

Affective Labor within the Local Humanitarian Workscape

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Abstract: The article presents an anthropological inquiry of the humanitarian *workscape* by focusing on the ethnography of work, and the interviews conducted with humanitarians employed during the mass refugee transit through the Balkan corridor. First, the paper will address manifestations of the humanitarian enterprise in a refugee camp in Croatia and then explore work experiences of the local humanitarians. Special attention will be given to dynamics between emotional and rational dimensions of aid work by using the concept of affective labor.

Keywords: Aid work, humanitarian workscape, affect, humanitarianism, affective labor

By the end of the twentieth century, humanitarianism became recognized as a distinct sector in the labor market (Barnett 2011; Weiss 2013) and was transformed into a powerful international *workscape* with more than 200 000 workers worldwide (see Walker et al. 2010: 2223). Despite high burnout rates and the fact that most organizations have to frequently recruit new staff, there is a growing number of full-time staff members who perceive humanitarianism as a career (see Barnett 2005: 130). According to Neuman and Weissman, the early ethos of adventurous humanitarians has been replaced by the ethos of »docile« and »responsible« employees (2016: 12–13) who are now subjected to the expanding security discourse within the aid industry (Duffield 2012). Next to the phenomenon of securitization of aid work, Duffield argues that there has been a growing discourse on self-care,¹ and the expansion of resilience training within the humanitarian sector, both of which might detriment their initial intentions of advancing the functioning of the aid industry by, among other things, acting to alienate aid workers from the context they work in and from the people they attempt to help (ibid.: 487). Consequently, humanitarianism has been widely criticized for cultivating remoteness among aid workers (see ibid.),

1 | Even though the notion of self-care presented in this text might invoke negative connotations, it is not meant to exclude its importance in feminist literature or the general emphasis on a person's well-being.

and for developing into an enterprise (see Donini 2008; Dunn 2012) and a form of government (see Fassin 2012). Importantly, it is estimated that around 90% of all aid workers are locally recruited (Egeland et al. 2011 in Duffield 2012: 476). However, the existing research on development and aid work is mostly focused on what Escobar termed the »transnationalized middle-class experts« who frequently occupy managerial positions (Escobar 2016 in Pascucci 2019: 744) and pay less attention to locally employed »subordinate aid professionals« (Heathershaw 2016 in *ibid.*).

Given the fact that I worked with several humanitarian organizations in Croatia on projects that were providing assistance to migrants and refugees, I decided to explore this specific *workscape* and focus on the aspirations and experiences of the local workers who were employed to distribute aid in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre of the Republic of Croatia during the mass refugee transit in 2015 and 2016. Thomas Andrews defined workscape as »a place shaped by the interplay of human labor and natural processes. [...] [It's] not just an essentially static scene or setting neatly contained within borders, but a constellation of unruly and ever-unfolding relationships – not simply land, but also air and water, bodies and organisms, as well as the language people use to understand the world, and the lens of culture through which they make sense of and act on their surroundings« (2008: 125). In the context of humanitarianism, I will use the concept of *workscape* to address the working arena produced in accordance with recent transformations of humanitarianism (see Barnett 2005) that enact individual, social, political, cultural, and labor practices negotiated within the humanitarian space. As the (neo)liberal transformations of humanitarianism and aid work are complex phenomena, this paper aims at tackling practices specific to this local aid workscape and focuses on individual impressions of emotional engagement in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Importantly, ethnography from the Winter Reception-Transit Centre of the Republic of Croatia encapsulates the tensions between rational and emotional apprehensions of aid work and enables an extended view on the dialectical nature of humanitarianism. I am specifically interested in the interplay between the impulse to give and the rational accountability of giving (see Bornstein 2009: 643) that I first encountered during my work in the camp and later in my research. In order to understand this affective ambivalence, the paper explores the nature and the kind of labor performed in humanitarian interventions. Particularly, it focuses on the labor invested by workers who are not part of the professional international humanitarian staff that jumps from one crisis to another, but are locally recruited workers with little or no experience in this field. Drawing on the work of Liisa Malkki (2015) and Anne Meike Fechter (2016), this paper aims at investigating affective labor performed by local humanitarians and their ways of adopting, rejecting, or adjusting the habitus of the self-manageable, compassionate professional fab-

ricated within the discourse of contemporary aid industry. Furthermore, the analysis provides an insight into the relationship between local and international forms of humanitarianism by looking at the manifestation of the transformed humanitarian sector in the micro context of the postindustrial Croatian town where authorities decided to open a humanitarian-transit camp for refugees.² The paper will first depict controversies of aid in the Croatian refugee camp with an emphasis on the manifestation of »humanitarian business« (Weiss 2013) in a local context and then discuss the affective labor of humanitarians formed between the emotional and rational positioning within the aid workscape, according to narratives of the local workforce.

