees whilst interpreting for other humanitarians from the global north. Well-liked by those with whom she worked, a scholarship awardee, published writer, presentable, eloquent and outwardly confident, rather than MacCannell’s (1976) shallowness of urban life, we find someone with deep bonds with her family, friends and community. She may not have the age and wealth of Edward Bruner’s (2005) mainly retired, divorced or widowed tourists in Indonesia, but is otherwise not much different from those ‘[s]uccessful and affluent persons who were quite secure about their identity [and] travelling at a stage of their lives when they had the income to do so’ (196). Indeed, the same might be said of many of the humanitarian community who, by virtue of ‘just being there’, had employed their privilege, resources and confidence to leave their home countries to support and stand in solidarity with refugees. Where, then, can we locate alienation in humanitarian travel to Lesvos?

A key theme that emerged in all interviews with volunteers was a perceived lack of agency in the face of global injustices and the refugee crisis in particular. Examples include volunteers’ comments in the previous chapter such as ‘I was angry at my country about how it was shifting’, ‘I can't just sit and read about it on the news’, or ‘I can’t *not* do anything anymore’. In contrast to Chad or Somalia, Europe is much more accessible for those wishing to ‘do something’. In this reading, Hazel Andrews’ (2011) analysis of the British on holiday in Magaluf provides some useful insights. Andrews argues, amongst other things, that young working-class British tourists are attracted to tourist resorts on the Spanish island of Mallorca because they can consume a version of British nationalism seemingly denied to them in the UK. She

argues that these tourists feel alienated from various centres of power in the UK whereby political correctness and an increasingly left-leaning liberal governments and social norms are increasingly gaining power and influence. She argues that this sense of alienation is compounded by sentiments surrounding loss of Empire, changes in work patterns, the installation of the free market and a (then as now) uneasy relationship with the European Union. In the resorts of Mallorca, however, they can publicly engage racist and sexist jokes, wave their flags in literal and metaphorical senses, 'let it all hang out', and express their nationalism accordingly.

While Andrews made this argument in 2011, I argue that a similar argument can be made regarding the mainly young, white and middle class northern Europeans who travelled to Lesvos in 2019 to support or stand in solidarity with refugees. With Trump's America, Brexit Britain and various northern European governments and countries' shifts towards the political and social right, particularly since 2015, certain sections of society feel increasingly alienated from the centres of power back home. Indeed, of the many Brits I encountered during fieldwork, not one supported Brexit (which also contrasts with the very many Greeks I met who supported both Brexit and Grexit). Andrews argues (*ibid.*:10) that 'If the home world cannot provide a sense of identity or security, it becomes necessary to look for the self elsewhere', and I argue that 'Europe's refugee crisis' in Lesvos has provided both a place and opportunity to do so. Instead of consuming a version of nationalism denied to them back home, however, they travel to Lesvos to consume a version of international solidarity seemingly denied to them by the foreign and domestic policies of their increasingly right-leaning and, in their view, illiberal and anti-immigrant governments and societies back home.

While the concept of alienation might be taken for granted in many discussions of authenticity in tourism studies, it is perhaps even less discussed in humanitarian studies. One notable exception is the work of Liisa Malkki (2015) whose study of international professional Red Cross workers from Finland found that, along with social isolation, marginalization and falling between the cracks, alienation is recognized and routinely discussed as a serious social problem 'as endemic as depression, alcoholism and suicide' (*ibid.*:138). Noting that these problems are not unique to Finland, she argues that it is more the neediness of the helper that drives humanitarians than it is the needs of those they seek to help. With refugees

typically constructed in the media and elsewhere as 'vulnerable' or 'distant victims' whereby the audience is expected to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment (Boltanski 1999; Höijer 2004), Malkki argues that this 'need to help' is deeply embedded in such imaginaries and emerges more out of local and personal concerns as a kind of 'self-help'. This is a powerful argument and could also help explain how, on several occasions since 2015, there has been a much greater supply of humanitarians than demand (see Chapter 6). Despite humanitarian actors' calls for volunteers to stop coming to Lesvos during this period and at other times, volunteers continued to arrive only to find little to do.

8.4.2 Whose needs?

While most volunteers presented the purpose of their humanitarian travel as responding to Europe's crisis or refugees' crisis, the data indicates that many were also escaping their own crises back home. The observation of one senior local aid worker (L/H,M,31,SI:8/10/19) speaks directly to this point. Since 2015, he has come to know and worked with 'probably thousands' of volunteer and professional humanitarians and came to the conclusion that 'almost everybody is in some kind of crisis' back home. When asked for examples, he described the case of a man who was going through a divorce, had lost his house, put his life's possessions into storage and then driven to Lesvos to volunteer; a person whose sexuality was a secret at home but who was comfortable being open about it in Lesvos; and several cases of people who had recently lost or quit their jobs and had travelled to Lesvos to volunteer. Similarly, my interlocutors included two cases of a recent divorce, several people who had recently broken up from (or were still in) a long-term relationship and went to Lesvos both to volunteer and to evaluate their situation back home; people who had quit, lost, or taken extended time off work and were both volunteering and evaluating their life-choices and future plans; and somebody who had lost his job and his house and considered it 'a good opportunity' to travel to Lesvos at this stage of his life; and countless students (and academic professionals) who volunteered during out-of-term-time.

In this respect, the evidence suggests that many, if not all, of the volunteers were in a liminal phase of their lives. As discussed in Chapter 2, liminality is based on a Durkheimian understanding of society whereby humans are understood as needing time to separate from their usual social affairs in order to maintain social cohesion over time. Whether between

jobs, houses, relationships, terms in the academic calendar, or simply on holiday, liminality emerges as a unifying element in their otherwise diverse biographies (cf. Roth 2015). Following on from the senior aid worker's suggestion that everyone is 'in some kind of crisis' back home, many of these cases also revealed elements of the self-escape discussed in both Malkki's (2015) and Smirl's (2015) work. As one volunteer (H,F,40,SI:29/919) explained somewhat emotionally at the end of her fourth volunteering trip in three years, this time for five weeks:

> It's always hard going back and fitting back into what's expected of you. Its tough to go home because there's a lot of expectations and you have to live up to those expectations. Back to working at the same level, back to being a wife, the brilliant mother of a large cat. These are tough things, and you can't just run off. You have to stay and answer questions, and that's really tricky...It's not running away, its finding perspective. Viewing a problem from a different angle.

While she explicitly stated that 'it's not running away', an element of escape is clearly present in her and many others' narratives. The liminality of her trip lies in returning home, returning to work, to a spouse, a pet, the routine and the mundane of life back home. In her case (and many others), the desire or need to escape (or self-escape?) overlaps with the less dramatic liminal period of a holiday between long periods of work. In other cases, students volunteer during their summer holidays in between periods of study, retired couples doing 'something different for a change' as well as during the more substantial transitions between life-stages described above. Meanwhile, travelling in search of meaning, a different perspective and making sense of one's life are long recognised amongst key motivations of people who conduct pilgrimages (Blackwell 2007).

As three distinct yet overlappingly similar practices of mobility, humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage come together with Kate, a mainly retired worker from the finance sector who had recently uprooted her life in northern Europe to move permanently to the Lesvos. Kate has been holidaying to Greece and its islands since the 1970s, has conducted various Christian pilgrimages in Europe throughout her life for 'I have to say spiritual' (H/L,F,61,SI:2/10/19) rather than religious reasons, has volunteered with refugees three times since 2016, and

recently moved her life to Lesvos in 2019 following the breakup of a long-term relationship. According to Kate: 'the people that you meet on the [pilgrimage] are no different from the people that turn up on this island to do humanitarian work'. When asked for more detail, she first laughed 'They're all bonkers, a great fucking eclectic mix of mad people from all over the world', and later expanded:

> I feel that the young people you meet on [the pilgrimage] are exactly like the young people coming here to volunteer. They have the same style about them. They're in the middle of studies. The very same type of people. I don't know how to classify…Well, normally I have to say they are young, educated people, definitely educated, like what I mean by educated, in the middle of university studying. But then you do meet people from like France that are walking [the pilgrimage] for months who I feel are a little bit lost, probably, maybe like me, always wanted to disappear.

Kate touches on several issues in this excerpt. Her initial references to an 'eclectic mix of mad people' serves to distinguish these groups of people (including herself) from those who do not engage in travel for humanitarian or pilgrimage purposes. She also makes a distinction between the people who are 'a little bit lost' (like her) and the 'young, educated people' ('them'). While her recent break-up and references to being lost and wanting to disappear speak directly to alienation, escapism and self-care as motivations for (humanitarian/tourist/pilgrimage) travel, her comments regarding university also touch on the issues of age and social class. Indeed, many were young and either were at or had been to university. In addition to the well-established links between social class and higher education, the free time and discretionary income that is necessary for tourism, pilgrimage and, indeed, international volunteering is also represented here.[37]

The relationship between social class and volunteering is not a key focus of this thesis and proper analysis would best be conducting alongside intersecting identities including age, gender and race (Crenshaw 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006; Rigon and Broto 2021). Even so, some

[37] While social class with regard to humanitarianism and volunteering has not been properly addressed in this thesis, it would be best explored alongside other intersecting identities such as age, gender and race.

comment is necessary. In addition to being relatively financially privileged, the overwhelming majority of volunteers in Lesvos were white women. This pattern is noted by various volunteer tourism scholars (Jackson et al. 2016; Mostafanezhad 2014; Vrasti 2015) although few explanations are provided as to why. In her study of volunteer tourism in the global south, Vrasti (2015) builds on the work of Cruikshank (1999) in addressing the historical alienation of women in the global north by arguing that 'white women […] use charity and philanthropy towards colonial subjects and the domestic poor as a way to carve out a space for themselves in the public sphere and assert their equality vis-à-vis white men' (Vrasti 2015:10). Also speaking to gender relations in the volunteer-producing countries of the 'colonial' north, Mostafanezhad (2013:488) points to the reproduction of gendered norms regarding care generally and, specifically, caring for children as reproduced in media representations of female celebrity humanitarians and mediated by centuries of literal and figurative colonial presence. Meanwhile, Ranjan Bandyopadhyay and Vrushali Patil's (2017:664) paper on race and volunteerism suggests a need for future studies on volunteer tourism 'to examine its emergence, growth, and popularity (with white women in particular) from the perspective of historic and ongoing power relations having to do with race and racialized gender'. While a gendered lens has been applied widely in studies of displacement, it is more commonly applied to the study of the displaced rather than those who assist them. While I did not set out to study this phenomenon specifically, Lesvos provides an easily accessible and fertile field site for research on the relationships between humanitarianism and/or volunteer tourism and intersecting identities of class, gender, race, and other markers.

8.5 The Human touch

The need for various levels of social interaction are well documented as reasons for travel, particularly in tourism and pilgrimage (Blackwell 2007; Ooi and Laing 2010), but less so in humanitarianism (cf. Conran 2011). Of the many examples Malkki uses to describe aid workers' 'need to help', she notes (2015:201) how '[o]ne person talked movingly about how she missed the casual, friendly, bodily contact she had with teammates and patients on missions but not in Finland. She was often left feeling alienated and needy; no wonder that she was abroad on assignment so much of the time'. Several northern Europeans and American volunteers commented on the bodily contact they encountered in Lesvos but not back home. It is commonplace to see refugee children running to and hugging receptive

members of the humanitarian community in the camps. Putting to one side the inherent structural inequalities (Conran 2011) and ethics of this practice, one volunteer describes how she initially felt about this:

> The first year I was here and that happened, I think I froze. I didn't know what to do. I was trying to push the kids off me. Back home I have a whole [group of students] and I wouldn't, I don't think I would feel comfortable going up to them and hugging them. There's different perceptions [back home] and it's good in some ways. It's meant to protect them, sure. But something pretty big is lost as well.

Speaking further, it was not just the friendly bodily contact of refugee children she embraced:

> It's, you know, somebody walks by at the café, and they just like touch your shoulder, or it's just these little tiny touches that don't quite exist in my life [back home]. And a part of that is because this place [Lesvos/Greece] kind of forces it on you, you don't really have a choice. People just don't touch [back home] so the lesson I want to learn is to be able to take this warmth, and these little extra touches back with me, so I can, I can give that same thing to people around me.

Her narrative speaks to several themes at the heart of this thesis. One concerns the alienation and neediness discussed by Malkki above. While she says that she would not feel comfortable hugging her child students back home, as I observed and she confirmed on several occasions, she has more than accepted the practice in Lesvos since her first trip. Her comment on the different perceptions back home refer to child protection practices which, she noted, is meant to protect but, at the same time, 'something pretty big is lost as well', again speaking to feelings of alienation and neediness. This is reinforced in the second extract where she speaks of casual, friendly bodily contact with adults in Lesvos and how she wants to take this practice back home where 'people just don't touch'. At the time of writing (Sept 2021), this person had been to Lesvos six times and was working on various ways to spend more of her life there, perhaps not unlike Malkki's Red Cross worker who was abroad so much of the time. This line of analysis not only raises questions around whose neediness is being addressed by her

repeated trips to Lesvos, but also addresses broader themes concerning contact with the exotic other as a motivation for travel.

While I did not directly ask about physical or romantic relations, the subject emerged enough times to warrant discussion. According to one refugee (R,M,II:20s/8/19) ‘All [the volunteers] want from here is fun and fuck. All they want is to drink and make sex with refugees’. Admittedly, this particular refugee was somewhat inebriated and perhaps a little frustrated that he was talking with me at 2am rather than one of the female volunteers from the adjacent bar/nightclub. However, a pre-2015 former refugee who has worked professionally for different humanitarian agencies around Greece since before 2015 asked me if I had heard of ‘sexual volunteers’. He explained (L/H/R,M,29,SI:26/7/19) that these are volunteers who come to Greece specifically looking to have sex with refugees and gave me an example:

> I was in [a bar/club] at like two or 3am, I was dancing and she was about to kiss me and I was like ‘No thank you’. She said ‘Come on, I’m here to offer myself to you’. I was like ‘Why are you here, are you a tourist or something?’ She said no, ‘I’m a volunteer’. I was like ‘Holy shit! What organisation are you with? I’ll get you fired tomorrow!’. And she was drunk so she was being honest. She said ‘Well, honestly, I came here for two weeks because I want to taste different men’.

Others also spoke of this phenomenon. A local who has worked in the humanitarian sector since 2015 (L/H,M,32,SI:29/8/19) and also works in bars in the evening stated that ‘there are some volunteers who come just for sex’. He said that ‘it was really easy for me to see this because I was working [in different bars] and I was watching ladies getting drunk and having relationships with refugees’. While he was careful to note that his observation applies to both men and women,[38] he provided an example of a female volunteer in a relationship with one of the refugees in the camp where he was working and she was volunteering (which is strictly forbidden under both NGO and camp rules):

[38] Indeed, there were some shocking but unconfirmed rumours concerning the exploitation of young refugee girls by certain members of one particular NGO.

> [She] came three times to volunteer and each time she had a relationship with a different guy. I realised the second time in and spoke to her. Then I found out the first time she came, she did the same with another guy. And then she came back a few months after that with a different NGO and had a relationship again with another guy… There's also another volunteer who I found actually having sex with a refugee in the camp during work hours….I've got so many stories like this…I see it as a power thing.

While the search for sex with an exotic other and, indeed, a less powerful other, are subjects that have been discussed in tourism studies from various angles for at least fifty years, it is rarely discussed in humanitarian studies. Erik Cohen's (1971) 'Arab Boys and Tourist Girls in a Mixed Jewish-Arab Community' presents Arab youth in cultural, economic and political contexts that limit both life opportunities and opportunities for sex with Arab or Jewish girls while female Euro-American tourists present a potential way to escape it all. Studying Palestinian merchants, Glenn Bowman's (1989) 'Fucking Tourists: Sexual Relations in Jerusalem's Old City' concluded that 'cash and conquest' (*ibid*.:79) rather than escape were the primary objectives, counterbalancing the merchants' relative socioeconomic powerlessness by pursuing an aggressive sexuality towards tourist women while charging as much as possible for their merchandise. Linda Malam (2006:281), on the other hand, criticises Bowman's study for theorising these relationships in very 'unidimensional and contradictory terms, fixing identities to essentialised categories' and for being underpinned by a 'strongly moralistic' theoretical framework. Instead, her exploration of the dynamics between Thai men working in the tourist industry and Euro-American tourist women focuses on the 'multiple and conflicting roles individuals take up as they negotiate their sexual relationships' and argues that identities are 'spatially and temporally specific' (*ibid.*:280) while challenging understandings of relationships that cross axes of difference. Indeed, this latter approach bears particular relevance to my conceptualisation of the humanitarian/tourist continuum which also avoids fixing identities to essentialised categories.

Like much research in development/humanitarian studies, conversations on physical or sexual relationships tend to focus on beneficiary communities. These include studies on sex work (Rosenberg and Bakomeza 2017; Hoefinger et al. 2019), responses to LGBTQI+ displaced

populations (Saleh 2020; Reda and Proudfoot 2021) and other studies. The few exceptions that discuss sex with development/humanitarian aid workers/volunteers are either shockingly exploitative such as cases of volunteers engaged in orphanage tourism and child sexual exploitation (ecpat.org 2019), limited to relations amongst professionals (Cain et al. 2004) and their analysis (Smirl 2015), or contain elements of both such as in discussions of the #MeToo/#AidToo movements (Riley 2020). Most tend to emphasise the predatory behaviours of men on women. While sex in the field is also relatively undiscussed in Anthropology, a recent key exception includes *Sex: Ethnographic Encounters* (Martin and Haller 2019) in which Heath Cabot reflects on an encounter twelve years earlier during her fieldwork at an asylum advocacy NGO in Greece. She discusses (Cabot 2019) how she 'had learned to see and desire [a young Afghan man who was not an asylum-seeker or refugee] through tropes of exoticism and vulnerability' dominant in her field site and how he was apparently attracted to her whiteness and 'perhaps also my Americanness', as well as her relatively open style of communication (*ibid.*:27). Writing as an ethnographer rather than an NGO worker/volunteer – although Gardner and Lewis argue (2015:110-111) that they are often the same – she eloquently describes (Cabot 2019:40) her emotions after their first and only kiss:

> an experience of simultaneously discovering the irreducible individuality of another person while also, in a way, living out a kind of fantasy – a desire for a certain *type* of encounter, with a particular *type* of person, which had been slowly growing in me for a while (with all of the elements of *stereo*-type that this also connotes).

At a time of her life when she 'was coming of age in many ways – and not just as a scholar' (*ibid*.:28), Cabot's exploration of some of the broader power relationships that permeated her encounters with desire in the field are relevant both to the present thesis and to the participants at its heart.

Since 2018, many NGOs in Lesvos have initiated somewhat of a crackdown on romantic/sexual relations between volunteers and refugees. Various NGOs have made amendments to their codes of conduct whereby one such document forbids 'socialising with camp beneficiaries outside the camp, unless as a[n official] activity', states that '[y]ou should

not be alone with camp residents (whether in or outside the camp)', advises that '[n]o massaging/rehabilitation/reiki touch related work [is] permitted unless part of an approved project', and emphasises that 'romantic relationships between residents and volunteers are prohibited'.[39] Meanwhile, several short-term and long-term volunteers informed me that they had been advised that hugging was also strictly forbidden. The way that these rules are drafted, applied, communicated and enforced, however, highlights a particular set of racialised power dynamics within Lesvos' humanitarian community. For example, the predominantly (although by no means exclusively) white volunteers from the global north are permitted physical/romantic/sexual relations amongst themselves but not with their (exclusively) non-white volunteer camp-based colleagues. Meanwhile, if applied to *all* volunteers, camp-based volunteers would not be permitted any kind of relationship outside of work/volunteering, neither with their any of their humanitarian colleagues nor with their camp-based friends, neighbours, etc., thereby restricting relations to the very small minority of refugees who live outside of camps and to the island's much larger although not-so-refugee-friendly local population. This code of conduct was not, however, distributed to or signed by refugee volunteers in this particular NGO. One refugee volunteer explained that he was advised verbally not to engage in physical/romantic/sexual relations in the induction/training to one of the six organisations he has volunteered in, but has never signed a code of conduct with such stipulations. While this practice undermines any pretence of equality between volunteers in the humanitarian response, such encounters do nevertheless take place as can easily be observed in certain bars/clubs in Mytilene late at night/early in the morning. Meanwhile, for the purposes of this thesis, it is worth noting that although I did not directly question any of my interlocutors on the subject, the pursuit of intimate/physical/romantic/sexual relations was nevertheless identified (mainly by men) as a key motivation for volunteering. While this was certainly not the case for most volunteers I encountered, this section demonstrates that there is something important to be said regarding the pursuit of such encounters with an exotic other as a motivation for humanitarian travel.

[39] Excerpts from an international NGOs' Code of Conduct (2019), on file.