HUMANITARIAN WORKSCOPE OF THE WINTER TRANSIT-RECEPTION CENTER IN SLAVONSKI BROD

In the fall of 2015, Croatia witnessed mass refugee transit that eventually took the form of the Balkan corridor whose formal recognition and exceptionality remain a contested area of discussion up until today (see Santer and Wriedt 2017). From the border between Greece and Macedonia to the border between Slovenia and Austria the movement of people was coordinated, though arbitrarily, between the countries through which the corridor passed while migrants were being given humanitarian assistance in different transit points throughout the route. In November 2015, the Croatian authorities opened the Winter Transit-Reception Centre in Slavonski Brod, a town at the border with Bosnia and Hercegovina that has been facing sound waves of deindustrialization since the war in the 1990s and increased labor emigration since Croatia's accession into the EU. The refugee camp was placed in the industrial zone of Slavonski Brod, in a neighborhood called Bjeliš, at an old railway station adjusted to temporarily function as a transit station for people on the move through the corridor. Škokić and Jambrešić Kirin importantly argue that this center signified the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial town in which »Slavonski Brod came to realize that someone else's misfortune is a (business) opportunity for foreign corporations and humanitarian agencies« (2018: 91). As I have argued elsewhere (Pozniak 2019: 77–78), having in mind the high unemployment rates and the ongoing aggravation of

21 For a more detailed analysis of the transformation of humanitarian work by using the example of the Croatian refugee camp in 2015 and 2016 with an emphasis on its economic and political aspects, see Pozniak 2019.

the Slavonski Brod economy,³ this camp appeared as an ephemeral economic stimulation given that the substantial number of mobile, national, and transnational humanitarians were using a broad range of local services (i.e. renting rooms and apartments and using taxi services, local shops, bars, and restaurants, etc.). Moreover, during the course of its work,⁴ aside from engaging international professionals, this camp enabled short-term employment for many local and national residents. According to the minutes from the camp's daily coordination meetings between aid organizations, it had up to 300 people working every day with a decrease in March and April due to the closure of the corridor and the official ending of the organized transit. Many local workers were employed through state-subsidies (i.e. »public work«)⁵ at minimum wages which enhanced an already large disproportion between the position of international professionals sent on a mission to the »western Balkans« and the local workforce employed on short-term and precarious contracts, a position that, according to Catherine Baker's criticism of the disrupting impact of foreign aid in post-war and post-Yugoslav states, could be understood as elite precariat (see 2014).

At the time, I was employed by a local NGO, sub-contracted by an international humanitarian organization, to work on their child protection program. According to my working experience and a four-month engagement in Slavonski Brod camp, work in the humanitarian sector required a peculiar performance of loyalty and discretion—even though I had not signed a confidentiality agreement with the international agency leading the program, I was expected to follow confidentiality regulations to prevent me from exposing the organization to external criticism and unpredictable public attention or from compromising its reputation. Taking this into account, as well as the fact that the ethnographic data and impressions presented in the text were collected during my employment and that they formulate a specific (auto)ethnography of humanitarian work, I decided not to expose the name(s) of the organizations I worked for. To complement the research, I conducted interviews with employees

3 | The unemployment rate for Slavonski Brod was 25.5% in 2015 and 22% in 2016. In the same years, the unemployment rates in Croatia were 16.9% and 14.2% (see Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje 2017: 9).

4 | The camp opened on 3 November 2015 and closed on 15 April 2016.