8.6 Building community and communitas in Lesvos

Closely linked to liminality as well as to different aspects of the social contact discussed above is the concept of communitas as developed in pilgrimage studies (Turner 1969, 1974; see Chpater 2). When asked to identify the best thing about their experiences in Lesvos, almost every volunteer said 'the people'. While most were referring primarily to the refugees that met on the island, further discussion and observations revealed that they were also referring to their fellow humanitarian colleagues, many of whom – like the refugees – they had met in Lesvos for the first time. Building Chapter 2's discussion, the 'strong sense of unity' and 'sensation of mutual fellow-feeling' (Di Giovine 2011:247-8) experienced by pilgrims (and tourists) is notably present amongst volunteers in Lesvos. United by compassion for refugees a 'need to be there' (Malkki 2015) and 'do something', one northern European volunteer (H,F,24,SI:5/5/19) noted how 'it becomes this very intense group of people' who share their lives together as they experience humanitarian work, often for the first time, and face similar challenges and tests during their experiences in Lesvos. Another (H,F,22,SI:21/8/19), representative of many volunteers on (and similar to the comments of two PhD candidates encountered during 2019 who were researching Lesvos) talks of how she had 'met some of the most amazing people in my life here' and how 'it's the best experience' she had ever had. Indeed, fieldwork revealed many instances of groups of friends formed in Lesvos since 2015 who say they have found particularly deep social ties with the like-minded people they met in Lesvos, sometimes comparing them favourably with people back home. On several occasions during fieldwork, I encountered groups of volunteers who had initially met during previous years while volunteering in Lesvos and who regrouped in 2019. They maintained regular communication during the interim periods despite, in some cases, the challenges of being on opposite sides of the planet: 'Yeah, we've had a lot of late night and early morning calls' explained one (H,F,38,II:22/9/19).

This sense of 'unity' and 'fellow-feeling' is confirmed by previous research on volunteer tourism and grassroots humanitarian responses. For example, the special bonds experienced by volunteer tourists engaged in development work are well noted (Dalwai and Donegan 2012; Mostafanezhad 2014) and, in the grassroots humanitarian response in the 'Jungle' in Calais, France, Doidge and Sandri (2019:478) note the 'very high level of mutual trust and affection between volunteers even though their relationships are relatively new'. Also, in

Lesvos, Trihas and Tsilimpokos (2018) concluded that volunteers' perceptions of best experiences on the island were largely linked to two concepts: altruism and the social dimension of the experience with the most prominent quotes assigned to each concept respectively 'the sense of solidarity and cooperation' and 'the amazing people I have met here'. These findings are notably similar to my own and the two quotes can be said to be constitutive of communitas. Meanwhile, volunteers in Trihas and Tsilimpokos' study also identified the witnessing of dead children, shipwrecks and people dying as their worst experiences. These experiences also contribute to the sense of communitas among volunteers as does, to a less dramatic extent, visiting the Lifejacket Graveyard in the company of refugee guide. While these sentiments that are constitutive of communitas have been identified in previous research on grassroots humanitarianism, as far as I am aware, the concept of communitas has not been applied to a humanitarian context.

Fostering communitas is a key concern for religious site managers (Eade and Sallnow 1991), tour operators (MacCarthy et al. 2006) and, as this thesis has found, NGO managers and coordinators. In their paper on the touristic quest for existential authenticity, Hyounggon Kim and Tazim Jamal (2007) argue that 'a sense of communitas is achieved through sensed equality, particularly among the highly committed tourists'. Like-minded people united by their humanitarian purpose, most volunteers can be considered at least highly committed if not tourists. According to Fatma (H,F,23,SI:26/4/19), 'anyone who comes and is new and has come here by themselves, which is most people, they come here and obviously they want to make friends'. Following Kim and Jamal's line of argument, the combination of sensed equality and high motivation is likely to achieve a sense of communitas. I argue that this process is facilitated by regular team lunches and dinners with colleagues (including refugee colleagues) organised and facilitated by the NGO, trips to other parts of the island including the Lifejacket Graveyard and the adjacent (largely refugee-free) beaches, organising after-work volleyball matches and other sports and, particularly in cases where the NGO provides or helps arrange accommodation, simply living together in the same house. Added to this is the volunteer work itself which involves spending long days and/or nights in a refugee camp or on a beach with likeminded colleagues who often wear the same NGO-logoed T-Shirts.

The humanitarian community in Lesvos is far from a united community, however. Ongoing and intense competition between different agencies over access to resources and funding is played out in meetings, on social media, in supply chains, among donor communities, the local rental market and in recruitment amongst other areas. Further divisions can be found between secular groups and religious groups and indeed within these groups and others (Chapter 5). These manifest in behind-the-back gossip, accusations of incompetency, corruption, theft, sabotage and exploitation as well as rumours of much more horrible things, most of which are not conducive to effective programme delivery. The divisions and contestations often pass by unnoticed by short-term volunteers who, contained in their NGO bubble, are either unexposed to them or hear snippets of negative gossip about people and activities in their NGO's competitors, government institutions or other agencies. Such competition is well documented in the humanitarian world, notably by Jock Stirrat (2006) regarding the unhelpful competitions between humanitarian agencies in Sri Lanka,[40] and also by scholars and practitioners elsewhere (Collinson 2016; Fiori et al. 2016).

In their classic volume, *Contesting the Sacred*, John Eade and Michael Sallnow (1991), noted similar such divisions and patterns of behaviour with regard to the practice of pilgrimage. They argue that, far from being a unifying ritual practice that either subverts or idealizes a particular social order, pilgrimage is 'above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, both for the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and communitas, *and* for counter-movements towards separateness and division' (*ibid.*:2). Rather than producing unity, they argue that communitas is based on and constructed through difference. Furthermore, their engagement with the concept of 'arena' links to Hilhorst and Jansen's (2010; Chapter 3) 'humanitarian arena' whereby different actors compete in their search for resources and authority or to assert their power, gain legitimacy and renegotiate the arena's values and structures. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the key areas of contestation is over the label and identity of humanitarian, humanitarianism and who is more humanitarian than whom or, comparatively, "who is holier

[40] Also based in research in Sri Lanka, Stirrat has also written about pilgrimage (1991), specifically regarding the historical shift from place- to person-centred pilgrimage. He has not, however, written on the links between humanitarianism and pilgrimage.

than whom?”. In place of conflict and competition between orthodoxies, sects and confessional groups, we find in Lesvos conflict and competition between humanitarian actors: professional/volunteer, government funded/grassroots, short-term/long-term, religious/secular, etc. (the different types of humanitarian actors is are discussed more in the following chapter). However, when confronted with an ‘other’ group such as locals who oppose the refugee presence or with activities that threaten the humanitarian presence itself, ranks begin to close and a broader sense of communitas is able to find place, once again through difference. While this critique is indeed a powerful one, it should not however detract from the powerful feelings that volunteers (and, indeed, other humanitarians) experience during their time in Lesvos.

8.7 Conclusion

In some senses, it should not be surprising to find such close links between pilgrimage, tourism and international humanitarianism in Lesvos. As with pilgrimage and tourism, volunteers step aside from the normal rules of life and society for a limited duration to purposely travel toward a highly anticipated destination where unique social relations are formed, and feelings of intensity are experienced. As such, humanitarian travel bears both structural and experiential similarities to pilgrimage and tourism in modern and earlier times. Just as the Turners (1978) observed that pilgrimage is organized, bureaucratized, and uses the same infrastructure as tourist travel agencies, we find that pilgrims, tourists, and humanitarians all occupy similar spaces albeit with different but related spatial behaviours.

If travelling to Lesvos can be considered a form of pilgrimage for those inclined towards supporting or standing in solidarity with refugees (or locals), then visiting the Lifejacket Graveyard can be considered as a pilgrimage-within-a-pilgrimage. Analysis of the site, those who visit it and those who engage with it in other ways has demonstrated its role in visitors’ quests for authenticity. MacCannell’s formula affirms its status as an ‘attraction’ although determining exactly what kind of attraction – tourist, pilgrim, or humanitarian? – depends largely on the subjectivity of the person visiting the site. That it is mainly attractive to international humanitarians is significant and relates directly to the conflict over the site’s identity as a rubbish dump or ‘the Lifejacket Graveyard’ as a symbol of the refugee crisis. This speaks to Bruner's (1993) work on contested sites and further highlights the broader conflict

over the identity of the island as a 'refugee island' (Chapters 5 & 7) while demonstrating the different meanings the site has for different people including, for example, a *de facto* site for team-building amongst volunteers. Indeed, this last point is particularly relevant to the humanitarian/tourist continuum which, I argue, is more representative of fluid forms of identity and activity that can overlap and coexist simultaneously within a person at any one time than it is with fixing identities to essentialised categories.

Key to my argument is the concept of alienation. Despite its essential and foundational role in understanding the search for authenticity (a key concept, if not a pillar, of the study of tourism), it is largely overlooked in both tourism and humanitarian studies. While the international volunteers of Lesvos unanimously claimed that they travelled to Lesvos to support or stand in solidarity with refugees, analysis revealed motivations related to alienation back home that were also important in deciding to engage with international humanitarian action. Hilhorst and Jansen rightly note (2010:1121) that an important feature of the arena approach is that it recognises that humanitarian action is based on a range of driving forces besides the humanitarian desire to alleviate 'life threatening suffering wherever it may be found'. Similarly, Justine Digance and Carole Cusack (2002: 265) note that 'the superficial view that tourists travel solely for pleasure has been questioned for several decades, and it is now acknowledged that there are many complex reasons why people . . . elect to travel'. Indeed, Liisa Malkki's (2015:201) study of Red Cross workers found 'a neediness more generally underlying many people's love of travel — and an imaginative/intellectual excitement in being involved in something different from and somehow larger (even "greater") than their usual working and personal lives' back home. Similarly, in Lesvos, I found many of my interlocutors motivated by their own needs for social interaction, (self-)escape, and international solidarity whereby providing care for a distant other is also understood as a way to provide care for themselves. In this respect, much like tourism and pilgrimage, humanitarian travel can also be understood in terms of a search for authenticity elsewhere. Indeed, despite international volunteers' widespread rejection of associations with tourism, it is worth noting Vrasti's (2015:72) suggestion that '[m]ixing travel and work, hedonism and purpose, charity and self-growth, volunteer tourism seems well-poised to solve the pervasive problem of modern alienation and loss'. Building on this discussion, the next chapter concludes the thesis by bringing together the threads of the

arguments presented in the preceding chapters and articulating the thesis' key contributions to academic and policy debates.