5 | Public work is an employment measure in Croatia whose program is based on socially useful work initiated by the local community or civil society organizations. The goal of the measurement is to include unemployed persons into the labor market and »activate them« through socially beneficial programs. It can last up to six months for full-time employment with a guaranteed minimum wage provided by the government of the Republic of Croatia (for more information see mjere.hr [27.01.2020]).

who worked in the camp, whose identities, as well as the organizations they worked for, will also remain unexposed.⁶ The interviews were conducted after the closure of the Balkan corridor, and therefore they offer an extended perspective on aid work, not only during the mass refugee transit in Croatia but, more importantly, about the practices and implications of aid in its aftermath. In the context of humanitarianism and migration studies linked to the Balkan route, the Winter Transit-Reception Centre was important for introducing a professional standard of aid that continued to dominate the formulation of humanitarian practices in the post-Balkan corridor context and expanded to the models of humanitarian assistance in the neighboring countries after the redirection of the migration route—a mechanism in accordance with Marta Stojić Mitrović and Ana Vilenica’s thesis about the circulation of people, practices, money, and organizations within the external borderscapes of the EU (see Stojić Mitrović/Vilenica 2019).

The camp in Slavonski Brod was managed by the Croatian Ministry of Interior (MOI), which appointed the Croatian Red Cross (CRC) as the coordinator of humanitarian assistance. During my work there, it consisted of five sectors that were composed of large tents and shipping containers to accommodate thousands of people for a short stay, a central transit space divided between a »registration area« with several smaller tents placed right next to the railway (a point of arrival and departure for refugees transiting through Croatia by train) and a »distribution area«, a large tent where humanitarian organizations distributed immediate aid. Right next to the distribution area was a separate tent for women and young children and an additional tent for activities of the Croatian Red Cross. Apart from tent-units for police officers and the main administration building for government officials, containers were set for the NGO humanitarian staff that marked an area also known as the »NGO village« or »office area« mostly used for desk-work and staff meetings but also as a place of interaction and social relationships among humanitarians. Except for the CRC, a dozen organizations decided to join relief programs in Slavonski Brod and, more importantly, their involvement was approved by the Croatian MOI.⁷ With time, every

6 | Research participants are presented under pseudonyms.

7 | Among the intergovernmental organizations and UN agencies were the UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The international non-governmental organizations present in the camp were: Save the Children, MAGNA, and Samaritan’s Purse. The national non-governmental organizations were the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), CARITAS, Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA), the Alliance of Baptist Churches in the Republic of Croatia, the Centre for Peace Studies (CMS), Welcome! Initiative, the Humanitarian Association Remar Croatia (REMAR), the Croatian Law Center (HPC), and the

organization took over a specific program adjusted to fit its mandate and offered aid they considered appropriate and that would distinguish them from other humanitarian actors. The distribution area was a place where the division of labor between different actors was clearly enacted, hence, enabling the differentiation of donors, types of aid, and responsibilities of each NGO. Such a configuration created a parceled aid system with a more or less specialized niche for each association and for particular groups of refugees moving through the corridor. Even though the cluster approach sometimes seemed to be the only viable solution to meet the needs of people on the move, the fast transit through the Balkan corridor, with less than one hour of time for scanning and refreshing in the camp, certainly fits to Elizabeth Dunn's notion of »aid adhoc-racy« (2012). She argues that despite the efforts of humanitarianism to standardize and bureaucratize aid, it is a process based on guesswork and »satisficing« as well as on rational planning, which eventually transforms the imperative of bureaucracy into chaos and adhoc-racy (ibid.: 2). The dehumanizing effects of the contested humanitarian governmentality (see Agier 2010; Fassin 2012) were mostly demonstrated in efforts to properly classify the severity and the type of a refugee's misfortune. One of the key codes for mastering work within the aid distribution echelon was to economically and rationally assess how badly someone needed assistance and what kind of aid should be offered accordingly:

»[Center for Peace Studies representatives posing a question] Does any organization have male and female trousers S/M/L and socks? [CRC answering] CRC has socks; we will bring it to the distribution tent. We point out that we shouldn't offer everything to everyone, but see who is in *real* [added emphasis] need of something.«⁸

Furthermore, the aid labor division, in combination with the attempt to distribute »exclusive« humanitarian assistance, served organizations to justify their further presence in the camp and assure donors that their money was fairly used. The fact that humanitarians were obliged to report to donors about the type and quantity of delivered aid caused competitive relationships between organizations subjected to the growing humanitarian business and the overall transformation of humanitarianism

Croatian Association of Court Interpreters (HSUST). In addition, a German non-governmental organization Intereuropean Human Aid Association (IHA) was also present in the camp (see also Pozniak 2019: 76–77).

8 | This is a portion of the text from the »question and answer« section of the daily coordination meeting between humanitarian organizations held at the Winter Transit-Reception Centre in Slavonki Brod, 8 January 2016.

(see Pozniak 2019: 81; Weiss 2013; Barnett 2005). It is important to stress that several associations were not subjected to the economization and standardization of aid practices, at least not to this extent. Some actors (i.e. the Center for Peace Studies and the Welcome! Initiative) did not identify their mission with the discourse of aid industry but rather with the Croatian civil society scene (see Stubbs 2001) and the solidarity movements with refugees and/or with a »wider context of structural critique of neoliberal, post-colonial, or capitalist structures« (Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017: 19). Importantly, several NGOs (i.e. CMS, HSUST, REMAR, IHA) largely engaged as volunteers rather than employees. However, the importance to differentiate between civil society, activists, and volunteer actors, on the one hand, and the professional (inter)national humanitarian agencies, on the other, does not mean that such actors are entirely excluded from becoming involved in what Paul Stubbs defined as the »struggles over the possession of different ›capitals‹« (2001). According to one of the participants of the established activist platform Welcome! Initiative they never identified themselves as a humanitarian organization in order to avoid a further victimization of refugees. Nonetheless, distributing aid in the camp enabled an insight into the situation and formed the basis to work on other activities (advocacy, public demonstrations, monitoring the human rights violations, etc.),⁹ which was seen as one of the factors that intensified competitive and rival relationships between different actors in the camp:

»I remember, when I would go to the field, my goal was to give water, but my goal was also to find out what was going on. Someone who only wanted to give water at that moment and saw me not doing that held it against me, but that was the process one has to go through.«

Controversies over everyday aid in Slavonski Brod were best summarized in a complaint made by a handful of humanitarians about local »public work« employees and Red Cross volunteers taking pieces of donation clothes, such as shoes or jackets, that were meant for refugees, which led to the decision that staff members were not, under any circumstances, allowed to use donations, not even the »leftovers« that had not been picked up by refugees. This restriction was introduced in spite of the fact that some auxiliary workers—hired to clean the camp after a train, that had carried approximately one thousand persons passing through the distribution area within two or three hours, departed—could not afford proper pieces of clothing for an outdoor job

⁹ | One example for this can be highlighted by the case of members of the Welcome! Initiative who worked on collecting information and testimonies on human rights violations and mistreatment of people incarcerated in closed parts of the Winter Reception-Transit Center.

in the middle of the winter. The established humanitarian adhocacy of the Slavonski Brod camp insisted on regulating any potentially compromising situation by avoiding any potential conflict with the donors and adhering to general standards of humanitarian action, even if it meant supporting (and producing) precariousness, social stratification or, more paradoxically, not being able to properly answer to the needs of persons transiting through, or staying in, the camp (cf. Pozniak 2019: 82). Anita, one of my interlocutors, remembers her boss insisting on following every protocol, step by step, even when a certain procedure could not respond sufficiently and timely to a specific situation, or when it was not applicable in this particular camp:

»This way of work made me feel frustrated because someone who is constantly in the office can't judge if there are any steps... I think we were all skilled enough to skip two or three steps at that moment, when this need is present, and to help that person as soon as possible.«

For myself as an employee, it was demanding to witness how the managerial system of aid overpowered the ethos of »help«, or, more precisely, how the two opposite perspectives worked together in fabricating a system focused on satisfying the donor requirements rather than efficiently providing help for its beneficiaries. This, coupled with the fact that working in this refugee camp implied an emotionally taxing working environment, especially for volunteers and less experienced employees, suggests that aid work did not only require emotional engagement but also imposed specific ways of managing compassion and the impulse to help.¹⁰ In other words, the exposure to mass suffering not only initiates emotional distress but a sole logic of a technocratic system of care also causes disturbing impressions. Importantly, as I will show in the next section, humanitarianism simultaneously tries to manage these impressions. In addition, most research participants had difficulties dealing with affects produced by the emotionally wearing aid workscape that emphasized that humanitarian work should be approached professionally and treated as a job (cf. Pozniak 2019: 83) rather than a selfless act of help. In order to examine the discomforting ambivalence—the binary created between the emphasis on professionalization and rational aid management on the one side, and the emotional engagement of local workers on the other—the interviews especially focused on investigating how workers perceived this kind of job, how they coped with anxiety produced by this ambivalence (if any), and what kind of labor humanitarianism finally entails.