CHAPTER 9 – Conclusion: The Blurred Boundaries between Humanitarianism and Tourism

9.1 Introduction

Scholarly interest in the study of humanitarian action has grown alongside the expansion of the humanitarian sector. Most of this research focuses on the policies and programmes of aid agencies, leaving a gap surrounding the people who implement these and, importantly, their social activities outside of these programmes. Using an actor-oriented approach (Long 2001) and through expanding the scope of the humanitarian arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Hilhorst and Serrano 2010), this thesis directly addresses this gap while arguing precisely that humanitarian action cannot be fully understood without also understanding these actors and their "other" activities. In doing so, my analysis has revealed the overlap between everyday practices of humanitarians and those of tourists. On the surface, these two forms of mobility could not be further apart – social constructions of humanitarianism in the global north concern the important work of saving lives and alleviating suffering, while tourism is associated with leisure-seeking, fun and refreshment. Practitioners of each are constructed accordingly. However, as this thesis reveals, the social, economic, and spatial practices of the humanitarians of Lesvos are very similar to those of tourists (Chapter 6). They are so similar that their colleagues often cannot tell them apart; and so similar that the tourist label is often credibly deployed by humanitarians and locals alike to criticise and denigrate the work of other humanitarians. These practices reinforce identities and contribute to the emergence of new forms of local and humanitarian subjectivities (Chapter 7). Meanwhile, humanitarian and tourist imaginaries combine in Lesvos as a context for people wishing to engage in frontline humanitarian work, "do something" to address global injustices, meet an exotic other, have a holiday, escape from their lives back home, or all of the above, while in the safety and relative familiarity of a Greek island. Linking humanitarianism to tourism and, indeed, to pilgrimage as a form of tourism with a "higher" purpose (Chapter 8), has important implications for the study of all three, not least in helping us understand why people feel the need to travel.

The actor-oriented approach has been crucial to understanding these social processes. Through acknowledging continuities between and discontinuities in social processes before and after 2015 while placing agency at the centre of analysis, my analysis of humanitarian actors and their "other" activities has produced insights that are less visible in policy and media discourses. The dominant narrative that the refugee presence has scared away tourists is not consistent with my research which instead reveals a new type of tourist who is very much attracted to the island precisely because of the new refugee situation which, in turn, has allowed the island's tourist infrastructure to function all year around instead of only during traditional tourist seasons. My analysis challenges media and policy narratives that suggest that the Greek government and formal aid agencies are at the forefront of the humanitarian response, instead revealing that ordinary people, even tourists, are a crucial part of the response. Moreover, the findings presented in this thesis demonstrate that the effects of the humanitarian presence on host communities are often greater than the effects of the refugee presence. Key changes have been identified in the areas of property prices, rents, urban development, the labour market, and the hospitality sector. Importantly, the humanitarian presence has also contributed to social change surrounding processes of hospitality and hostility on the island. As both winners and losers emerge from these developments, the effects of the humanitarian presence are found to be related to, but quite distinct from, those caused by the refugee presence. Theoretically and methodologically grounded in an ethnographically informed actor-oriented approach, this thesis has revealed micro-level acts of resistance and cooperation, complex and changing motivations, contrasts between self-perceptions and external perceptions, as well as the more mundane everyday activities of the actors who populate the humanitarian arena. My application of the actor-oriented approach and the humanitarian arena framework to the activities of humanitarians outside of the projects and policies they implement has been essential in providing this more holistic understanding of the social processes that underlie humanitarian practice.

Drawing the thesis to a close, this chapter brings together the threads of the arguments presented in the preceding chapters and articulates its key methodological, theoretical, and conceptual contributions to academic and policy debates. It points to the implications of this research for the study and practice of humanitarianism and suggest directions for future research before concluding the chapter and thesis.

9.2 Refocusing forced migration studies on "other" displacement-affected actors

With a focus on humanitarian and local populations, a key methodological contribution of this thesis is to shift the analytical focus of forced migration studies away from displaced populations and towards other displacement-affected populations. Despite the nearly forty years that have passed since Robert Chambers (1986:246) observed that 'refugee-related research and writing almost always start and end with refugees', this trend of refugee exceptionalism (cf. Hui 2016) continues today. While Chambers' critique was mainly concerned with the lack of scholarly attention on host communities who, he argued, were 'either not considered or treated as secondary or incidental' (*ibid*.), my thesis is also concerned with people who cross borders to assist or stand in solidarity with the displaced. In Chapter 3, I made the case that the central role of the displaced in humanitarian scholarship and practice, as both objects of analysis and intervention, has rendered the dynamics and relationships between humanitarians and local communities relatively unexplored. Through interrogating these dynamics, my thesis makes an important contribution to ethnographies of aid and, in doing so, contributes to a more holistic understanding of forced migration and humanitarianism and the diverse responses they produce.

This focus on the international humanitarian population further contributes to key methodological debates regarding "who" to study (Nader 1972; Kubota 2017; Reem Farah 2020). It addresses the broader field of migration studies' 'strong bias towards so-called lowly skilled migrants', mainly from the global south (Salazar 2019:15), by focussing on more privileged migrants, mainly from the global north, who travel to Lesvos to conduct what is often lowly skilled volunteer work. Despite the passing of half a century since Laura Nader (1972) called upon anthropologists to 'study up' power hierarchies rather than 'studying down', there remains much work to do in this area. While host communities now receive more scholarly attention than when Chambers penned his critique, it is only recently that ethnographies and ethnographers of aid have begun to shift their attention to people who cross borders in order to help or stand in solidarity with the displaced (see Chapter 2 for an analysis of this body of mainly anthropologically-informed research). Given my background in international humanitarian aid, both as a volunteer and as a professional aid worker, it could well be argued that my thesis is more a case of studying 'sideways' or 'across' than 'studying

up' (Nader 1972; Kubota 2017). However, through inverting 'the gaze from refugees to the transnational power structure of the humanitarian industry that governs them' (Farah 2020:131), my research can also be considered as 'studying up'. Only through studying up (as well as down and across) can we fully understand the wider structures of power within which responses to displacement are produced – and, indeed, within which displacement itself is produced. This broader, more holistic, understanding of displacement and power has the potential to lay the foundations for more robust forms of accountability, an issue which both scholars and practitioners in forced migration have a responsibility to address.

9.3 Conceptualising the 'humanitarian presence' in humanitarian action

The concept of presence is widely used in international development yet remains largely undefined. Chapter 6's conceptualisation of the 'humanitarian economy' in Lesvos drew on Jennings' (2014) concept of a 'peacekeeping economy' which she defines as 'economic activity that either would not occur, or would occur at a much lower scale and rate of pay, without the international presence' (*ibid.*:315). Throughout her work on the peacekeeping economy, she refers to the 'international presence', the 'peacekeeping presence' (*ibid.*:325), and, elsewhere, the 'UN presence' (Jennings and Bøås 2015:282). Yet the concept of 'presence' on which her work and my chapter is based is not elaborated. At the same time, Büscher and Vlassenroot's (2010) excellent paper on the humanitarian presence and urban development in Goma, DRC, recognises that 'the indirect consequences of the *presence* of humanitarian actors on the urban level are only acknowledged, if at all, as a theme of secondary interest' (*ibid.*:256 [their emphasis]) and places presence as a key focus of the article. While urban development is discussed in detail throughout the article, the concept of presence is left somewhat undefined. Although efforts to define the concept of presence have been made elsewhere,[41] it remains largely under-analysed in the literature on development. In order to address this gap, this thesis provides a framework for understanding the humanitarian presence. While the spatial, economic, psychological, and cultural dimensions articulated below apply specifically to Lesvos, I argue that that they can also be applied to humanitarian, development, and peacekeeping interventions elsewhere. As per the scope of

[41] See, for example, Lombard and Jones' (2015) chapter for a discussion of divergent and overlapping and definitions of the concept of 'presence' in media studies.

this thesis, particular emphasis is on activities that are not directly related to institutional projects, programmes, policies or “lifesaving activities”.

Spatial

The spatial presence of aid workers and volunteers is a key element of the humanitarian presence. In Lesvos, I estimated the numbers of humanitarian workers and volunteers in 2019 to have fluctuated from around 800 people in the winter to around 1,500 in the summer with most living and working in and around Mytilene and the surrounding villages (see Chapter 4). With the vast majority estimated to be relatively young (20s to 30s) this number is particularly significant when considering that Mytilene’s pre-2015 population was around 25,000 people, nearly 30% of whom are over 65 (ELSTAT 2011). While the relative size of the population shrinks in comparison to 2019’s fluctuating refugee population of between 5,000 and 20,000 people, it remains significant when considering that most refugees do not venture too far from the camps where they stay and that most humanitarians live, stay, and socialise in and around Mytilene. Furthermore, when adding their vehicles alongside their accommodation and offices, the small town of Mytilene can appear to become quite crowded, particularly when compared to the pre-2015 era. In looking at how the presence of tourists affects local communities, Jeremy Boissevain (1996:5) notes ‘the crowding of thoroughfares, public transport, shops, and recreational facilities’ not only annoy many local inhabitants but also highlight conflict over space. This also applies to the humanitarians of Lesvos who, unlike tourists, remain on the island all year round. As with Smirl’s (2008, 2015) ‘auxiliary space’, these highly visible bodies and physical environments of aid workers are key elements of the humanitarian presence.

Economic

Another dimension concerns the economic transformations that have taken place since the arrival of humanitarian actors. Nearly four decades ago, Robert Chambers (1986) found that the better-off and more visible locals usually gain from the presence of refugees and assistance programs in Sub-Saharan Africa while the poor are often rendered hidden losers. My findings in Chapter 6 reveal similar results as landlords and business owners who can provide services to the incoming humanitarian actors have profited significantly. Short-term and long-term humanitarians need places to stay and, as a result, property rents have

rocketed and hotels that used to be open only during the summer period now stay open all year round. In addition to the accommodation and hospitality sectors, small and large-scale businesses that cater to humanitarian needs ranging from plumbing and electrical services to providing socks and tents for newly arrived refugees have profited well. Meanwhile, economic transactions represent one of the main areas of social interactions between international humanitarians and the pre-2015 population. As discussed in Chapter 5, there is surprisingly little interaction between the two groups and, as Jennings and Bøås (2015:283) note in reference to the 'peacekeeping economy':

> these encounters—which, in keeping with the transient, transactional environment that characterizes peacekeeping missions, basically constitute an ongoing series of microeconomic arrangements—are generally the only real contact that most peacekeepers have with "the locals", and vice versa.

This transactional, transient environment also characterises humanitarian missions and, as this thesis has found, such microeconomic arrangements represent some of the only real contact between humanitarians and locals in Lesvos. At the same time, the humanitarian sector has also provided much needed jobs in an economy that, before 2015, was severely affected by economic crisis and austerity. Of course, not everybody is affected equally. Those who do not own property such as students, soldiers, civil servants on deployment and others, struggle to pay the increased rents. Meanwhile, access to the labour market depends on diverse factors, and economic transformations differ geographically depending on proximity to areas of humanitarian interest. As some people become richer, others become relatively poorer which places strain on social relations and compounds the psychological dimension of the humanitarian presence. For richer or poorer, the economic dimension represents a significant component of the humanitarian presence.