10 | The phrase »impulse to help« is coined by paraphrasing Liisa Malkki's notion of the need to help (2015) and Erica Bornstein's notion of the impulse of philanthropy (2009).

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS— THE SELF AND THE HUMAN(ITARIAN) AFFECT

My interviewees were temporarily employed in several non-profit organizations that were providing humanitarian assistance in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre in Slavonski Brod. Most interlocutors (except one) did not have prior working experiences in refugee camps or humanitarian crises. Some of them found the motivation to work there in their professional occupations, like psychology or social sciences, or because they spoke one of the languages used by migrants so they could work as interpreters, while other local workers were just curious to see how the camp functions. Certainly, some unemployed individuals sought to, at least temporarily, satisfy their basic existential needs. Some workers searching for a career in the desired sector known for its competitiveness decided to engage as volunteers only to later obtain a paid »entry« position in the humanitarian sector.

The interviews presented here were conducted with a project assistant, an interpreter, a child feeding counselor, and a field coordinator, all working on short-term but not minimum wage (like state subventioned »public work«) contracts. On many occasions during conversations with research participants, I was able to compare the feelings and challenges they went through to the ones I faced during my stay in the camp. The only part where our experiences somewhat differed was the employment position—most of the informants worked directly »in the field«, with refugees as »first-line responders«¹¹, while I engaged in »office work«. This meant that I coordinated project activities; hence, I spent less time with refugees and dealt with project coordination and donor reporting. This experience also steered my research attention towards the transformations of humanitarian work and its growing bureaucratization, which is why it did not come as a surprise when most of the informants pointed out the disproportion between »office-work« and »field-work« and expressed their concerns about administration becoming a priority and preceding the needs of the recipients—the reason we were all there in the first place. Their working experience, together with their methods of negotiating, overcoming and coordinating the overwhelming compassion within an emotionally exhausting working environment and an overly bureaucratized structure of aid work, served as a basis to comprehend the labor performed by local humanitarian workers.

11 | »First line responders« were people working directly with refugees transiting through the camp: interpreters, distributors of aid packages, staff assisting women and young children in »Mom&Baby Area« etc.

According to Liisa Malkki, humanitarianism is often associated with selflessness and self-sacrifice and less often with notions that appeared in her research such as »self-escape, self-loss, dehumanization, self-humanization, self-transformation, the care of the self, the relation of self to others and the relation of self to the world« (2015: 10). Her informants were members of the Finnish Red Cross who joined international missions of the Red Cross and worked in extreme humanitarian crises all over the world. Even though the reasons to join such missions varied, she interestingly shows how, for some of them, aid work abroad represents »a line of escape from the familiar, and sparks urges to self-transformation« (ibid.: 4). Because the notion of selflessness is usually inscribed in the meaning of humanitarianism, she was interested to see how aid workers abroad perceived themselves and, analytically, what happens with the *self* while engaging in such a selfless profession? Importantly, her informants emphasized that they do not perceive themselves as selfless heroes. They pointed out the fact that they were trained professionals, experts in their fields, who had no motive in perpetuating the heroic image about themselves and their work ethics. On the contrary, doing so was perceived as a non-professional behavior.

My interlocutors were not trained professionals abroad but, rather, non-professionals or semi-professionals recruited locally (or nationally). Nonetheless, similar to Malkki's findings, the processes of self-identification, valuing the self, self-protection, and care of the self, emerged as main attributes that they used to describe their experiences. In more general terms, Nikolas Rose has argued that today »the prevailing image of the worker is of an individual in search of meaning and fulfillment, and work itself is interpreted as a site within which individuals represent, construct and confirm their identity, an intrinsic part of a style of life« (1990: 14). One of my interlocutors, Vinka, hoped for meaningful changes in her life and a job that would fulfill her, which is why she decided to quit a steady job as a school psychologist in Zagreb and apply for a job in the camp. Saman worked on aid programs in Bosnia during, and after, the war in the 1990s and, as a person originating from Iran, he spoke Persian, including Dari. When he first found out about the refugees' arrival in 2015 and the opening of the camp(s) in Croatia, he thought: »Something happened without me. Something is happening in Croatia, and I'm here, close, but not a part of it.« Soon after, he came to work in the camp and later joined several projects focused on migration and refugee assistance in Zagreb. While looking for a job that would enable her to combine professional and personal passions, Anita, a senior-year psychology student soon to defend her MA thesis, came across a job vacancy as assistant coordinator of a child protection program in the camp. She immediately applied, even though she had to go back to Slavonski Brod, a hometown she »ran away from«, and a place she thought she would not be coming back to, at least not

for work. However, while completing the application form and hoping to get the job, she did not even think about that. In her understanding: »I felt that this job is for me.« Another interviewee, Marija, had wanted to work with refugees ever since she was a little girl. During our conversation, she remembered that her parents always worried about her one day working in dangerous places and refugee camps far away from home. Very soon after graduating political sciences, she was hired by an NGO she had been volunteering with for a couple of years in Zagreb and in which she coordinated the activities in the camp in Slavonski Brod: »At first, it was a shock that I could work on the topic I love very soon after graduating!« Anita, Vinka, Saman, and Marija all shared enthusiasm towards working in the refugee camp, perceiving it as an arena that would enable them to professionally and personally express themselves and satisfy their needs. The latter did not only refer to the needs of being engaged in a crisis situation or advocating for political and social changes, but, for some interlocutors like Vinka, it meant to have their actions finally recognized and respected, to inscribe them with meaning. Describing her first encounter of »aiding refugees«, Vinka portrayed herself as the »helper« whose actions had finally been appreciated, and who, in the process of giving aid, received feedback that fulfilled her need to feel like a valued and accomplished human:

»By offering my hand, giving someone a blanket or a hat, I received something that I wouldn't receive in school in one year. And so, there somewhere, on a personal level, there was this beautiful exchange where I felt valued, seen as a person, as a human being. What I have to offer, what I was usually giving and what hadn't been seen; it certainly found its place in these moments.«

Aid workers in Slavonski Brod were confronted daily with a »bare humanity«—the suffering mass on the move—managed by the progressively rigorous migration and refugee policies and subjected to a »regime of care« (Ticktin 2011) that classified their pain in order to supply them with donor-convenient necessities. In that kind of situation, the gratefulness and appreciation shown by aid receivers, presented in the form of words like »thank you« or a smile on their faces because they were given an appropriate aid item needed to alleviate their pain, created for some research participants a powerful, yet potentially toxic, agglomerate of feelings—a form of affect—that, as I want to show, professional humanitarianism strives to tame. Unlike emotions, affects are understood as interrelations (see Škrbić Alempijević/Potkonjak/Rubić 2016: 65), ambiguous conditions that are »less easily categorized« and »potentially more disruptive presence in a social world« (Malkki 2015: 55). The »beautiful exchange« that Vinka felt while distributing blankets to refugees

passing through the camp, or Anita's realization of »how little can be enough to make someone's day, a month, or a week« can be understood as affective conditions that, as I will show in the next section, humanitarians had to learn to control. According to Saman, »this stimulates one part of the brain that gives you the most beautiful feelings that you can get—that I'm a human. And this ›*I human*‹ [affect] you want all the time, constantly, you won't have a limit.« Particularly, he emphasized the risks of attaching yourself to »beneficiaries« and allowing the »satisfaction for doing good« to affect you:

»When you do something good, and you really do it well, and a woman hugs you, cries in your lap. When children see you from afar and start running towards you, run to your lap. . . [. . .] You attach them to you. This brings such a big feeling of satisfaction, self-satisfaction, pleasure—that I did something good—that you become addicted. [. . .] It's very important that we don't ask someone to worship us, to look at us like heroes, to be grateful. We just want respect because we do our job well.«

Saman was the only interlocutor who had worked in the humanitarian sector before the camp opened in Croatia and could refer to his experiences from Bosnia during the 1990s. To protect oneself from the »do-gooder addiction« that can cause humanitarians to neglect their private life, he advocated professionalism and treating aid work as a job. According to him, humanitarians should present themselves as the »intermediaries« of aid companies who cannot take full responsibility when faced with either disappointment or criticism if an aid package was not sufficient or with immense joy and thankfulness due to an appropriate aid package. In other words, this could be seen as a self-protection measure for the aid worker and a mechanism that hinders both the negative image of aid labeled as counterproductive and the heroic image of humanitarians perceived as saviors. Even though Malkki's interlocutors worked in extreme situations like the Rwandan genocide, Saman's narration similarly refers to the possible dangers an aid worker faces when being overwhelmed by a crisis situation in terms of its scale, duration, or complexity (see *ibid.*: 56). For example, the Finnish Red Cross humanitarians that Malkki interviewed did not even want to engage in knowing details about the socio-political context of the place where they came to intervene because it could have jeopardized their focus on urgent medical assistance they were obliged to provide (see *ibid.*: 56–57). In case they would fail in providing aid because they were emotionally and affectively distracted, they were perceived as non-professionals and basically unfit for (aid) work. Interestingly, though, despite the fact that he advocated for professional behavior and maintenance of a social distance