Psychological

The humanitarian presence can also be understood in psychological terms. Closely linked to the spatial element, the idea of "invasion" and/or "occupation" frequently emerged in interviews with members of the pre-2015 population. These were made mainly in reference to the presence of refugees (see Chapter 5) but also to the post-2015 humanitarian

population. During fieldwork, it was not uncommon to hear comments such as 'we used to all know each other here, recognise each other on the streets, but now we don't know who is here anymore'. Furthermore, Rozakou notes (2017:102) that, early on the crisis, many locals uncomfortably remarked on and objected to the transformation of their island into a 'Third World' country and the neocolonial attitude of humanitarian actors, a process compounded by the use in Greece of European Commission funds traditionally reserved for international humanitarian operations in the global south. Meanwhile, an ethnographer of Lesvos and island local, Evthymios Papataxiarchis, commented (2019) on an incident in 2015 when a foreigner shouted at him, ordering him to stop taking a photograph in what used to be an olive grove before it became a camp/hospitality site for refugees. While he was aware of the protection concerns surrounding the photographing of refugees, he noted that 'Of course they didn't have any authority, but they were behaving in a way as if they did. It was very impressive. It made me think of sovereignty and space' (*ibid.*). By early 2020, there were wide-scale demonstrations on the island under the banner 'We want our island back' and violent attacks on humanitarians and their property. This psychological sense of invasion, occupation, and loss of control represents a key dimension of the humanitarian presence in Lesvos.

Cultural

The cultural practices of the incoming humanitarian population further feedback to the spatial, economic, and psychological dimensions. These include the greater diversity of international food options available on the market in Mytilene since 2015; different styles of clothes are available (according to one local interlocutor (L/H,M,33,II:6/6/19), the North Face clothing brand has become more popular since 2015);[42] the greater visible presence and use of bicycles (and, less so, skateboards) on the streets whereby, in addition to their practical uses, locals and humanitarians (and refugees) share technical knowledge; increasing use of English language (and others) which has also become an important part of social and economic relations in ways that are both similar and different to the language's relation to tourism (Chapter 6); and more. While these are some of the key examples, the cultural dimension combines with other dimensions in producing the humanitarian presence.

[42] This point also relates to the global consumer trends in internet shopping and Amazon-style delivery services.

With specific reference to activities that take place outside of programme and policy objectives, the humanitarian presence in Lesvos can be defined as having the above spatial, economic, psychological, and cultural dimensions. This definition provides a framework for understanding the humanitarian presence in Lesvos. Importantly, it contributes to Jennings' (2014) 'peacekeeping economy' approach, and to Büscher et al.'s (2018) 'humanitarian urbanism' by developing the concept of 'presence' in their work. It also contributes to Smirl's (2008, 2015) spatial dimensions of international humanitarian responses and the 'auxiliary space' produced by the everyday practices of aid workers. It is, however, by no means comprehensive. I have not, for example, included political racial dimensions as they have not been the main foci of this thesis. This definition and framework does nevertheless represent a starting point for discussion on a concept that has not yet received much attention in development and humanitarian studies and provides a foundation for future research.

While the above examples apply specifically to Lesvos, the framework can also be applied to other humanitarian contexts. The ways and extent to which they are applied, however, will differ depending on the specific context. In the case of Lesvos, for example, 2015 marked the first time that most of the island's pre-2015 population had been directly exposed to a modern-day international humanitarian presence, with many of my interlocutors stating that their previous experiences with international humanitarian actors had largely been limited to media representation. In contexts where there has been a much longer humanitarian presence such as, for example, in South Sudan where international humanitarian agencies and their staff and volunteers have been present in one form or another for generations, the application of the framework will likely produce different results. As the contrast between Lesvos and South Sudan implies, other factors such as geography, history, politics, the role of colonialism, etc. also need to be taken into consideration when applying the framework. Nevertheless, I argue that, overall, the framework serves as a solid starting point for understanding the international humanitarian presence and, furthermore, can reveal that the effects of the humanitarian presence can be as significant as, or even greater than the refugee presence.

This thesis' findings also have relevance to other contexts. For example, in her study of the everyday practices of peacekeepers, Séverine Autesserre (2014) notes that her subjects are an example of a much broader group that includes development experts, humanitarian aid workers and democracy builders. These groups, she argues, have similar characteristics including: living and working primarily in an expatriate bubble; a lack of understanding of local contexts; a focus on short-term results; valuing thematic and technical expertise over local knowledge; and more. With the vast majority of Lesvos' international humanitarian community operating on the island for just a few weeks and the 'long-termers' often spending little more than a few months, the above temporality-related findings are even more pronounced. Nevertheless, the everyday practices of development workers, democracy builders, human rights researchers and, indeed, academic researchers often involve living and working in expatriate bubbles, eating and drinking in similar and familiar venues and spending limited periods in their places of operation. For these reasons, the above definition and framework – and, indeed, the findings of this thesis more broadly – also have academic and policy relevance outside of humanitarianism. Beyond, academia, understanding the presence is important not only due to its potential to affect the practical aspects of international responses but also for its effects on relations between locals and those who come to "help".

9.4 Understandings of processes of self-identification and identification by others

There has been an increasing interest in labelling and interpellation processes in displacement contexts with Roger Zetter (1991, 2007) arguing that they cause dependency on their subjects while shaping and normalising behaviours, and Gillian McFadyen (2020:42) arguing that 'the creation and application of labels is always political'. While both were referring to the top-down labelling practices of the 'more powerful actors' (Moncrieffe 2007a) of humanitarian and government institutions, my research in Lesvos has shifted the debate to the labelling practices of the local community and international humanitarian actors. In doing so, it has confirmed the political motivations of labellers but highlighted processes of resistance rather than dependency. These processes have important implications for the study and practice of humanitarian action.

Before continuing, it is important to acknowledge the epistemic violence caused by my exclusion of refugees who work in the humanitarian industry from my definition of international humanitarians. Refugees are, by definition, international; and those who work in the humanitarian industry (in Lesvos and elsewhere) should therefore be considered as international humanitarians. However, in 'studying up' (Nader 1972; Farah 2020) international humanitarians, this thesis is primarily concerned with those people who cross borders voluntarily (rather than those who are forced) and who do so with the specific purpose of helping or standing in solidarity with the displaced. As such, in awareness of the potential for epistemic violence yet for the purposes of this thesis, I apologetically exclude refugees who work in the humanitarian sector from my definition of international humanitarians.

With the above in mind, this thesis has highlighted the different ways in which international humanitarians self-identify and are identified by others. Amongst humanitarian actors, key distinctions are made between volunteers and professionals, long-termers and short-termers, those who identify as humanitarians, those who identify as solidarians, and those who might not identify with either. A hierarchy of morals is often attached to these labels by those who engage with, identify with and/or reject them. Meanwhile, members of the island's pre-2015 population often use the blanket term 'volunteer' (mainly in Greek but sometimes in English), without distinguishing between professional and volunteers, to refer collectively to the island's international humanitarian population. Alternatively, they might reject the term based on the (sometimes misguided) assumption that the international humanitarian actors of Lesvos are being paid and/or benefiting in some form or other from their time on the island. A key finding of the thesis relates to the ways in which the label of 'tourist' has been mobilised by different people to refer to international humanitarians. In all cases, the label was used negatively, either to denigrate the person or people under discussion or to distinguish them from others within a presumed hierarchy of morals.

Highlighting these processes raises several questions related to social processes generally and to humanitarian practice more specifically. One concerns whether or to what extent it matters if someone identifies themself as a humanitarian but is identified by others as something else. After all, does it make any difference to the person's ability to carry out their

humanitarian activities if a waiter in a restaurant thinks that they are mainly on the island to have fun? Or if a refugee thinks that the person providing them with a new set of second-hand clothes is just trying to build their resumé for a job back home? Or if one humanitarian considers their international colleague to be motivated more by the sun, sea, and holiday opportunities rather than the alleviation of human suffering? On a day-to-day, moment-to-moment level, it would appear that it does not matter too much, particularly if the humanitarian is on the island for a short period, socialises mainly with other short-term humanitarians, and leaves the island without encountering or learning about this labelling practice. After all, the refugee has been provided with humanitarian assistance and the international humanitarian who set out to provide assistance has achieved their goal in doing so. However, such a framing by no means tells the whole story, not least because it does not take into account how the aid and the provider are perceived by the recipient.

At the same time, it does matter to different people for different reasons. First, it is a clear form of epistemic violence against those who chose to spend their time and money on travelling to another country to improve the lives of those who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and countries. While the complexity of peoples' motivations to engage in humanitarian travel has been discussed in Chapter 8 and Malkki (2015) notes how 'the need to help' is imbricated in diverse power relations and systems of epistemic violence, it is important to note that decisions were taken to spend time and money "helping" others rather than, for example, on the classic 'sun, sea and sex' type of travel that is popular in the global north and might be considered less humanitarian. Such a frame is, of course, highly dependent on the relative positionality of those who are able to engage in these forms of travel.

Second, the gap between self-perceptions and external perceptions has serious implications for humanitarian policy and practice, both in Lesvos and beyond. In particular, it can have negative and dangerous consequences for the delivery of aid and aid workers' security in the field. For example, just because an international humanitarian might perceive themselves as a selfless, sacrificing volunteer or a professional aid worker committed to humanitarian principles, others might not. Just as post-colonial development practitioners were interpellated as colonial administrators (Baaz 2005), humanitarian NGOs and their staff can

be interpellated as part of an invading army. As Fiori et al. (2016:17) note, '[s]ignificantly influenced by donor governments, [humanitarian action] has often been associated with the promotion of military means to address humanitarian problems'. When US Secretary of State Colin Powell (2001) told a group of NGOs just after the invasion of Afghanistan that: 'just as surely as our diplomats and military, American NGOs are out there are serving and sacrificing on the front lines of freedom […] I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team', it was not clear whether all NGOs and their staff considered themselves to be a part of that combat team. Indeed, most humanitarian NGOs' mandates explicitly commit to humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence, etc., staff and volunteers are expected to commit accordingly and, indeed, may have signed up to humanitarian work precisely because of these principles.

It is not only donor government officials such as Powell who consider humanitarian NGOs and their staff as part of a combat team: local communities often do not distinguish between the different brandings of international arrivals in their country. Several scholars (Duffield 2012; Avant and Haufler 2012; Chandler 2021) have argued that such local perceptions – and therefore their realities – have been enhanced as the overlap between the agendas of humanitarian actors and those of military, political and other actors (particularly in conflict zones since the 1990s) has increased. Writing on behalf of MSF, Fabrice Weissman (2004) noted that the level of military/humanitarian cooperation in Afghanistan made it 'impossible to distinguish between a subcontractor working on behalf of a warring party and an independent, impartial humanitarian aid actor'. Several scholars (Avant and Haufler 2012; Carmichael and Karamouzian 2014; Hoelscher et al. 2017) have directly linked local attacks on aid workers to local perceptions that northern aid workers are united with their military and/or corporate counterparts.

While labelling and/or interpellating a humanitarian volunteer or professional staff member in Lesvos as a tourist (as opposed to a soldier) may seem relatively harmless, it is not. As I argued in Chapter 7, the local labelling practice represents a form of discursive resistance to the refugee and humanitarian presence on the island. While Lesvos was not invaded by a state army in 2015, there is nevertheless a strong sense of invasion amongst the pre-2015

population. As discussed in Chapter 5, the refugee presence is often presented as: a i) an invasion/occupation; ii) by Muslims (recalling the trauma and shame of the 450-year Ottoman occupation); iii) that is sustained, if not facilitated, by humanitarian actors; iv) who are paid and supported by the European Union (an institution which is dominated by the same northern European countries which provide most of the island's international tourists and international humanitarians); v) which, in turn, is responsible for the austerity, hardship and humiliation of recent years. When this discursive form of resistance is understood in conjunction with the broader, more material, forms of resistance that have included the strikes, mass protests, and attacks on aid workers and their property, all of which had climaxed by early 2020, then these processes of labelling and interpellation can be recognised as having serious implications for policy, practice and the wellbeing of others. Indeed, just because volunteers and aid workers consider themselves as part of the solution, this does not preclude locals from considering the humanitarian presence as part of the problem.

As such, my thesis contributes to ongoing discussions and ideas around labelling in displacement studies. It shifts the focus away from refugees and towards humanitarians. Rather than on the labelling practices of the 'more powerful actors' (Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007) of state bureaucracies, development and humanitarian agencies, or political leaders, this research focuses on the labelling practices of 'less powerful' actors of the volunteers, subordinate humanitarian professionals (cf. Heathershaw 2016), and members of the pre-2015 population (rather than their political leaders). While Zetter (1991) argued that NGOs were once pre-eminent in processes of transforming the refugee label, and later (2007) that governments took over this role, I have shifted the discussion to locally-based practices of labelling humanitarians. In addition to contributing towards the labelling framework, I have taken the discussion further by engaging with processes of interpellation, thereby allowing for an interrogation of subjectivities and processes of identity formation in the humanitarian encounter. In doing so, my research highlights the multiple realities which Long (2012) argues are key to understanding the 'social life of development' and that I argue are key to understanding the social life of the humanitarianism and social life more generally.

9.5 Towards a typology of actors in Lesvos' humanitarian arena

While this thesis began by categorising the island's population into three broad groups of 'locals', 'humanitarians', and 'refugees', the categories of 'pre-2015 population' and 'post-2015 population/newcomers' have often proved more productive. Noting, as this thesis has done throughout, the nuances and that each individual person has their own very personal and often quite complex set of overlapping motivations for their actions, it is nevertheless possible to delve deeper and make some broad generalisations about specific groups beyond these categories. As such, the table below presents an attempt towards a typology of some of the key actors who have featured in this thesis.

Type of Actor	Motivation and Change
Local business owners	Large and small businesses including hotels, bars/cafés, restaurants, catering companies, estate agents, plumbers, construction, etc. Motivated by financial gain, most exposed to the humanitarian presence have profited significantly although often struggle to reconcile with anti-refugee/anti-newcomer/anti-change sentiment. Competition over post-2015 income streams can cause friction between business owners.
Local property owners	Combined with the rise of Airbnb, 'anyone with a spare room' has been able to profit from the humanitarian presence. Sometimes accused of encouraging the refugee presence by housing humanitarians, most do not (nor want to) rent to refugees.
Renters	Increased demand in the housing market produced by pushes up rents. Negatively affected groups include university students, temporarily deployed civil servants (whose wages had been frozen under austerity) from primary school teachers to police officer, soldiers who work on the island's military base, visiting pilgrims and tourists, and others who rent. Despite the increases, rents remain cheaper than in most home countries of the island's high spending new consumer group.
Local NGOs and workers	Activities, budgets, and staffing expanded significantly. International status increased by donor and media attention, local status increased as provider of jobs, but widely criticised across the island for carrying out EU government agendas and encouraging the refugee presence against island interests. Criticised by solidarians and international volunteers of 'not really caring about refugees and just doing a 9am-5pm job'.
Local solidarians	Activities, budgets, and human resources expanded significantly. International status increased by donor and media attention. Broader political motivations, often anti-state/anti-borders. Self-

	identifies in opposition NGO workers although many similar activities. Widely criticised for encouraging the refugee presence.
International volunteers	Volunteer with established NGOs, grassroots NGOs, religious groups, solidarity networks and, less so, far-right organisations/networks. Widely criticised across Lesvos for encouraging the refugee presence. Motivated by varying interpretations of social justice and chance to gain refugee field experience. See some intersections below.
- Short termers	Constitute the vast majority of the post-2015 humanitarian presence. Keen to get the most from their experience and often criticised by long-termers for being 'gung-ho', inexperienced, and irresponsible. Widely (and often unfairly) criticised for being motivated by traditional tourist interests.
- Long termers	Often in more senior/coordinator positions, sometimes paid/on-a-stipend. Still keen to get the most from their experience but more concerned with a (healthy) work/life balance. Also (unfairly) criticised for being motivated by traditional tourist interests.
- Religious groups	Mainly, although not exclusively, young and north American. Motivated by social justice, 'doing God's work', and (sometimes) proselytization.
International professional humanitarian staff	Population decreased significantly since 2015/16. Used to working in the global south, mostly grateful to work in a field context in the global north. Criticised by NGO workers, solidarians, volunteers, and broader island community for carrying out EU government agendas, encouraging the refugee presence against island interests, and 'not really caring about refugees and just doing a 9am-5pm job'.

9.6 Contributing to the humanitarian arena framework

My most important contribution to the humanitarian arena framework has been to expand its scope to include the actions of humanitarian actors when they are not delivering humanitarian aid. While Hilhorst and Serrano (2010:184) define the scope as 'encompass[ing] all forms of service delivery during a crisis' – distinct from humanitarian space's scope of '[o]nly aid labelled as humanitarian' (*ibid.*) – all previous humanitarian arena work has focused exclusively on aid and its delivery.[43] Humanitarians, like other humans, need to sleep, eat, drink, move around, socialise and generally consume and, regardless of how much time they dedicate to their projects, they also spend a significant amount of time engaged in activities

[43] In Hilhorst's more recent 'resilience humanitarianism' (which is, for the most part, very similar to the humanitarian arena), she defines the scope as 'Interventions as open space in which different actors operate' (2018:7). Again, this is primarily concerned with the delivery of aid.

that are not necessary considered as working or volunteering. Research that focuses on the institution as the primary unit of analysis (e.g. the state, UN agencies, NGOs, the humanitarian community, the local community, etc.) is likely to overlook these "other" activities. I argue precisely that humanitarian action cannot be fully understood without also understanding these "other" activities.

My application of the actor-oriented approach's 'interface analysis' to the local/humanitarian dynamic represents another original contribution to the framework. My micro-level analysis reveals not only the surprisingly limited interactions between international humanitarians and the island's pre-2015 population, but also 'the different discourses that actors draw on to advance their ideas or activities' (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). It has allowed for an interrogation of subjectivities and processes of identity formation that are key to the humanitarian encounter, and revealed the 'multiple realities' (Long 2001:51) that constitute the social life of humanitarianism (and social life more generally) while highlighting key 'discrepancies in values, interests, knowledges and power' (*ibid.*:243). Furthermore, it has identified significant overlap between the island's aid industry and its tourist sector (and their participants) revealing that, in contrast to various media and local narratives of a suffering tourist industry, the humanitarian presence has been an economic boon. While Hilhorst and Jansen (2010:1121) argue that 'in an arena approach, the kinds of actions or actors considered to be humanitarian are not predetermined', this thesis argues the same can be said of actions or actors considered to be tourists. Such a finding that may be as useful to the study and practice of tourism as it is to the study and practice of humanitarianism, not least opening in up possibilities for future research that more easily cross disciplinary divides.

9.6 Interrogating inter and intra-disciplinary boundaries

By revealing the similarities and overlaps between the everyday practices of humanitarians and tourists, between humanitarianism and tourism, and their similar processes of global mobility, this thesis makes disciplinary contributions to both development/humanitarian studies and to tourism studies. However, I argue that the significance of this contribution is much greater to development/humanitarian studies than it is to tourism studies. Despite volunteers being the 'unsung heroes of development' (Eddins 2013), the vast majority of related literature is located in tourism studies. Perhaps development studies has little need

to cover volunteer tourism due to its multi/inter/cross-disciplinary nature (Kothari [2005]2019; Chapter 1) which provides space for engaging with other disciplines. However, this argument is not convincing. Tourism studies is as interdisciplinary as development studies – drawing on geography, anthropology, management studies, economics, psychology since at least the 1970s (Darbellay and Stock 2012) – yet development studies barely engages with volunteer tourism despite its (increasingly) important role.[44] Indeed, Mary Mostafanezhad, who has produced some key texts on volunteer tourism in relation to development and humanitarainism (2013a; 2013b; 2014), social justice (Luh Sin et al. 2015), geopolitics (Mostafanezhad and Norum 2016; Gillen and Mostafanezhad 2019; Henry and Mostafanezhad 2019), and disaster risk (Mostafanezhad and Evrard 2018), describes her disciplinary self as having 'shifted from anthropology to tourism studies to geography' (Lexington Books 2020) without any mention of development studies. Given that most of both Mostafanezhad's (and my) work takes place in development and humanitarian contexts, the relative invisibility of development/humanitarian studies is surprising.