between aid workers and refugees (cf. Gilbert 2014), Saman still tried to avoid the act of aid distribution simply because he did not want to decide »whom to give, and whom not to give«. Precisely this dynamic between the emotional and professional dimension of aid work is where the affective labor takes place.

AFFECTIVE LABOUR OF LOCAL HUMANITARIANS

Within the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski/Chiapello 2018), some authors discuss immaterial labor as the central paradigm of post-industrial work (Lazzarato 1996; Hardt 1999; Gorz 2015). According to Michael Hardt (1999), affective labor is a model of immaterial labor performed in professions that involve human contact and interaction. It acts in different kinds of relational services, all of which contain in-person interaction, from health to entertainment industries. He continues by saying that »this labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community« (ibid.: 96). What is essential to it is the fact that it creates and manipulates affects (ibid.). In comparison to Anne Meike Fechter’s understanding of immaterial labor performed within the aid industry, I will present difficulties that my interlocutors experienced during and after their engagement and show how the efforts they invested, or failed to invest, into adopting and practicing professional aid work could be seen as a form of affective labor.

Even though many situations could have been perceived as disturbing, some interlocutors explained that working in »fast transit« circumstances did not leave much time to build connections with refugees or to reflect on taxing events they witnessed daily. However, every time Vinka would leave the camp and go to Zagreb for a couple of days, she faced difficulties when trying to participate in »ordinary« everyday practices at home:

»When I’d return to Zagreb, it really felt like I don’t belong in Zagreb. As if I was, actually, in a way, swollen by this world of refugees, and I actually wanted to be there, but... It was unusual to witness my interior disproportion between the world, which is like: people here go to a bar, talk this and that, and I have to come back there tomorrow with refugees, and drama—people fleeing, barefoot, hungry, have no idea if... They hope it will, somehow, be a better tomorrow there, and you already have the experience that they end up trapped in some ghettos there from where they can’t get out, with no perspective.«

This narrative points out to the main antagonism created within the humanitarian workscape of the Croatian refugee camp that evolved around the impulse of an aid worker to provide essentially meaningful and sustainable service while, simultaneously, anticipating the ineffectiveness of the refugee aid discourse. Specifically, besides the ambivalence between emotional and rational giving, this refugee camp was organized around the humanitarian-security axis as shown by Hameršak and Pleše (2018) and Petrović (2018). It, thus, perfectly exemplified how the two discourses (the humanitarian and the security discourse) work together in fostering the techno-managerial approach that dehumanizes the contemporary refugee movements. Having to accommodate a knowledge about the morally disturbing opposition between the »extraordinary« reality of refugeeness and the »ordinary« everyday life not only depicts Vinka's possible state of distress or burnout but reveals the efforts required to deal with the disparity that working in the humanitarian sector implies. Marija's explanation sums up this tension:

»[...] it was really difficult to deal with that situation daily, with that topic generally, with everything you see on a daily basis, with all the wrongdoing you witness every day, which you try to fight against but you're under the impression that you're tilting at windmills.«

Furthermore, closing the camp meant for many humanitarians that they would lose their jobs, friendships, and connections with other humanitarians, but also the relationships with people who, upon the closure of the Balkan corridor, found themselves stranded in Croatia and who were, hence, incarcerated in the third sector of the camp.¹² Although some of them were aware that their feelings were paradoxical, the atmosphere of disappointment, sadness, and uncertainty spread through the camp as we were packing our things, tents, and containers. This is how Anita described her condition after closing the camp:

»I didn't save myself, emotionally, or in any other way. [...] It would have been easier, after the closing of the camp, if I hadn't known what was bothering whom, if I hadn't known which child lost its family members or which one had some traumas. [...] So, I wasn't in control of myself at all or the situation.«

12 | When the Balkan corridor closed in March 2016, a group of people was stranded in Croatia and incarcerated in the Winter Reception-Transit Centre. The third sector was used for stranded families. The organization I worked for was working with children, which is why some interlocutors spent more time in that sector and eventually got more connected with this group than with other people during the fast transit through the camp.