A possible explanation might be located in Chapter 7's argument regarding the social constructions of humanitarians as important and life-saving, and of tourists as frivolous and leisure-seeking. This argument could also be extended to scholars of humanitarianism, many of whom volunteer as well as research. Rather than identify, consider or analyse humanitarian volunteering through the lens of tourism (as with development volunteers), scholars of humanitarian volunteering are more likely to identify their subjects (and perhaps themselves) by labels less "frivolous" than tourism. These include 'volunteers' (by far the most popular term in Lesvos; see also Chtouris and Miller 2017; Knott 2018), 'volunteer humanitarians' (Sandri 2018), 'grassroots humanitarians' (Fechter and Schwittay 2020), 'citizen humanitarians' (Jumbert and Pascucci 2021), etc. But certainly not as 'tourists'. I argue that this (self-)labelling practice is similar to Di Giovine's findings that pilgrims consider their activities and identity to be of a 'higher purpose' (2013:85; 2016) and resist associations with tourism. Meanwhile, Di Giovine (2013:70) suggests two interconnected reasons as to why pilgrimage studies has 'paralleled, yet rarely overlapped, with tourism studies': it has

[44] It is also worth noting that development studies is around twenty years older than tourism studies: The Oxford Department for International Development was originally established at Queen Elizabeth House in 1954 under a different name.

traditionally been the domain of other disciplines (religious studies, theology, philology, and classics); and is more concerned with theoretical and theological debates on rituals than with international development or theorising mobility. Noting that the latter two very much *are* key concerns of development/humanitarian studies, it is curious as to why tourism is not more readily embraced. In paraphrasing Di Giovine (2013:63), I argue that these inter- and intra-disciplinary boundaries have impeded a robust exchange of data to the detriment of development/humanitarian studies more so than tourism studies.

Meanwhile, there is hope for the future. In Chapter 7, I pointed to McGhee's (2014) long-term exploration of voluntourism at an international environment charity where practitioners outright rejected the 'voluntourist' label during the 1990s yet, twenty years later, enthusiastically embraced it. Her research suggests that if the reactions of the volunteer humanitarians of Lesvos (and elsewhere) to associations with the voluntourism label are negative now, they may not necessarily be so in the future. Indeed, in so far as volunteers are increasingly becoming a part of the global north's humanitarian infrastructure, future research on the extent to which the voluntourism label is embraced or rejected as a part of the volunteer identity/role (and vice-versa) will be of increasing importance to scholars and practitioners. I argue that development/humanitarians studies scholars should embrace tourism studies in the way that tourism studies scholars have embraced development/humanitarians studies over the years; and that this should be done sooner rather than later. Having highlighted the links between the everyday practices of humanitarians and tourists, between humanitarianism and tourism, and development/humanitarianism studies' lack of engagement with tourism studies, I thus call for greater dialogue between these two bodies of interdisciplinary research.

9.7 Linking humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage

The most important contribution of this thesis, however, has been in locating humanitarianism within the contexts of migration and mobilities and, specifically, linking it with tourism and pilgrimage. Scholars have previously linked one of these forms of mobility with another, but the three, as far as I am aware, have never before been linked so explicitly in a tripartite structure. Various scholars have linked humanitarianism to tourism: primarily through the concept and practice of volunteer tourism (Mostafanezhad 2014a; Butcher and

Smith 2015; Bandyopadhyay 2019); and also in more critical ways regarding, for example, the short-termism of development/humanitarian practitioners' missions (Chambers 1979), and their tendency to leave at exactly the time when they are most needed (Carpi 2019). Meanwhile, scholars have linked tourism with pilgrimage since at least the 1970s: Victor Turner (1973) declared tourism as a subset of pilgrimage and later claimed (with his wife, Edith) that a 'tourist is half a pilgrim if a pilgrim is half a tourist' (Turner and Turner 1978:20); Nelson Graburn posited tourism as a 'sacred journey' (Graburn 1977) and later as a 'secular ritual' (Graburn 2001); while Michel Di Giovine (2013) sees pilgrimage more as a subset of tourism. These ideas remain key pillars in the study of tourism today. In turn, humanitarianism has been linked to pilgrimage, not only through humanitarian principles which are 'ultimately rooted in the world's religious traditions' (ICRC n.d.), but also through notions of self-sacrifice and travel for a higher purpose (Belhassen 2009) as well as, more critically, 'a veil for neo-colonial power and a prolongation of religious missionary activity in a new form' (Bitter 1994: 100-1, in Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003: 58, quoted from Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013:6).

As this thesis has revealed, there are many similarities between international humanitarianism, tourism and pilgrimage. Each involves taking a liminal break from everyday routine, travelling to a highly anticipated destination, and using similar infrastructure to get there. They are similarly organised and bureaucratised, characterised by unique social relations including the mixing of nationalities, classes and the rapid making of friends, and involve a heightened sense of unity and feelings of emotional intensity amongst their practitioners. As such, all three forms of mobility bear both structural and experiential similarities. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 8, key theoretical links between the three can be traced to work on rites of passage and rituals, in particular the work of Arnold Van Gennep (1909) and, as Tom Selwyn (2007:11) argues, many of tourism studies' founding fathers, including MacCannell and Graburn, 'have built their work on assumptions that owe most to Durkheim (1915) with traces of Marx'. Meanwhile, the late aid practitioner-cum-academic Lisa Smirl's (2015) analysis of aid workers' memoirs discusses the liminality of aid work and notes 'a highly structured, codified and predictable "rite of passage"' (*ibid.*:20) whereby practitioners come from their country of origin, move to the field, and return home irrevocably transformed in a process familiar to both tourism and pilgrimage. While Smirl's

analysis concerns professional aid workers, previous research on volunteers (Mostafanezhad 2014a, 2014b) has noted similar patterns although without drawing the theoretical links and conclusions that this thesis does.

This raises the question of why some people feel the need to travel and, moreover, why some humanitarians feel the need to travel in order to alleviate the suffering of others. After all, plenty of humanitarian issues exist “back home” including (ubiquitously) poverty, inequalities, and refugee issues. Echoing and adding to Malkki’s thesis (2015) on the ‘need to help’, my evidence suggests that the reasons extend beyond the humanitarian imperative. Every single international humanitarian I engaged with beyond the superficial, both volunteer and professional, presented very diverse and very personal reasons as to why they had left their countries. Immediate answers almost always concerned the alleviation of the suffering of distant others, yet further discussions revealed a range of complex and overlapping reasons including: the desire (or need) to escape relationships and difficult situations back home; being in-between jobs and/or houses and not really knowing what else to do; the desire to improve one’s self image for professional and/or social reasons; the search for an exotic other or a more exotic version of one’s self; a sense of alienation realised before or during their travel, be it from work, relationships or from the increasingly (politically and socially) rightwards-leaning centres of power back home; the search for meaning and authenticity in life; and a host of other reasons. However, a consistent theme in all accounts was a sense of guilt concerning one’s relative privilege and the need to give back to society or, in the case of the more religiously motivated, to give back to God. In trying to help the lives of others, many were also trying to help themselves, practically and spiritually.

Meanwhile, one could argue that the alleviation of international human suffering would be better achieved by staying “back home” and sending funds abroad. This would have several benefits: it would reduce the humanitarian carbon footprint thereby addressing the global humanitarian issue of climate change; the saved funds could instead be spent on projects staffed by longer-term staff and volunteers on the island, thereby reducing the loss of institutional memory through high turnover; it would provide opportunities for the thousands of refugees who are usually quite capable of doing the same job; and more. However, while the above may or may not be the case, practicing international humanitarianism in this way

would stop short of addressing some of the key objectives of my participants. Importantly, it would remove the social aspect which many of my humanitarian participants clearly thrived on. It would not demonstrate or provide the international cosmopolitan solidarity that many of my interlocutors set out to achieve in challenging EU and other border policies. It would not address the above-mentioned complex motivations and driving forces of those who wish to engage in humanitarian travel. Nor would it result in the quite profound personal transformations that people experience through their travel. This indicates that there are myriad and complex reasons why people feel the need to travel. As, indeed, there are for tourists and pilgrims.

I argue that a key link between these forms of mobility concerns the human quest for meaning and happiness in life. In her study of British tourist on holiday in Spain, Hazel Andrews (2011:6) quotes the mid-19th century French poet Charles Baudelaire who commented 'it seems to me that I would always be better off where I am not, and this question of moving is one of those I discuss incessantly with my soul'. Andrews notes that the idea of travelling somewhere else for a better life has found resonance in different societies across time and space, whereby promises of freedom and discovering one's true self are inherent not only in tourism but also in religion, existing metaphorically (life as a journey) and literally (in the form of pilgrimage). While pilgrims seek meaning in closeness to their god(s), Andrews argues that tourists travel to find identity and security elsewhere. The evidence from my research points to similar quests. While tourists are constructed as consumers of leisure, pilgrims as consumers of salvation, and humanitarians as consumers of solidarity, a consistent pattern is that all these figures of mobility are travelling in search of some form of happiness or meaning in their lives.

Situating humanitarianism within the broader context of mobilities in this way makes a key contribution to knowledge. Linking it to other forms of mobility helps us move beyond social constructions of figures and identities such as "humanitarian", "tourist", and "pilgrim" which help us more fully understand the social processes that govern people's lives. As the analysis of the self-identifying humanitarians of this thesis – and, indeed, the self-identifying tourists and pilgrims in Chapter 8 – demonstrates, the theoretical, structural and experiential boundaries between the three forms of mobility and the ways they are constructed are not as clear as popular narratives and media depictions suggest. Understanding this provides

deeper insights to the theory and practice of humanitarianism and tourism alike and, as such, is useful to both scholars and practitioners of each.

9.8 The 'white gaze' of humanitarianism

This thesis also contributes to contemporary debates on race, racism and racialisation in humanitarian action. Noting the relative lack of research on race, racism, and racialisation processes in development studies, Sarah White (2002:408) challenged this 'colour-blind' stance, arguing that 'the silence on race is a determining silence that both masks and marks its centrality to the development project'. Twenty years later, there remains scant (but increasing) literature on the role of race in both development and humanitarian studies. Robel Neajai Pailey (2020) makes the case for de-centring the 'white gaze' of development which, she argues, legitimises itself through racial tropes and problematic binaries such as references to global North vs global South, Third World vs First World, core vs periphery, as well as terminology such as 'formal' (read: westernised/colonial) and 'informal' (read: endogenous/non-colonial) institutions. Pailey (*ibid.*:733) argues that the 'white gaze' of development:

> assumes whiteness as the primary referent of power, prestige and progress across the world. It equates whiteness with wholeness and superiority. The 'white gaze' of development measures the political, socio-economic and cultural processes of Southern black, brown and other people of colour against a standard of Northern whiteness and finds them incomplete, wanting, inferior or regressive. In essence White is always right, and West is always best.

As the reader may have noted, race-related data from Lesvos are peppered throughout the thesis. These include, for example, a discussion of the island's highly racialised humanitarian labour market, Chapter 6's brown veiled woman interpellated as a refugee by restaurant staff, and the senior professional humanitarian's difficulty in distinguishing between humanitarians and tourists on their way to the beach in Chapter 7. The underlying assumptions are that brown/black = refugee; and white (northern Europe and America) = humanitarian and/or tourist. Other examples include: local "jokes" about all roads to the village being black; a northern European humanitarian's orientalist trope about the 'big, crazy, Middle East';

criticisms of 'blonde girls standing around doing nothing'; discrimination against racialised groups using the beaches, renting properties, and frequenting certain bars/cafés/restaurants; outright violence against refugees and international humanitarians; and, not included in this thesis, incidents of "well-meaning" local and volunteers offering food and money to a brown person who was neither a refugee nor in need; and much more. Indeed, the concept and popularity of the 'golden triangle' of bars/cafés/restaurants preferred by humanitarians is premised on actual and perceived racism. Meanwhile, my own positionality as a white northern European man with familial ties to the island inescapably facilitated my access to the island's pre-2015 population (see Chapter 4) in ways that would have been quite different with a different racial marker. However, apart from a brief section in the previous chapter, I did not analyse these glaring issues of race, racism and racialisation extensively because, at the time of writing-up, I did not consider them to fall directly within the scope of the thesis.

There is, however, an urgent need to extend conversations around the 'white gaze' of development to humanitarian studies. Situating the 'absent presence' of race (M'charek et al. 2014:472) at the centre of analysis would help reveal the inherent but under researched processes of racism and racialisation that remain embedded not only in formalised articulations of the humanitarian project but also in the less structured responses of everyday humanitarianism. Building on this thesis and focusing primarily on the figure of the humanitarian, ethnographic research would help illustrate how racialised processes of labelling and interpellation dominate everyday practices of humanitarianism. It would contribute to contemporary conversations that 'explore how mobility and labour converge to create and perpetuate racial categories, cultural profiling, and forms of exclusions' (Bastos et al. 2021:160). Moreover, it would contribute to debates on the 'white saviour industrial complex' (Cole 2012; Bandyopadhyay 2019; Anderson et al. 2021) while interrogating and adding some colour to the inherent whiteness of the global north's 'humanitarian gaze' (cf. Mostafanezhad 2014).

9.9 Conclusion

According to UNOCHA (2022), there are 274 million people around the world in need of humanitarian assistance. The international media produce and reproduce images and narratives of 'distant victims' (some more than others) whereby '[t]he audience is expected

to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment' (Höijer 2004:513). One response is to travel to the sites of needs and "do something". This is what I did when I chose to pursue a career in humanitarian action many years ago, and this is what thousands of people have chosen to do by traveling to Lesvos and elsewhere with the most recent iteration taking place in Ukraine. While my analysis of humanitarian action in Lesvos is based on 10 months of fieldwork, it is also undeniably informed by my previous experiences on the island since 2007 and my experiences in humanitarian practice. Aid workers are usually deployed in the early stages of the "crisis" with little knowledge or understanding of the pre-crisis situation. While I was aware of the situation in Lesvos before my professional deployment in 2015 and before my PhD fieldwork in 2019, I was still nevertheless surprised at what my research revealed. This thesis has striven to highlight the effects of humanitarian action beyond the policies and programmes of aid agencies and, in doing so, it helped understand the different ways that the humanitarian presence is conceptualised by different actors and how they respond to it. Through expanding the scope of the humanitarian arena and examining the everyday practices that have emerged from the encounter between international humanitarian and so-called host community actors in Lesvos, my thesis helps us to understand the different ways that different actors conceptualise the humanitarian presence, and how they respond to it. Importantly, it has identified blurred boundaries between the study and practice of humanitarianism and tourism.

Identifying these synergies represents a novel approach to understanding humanitarian action. Just as Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn (2010) argue that the study of tourism's foundations are located within the three broad fields of leisure, culture, and hospitality, I argue that these are also three of the key themes that underpin the study and practice of an emerging form of humanitarian practice upon which the international humanitarian system increasingly depends. Free/leisure time (outside of work), an interest in an exotic other, and an opposition to the spread of anti-immigrant sentiment in the global north have found an outlet in the humanitarian arena of Lesvos. Where charity-giving, fun-runs, ethical purchasing, and other solidarity practices provide outlets at home, the safe and accessible spaces in the emerging humanitarian arenas of Europe provide a more embodied way to "consume solidarity" (cf. Andrews 2011) for those who have the time, money, and inclination to do so. Moreover, as volunteers have become the now somewhat "loudly sung heroes of

humanitarianism” (cf. Eddins 2013), this phenomenon is increasingly co-opted by the refugee regime (of the global north) and has become a key part of the global humanitarian infrastructure. The social processes uncovered by my analysis are indicative of contemporary trends in solidarity, xenophobia, and humanitarian governance. I argue that these processes have produced a new generation of people (in the global north) with not only an interest in working in the humanitarian sector, but now also with the field experience that is needed to break into the sector’s continually expanding labour market (Bioforce and PHAP 2020). As the sector thrives, understanding the role and dynamics of the humanitarian presence is crucial. I intend to continue pursuing this line of inquiry in my own work, and I hope that others do too.

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Appendicies

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Local actors

Small proprietors in accommodation, transport, and food sectors and local civil society actors present in locality before the cut-off date. Questions will include:

- How would you describe this island 10 years ago?
  [Rationale: to understand participant perception of the past]

- How has the island changed since then?
[Rationale: to understand what changes are most prominent in the participants' lifeworlds]

- How has the island changed since 2015?
[Rationale: continuing with the above theme but focussing more on the period when humanitarian actors arrived]

- What have been the most important changes? Why?
[Rationale: to understand what changes are the most important in the participants' lifeworld]

- How has your neighbourhood changed?
[Rationale: to 'localise' understanding of these changes]

- Who has been affected by these changes? How?
[Rationale: to understand who, according to the participant, has benefited and who has lost out due to the identified changes?]

- How have these changes affected you personally?
[Rationale: to 'personalise' understanding of these changes]

- How have these changes affected your business/activities?
[Rationale: to understand the effects of these changes on business/activities]

- What did you do/how have you/your business/organisation to these changes?
[Rationale: to understand how the participants responded to the changes and, in particular, to the arrival and presence of humanitarian actors]

- How do you see the future of the island/village/neighbourhood/your business/organisation?
[Rationale: to understand the participants' perception of current and future socioeconomic trends]

- What kind of interactions do you have with humanitarian actors ('refugees' and/or 'responders')?

[Rationale: more targeted question on relationships with humanitarian actors]

- How would you describe your relationships with humanitarian actors?

[Rationale: more targeted question on relationships with humanitarian actors]

- What have been the challenges of living/working with humanitarian actors? Can you give an example? Or more?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perceptions of points of conflict with humanitarian actors]

Humanitarian Actors

- How does working here compare to working in 'other' operations? What are the similarities and differences?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perspectives of their work in the locality]

- How does living here compare to working in 'other' operations? What are the similarities and differences?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perspectives of their life in the locality]

- Please could you describe a typical day for you in Lesvos?

[Rationale: to understand daily routines, practices and perspectives of participants' lifeworlds]

- How have things changed since you have been here?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perceptions of change since their arrival on the island]

- What does 'local community' mean to you?

[Rationale: to understand this term has its place in policy discourse particularly for 'formal' humanitarians]

- How are relations with the locals?

[Rationale: to understand perceptions of relations with local actors]

- What have been the biggest challenges to working here?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perceptions of points of conflict with the locality]

- What have been the biggest challenges to working in this community?

[Rationale: to understand participants' perceptions of points of conflict with local actors]

- How do you access (goods and services)/how do you choose which actors to work with?

[Rationale: to understand the process participants use to identify local actor with whom to work]

Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants

Title of Project:	The Humanitarian Arena in Jordan and Greece	(Project ID Number): 14067/001
Name:	Andrew Knight	
Work Address:	The Bartlett Development Planning Unit 34 Tavistock Square London WC1H 9EZ United Kingdom	
Contact Details:	andrew.knight.17@ucl.ac.uk / [redacted]	

You are invited to participate in this research project.

Details of Study:

My project seeks to understand how the arrival and presence of humanitarian actors affect local actors in Amman, Jordan and Lesvos, Greece. The mass arrival of refugees and those who come to assist can have significant and varying effects while causing changes to everyday practices. In order to understand this phenomenon, I am interviewing people who were present before their arrival and have experienced these effects and changes.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary and will take place at your convenience. Our interview will involve a set of open-ended questions that will take approximately one hour to complete. With your permission, it will be recorded on an audio device and later transcribed for analysis. Privacy and confidentiality will be ensured during the collection, transcribing and processing of data in accordance with the UCL Research Ethics Framework and the RCUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity and UK's Data Protection Act 2018. Your personal details will be kept separate from other collected data and no names will be used in analysis. Study findings will be shared and discussed with the project team, comprised by the student and her supervisors. Collected data will be published for the purposes of this project and any related articles published by the researcher.

While participating in this project provides an opportunity to talk and reflect of your experiences, the findings of the research will make an original contribution to academic knowledge and intends to benefit policymakers, practitioners and displaced populations through its direct and indirect bearing upon humanitarian practice.

No risks, inconveniences or discomfort are reasonably expected during your participation.

Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Participation is voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether to take part or not; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. If you do decide to take part you are requested to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering take part in this research.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee, ID number TBC. You will be given a copy of this form and an information sheet.

Project Title
The Humanitarian Arena in Jordan and Greece

Researcher
Andrew Knight
Development Planning Unit
andrew.knight.17@ucl.ac.uk

Supervisor
Andrea Rigon
Development Planning Unit
andrea.rigon@ucl.ac.uk

University Contact Information
Development Planning Unit (DPU),
The Bartlett, UCL
48 Gordon Square
London, WC1H 0PJ, UK

Thank you for considering taking part in this research! I must explain the project to you before you agree to participate. If you have any questions about the information sheet or my explanation, please ask before signing below.

By checking or initialing each box below, you are consenting to that part of the project.

Boxes left blank indicate that you **DO NOT** consent to that part of the project.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have considered its contents and what will be expected of me. I have asked any questions I had and I am satisfied with the answers. I know who to contact if I have a concern or complaint. I am willing to take part in an interview.	
I consent to the researcher taking written notes during our interview.	
I consent to the researcher making an audio recording of our interview.	
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and decide what will be done with the information I have provided.	
I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purposes of this project which will be treated as confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018.	
I understand that my personal information will be anonymized.	
I agree that this information can be used in the researcher's PhD thesis, journal articles and academic conferences	
I agree that any non-personal data can be used for future research.	
I agree that the researcher can contact me with follow-up questions and/or to request a second interview.	
I am interested in the results of this study. Please provide me with a summary of the findings in Greek/Arabic and/or an electronic copy of the thesis in English.	

Name of participant Signature of participant Date

____

Name of researcher Signature of researcher Date