Similarly, Vinka said that when she returned home after the camps' closure she felt like she had a »mild PTSD«: »It was really difficult to go back to reality and turn on the ›now it's all okay, now I'm here‹, while I know I carried a burden of the whole story.«

The state of distress and the lack of emotional control are not new to humanitarian workers in crisis situations. The fact that these local workers had very little experience with such camps or mass refugee movements certainly influenced their impressions and the way they dealt (or had troubles dealing) with the emotionally disturbing work place. As mentioned above, Liisa Malkki and Anne Meike Fecther conducted research with international aid professionals. In both cases, most research participants had already established more or less clear accounts about the difficulties they were going through and the methods they used to manage them, unlike the Croatian local workers who were still trying to grasp the complexities of what they had experienced. In the case of the Finnish Red Cross workers, Malkki concluded that »maintaining a balance between humane professionalism and affective neutrality, on the one hand, and less manageable and even institutionally dangerous affects, on the other, was simultaneously a regulating ideal and a constant struggle« (2015: 55). To perform their jobs efficiently, and still protect themselves from conditions frequently defined within humanitarian regimes as the compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, burnout, and even PTSD, her interlocutors had to learn how to »professionally coordinate affects« (Mazzarella 2009 in Malkki 2015: 55). In her attempt to understand the daily labor invested by international aid workers in Cambodia, Fecther shows that their everyday professional and personal lives require the performance of what she proposes to identify as »moral labor«—a continuous search for the right approach and an answer to the question of »what is the right course of action when faced with morally complex situations« (2016: 230). This also refers to the effort required to deliver aid daily, knowing »that it will be impossible to make poverty history, [...] eradicate tuberculosis, or whatever the goals might be« (ibid.: 232). And she adds that this is not incidental but systemic: »performing this labor constitutes implicit part of an aid worker's contract with their organizations, aid donors and the general public« (ibid.).

According to Mark Duffield, to not only manage the security risks but the risks of emotional and mental distress caused by the humanitarian workscape, the aid industry requires workers to »build resilience« and apply therapeutic *care of the self* techniques (2012: 486). He argues that building personal resilience is a method of self-management, and it is not meant to deal with PTSD but to prevent it from happening in the first place (ibid.). Therefore, these risks can be avoided, managed, and rationalized by using the appropriate therapeutic techniques, or, in words of Niko-

las Rose »therapeutics can make us better workers at the same time as it makes us better selves« (1990: 11). This also means that the techno-managerial approach adopted in the humanitarian sector affects the way workers can not only manage external situations, such as the »refugee crisis«, but also their internal impressions when faced with morally complex or emotionally taxing situations. In my view, the formula for becoming a self-manageable compassionate aid worker is grounded in the assumption that the ideology of work ethics, as well as the overall professionalization of work, can regulate the discomforts of humanitarianism, be it the discomforts emerging from the exposure to mass suffering that is emotionally and mentally difficult to process, the entrepreneurial nature of humanitarianism or the paradoxical humanitarian-security alliances—all of which might cause the aforementioned conditions of distress. In other words, next to the discrepancy that Vinka had to deal with, the methodology that teaches humanitarians how to manage affective impressions is also tacitly contracted within the humanitarian sector. In order to reach the habitus of professional helpers, aid workers have to adopt the techniques of »building resilience« (Duffield 2012) and »affect management« (Mazzarella 2009 in Malkki 2015: 55) while simultaneously maintaining a social distance (see Gilbert 2016) without appearing to be »emotionally indifferent and cold« (Malkki 2015: 56) in the eyes of aid receivers.

Anita, Marija, and Vinka experienced powerful and potentially dangerous affects with little control over their emotional engagement, which is one of the reasons they were distressed during employment and in the aftermath of the camp's functioning. This also implies that they were yet to be disciplined in this particular profession. To paraphrase Fecther (2016), their professional and personal lives required labor that refers to experiencing these disproportions, reflecting about them, and learning how to manage them in order to achieve the required balance between emotional and rational dimensions of aid work. The sole experience of humanitarian affect, as designated by Saman in his notion of the »*I human*« affect, followed by the later awareness of the need to protectively use affect management (Malkki 2015:56) can be understood as affective labor. The image of a professional, self-manageable, and compassionate humanitarian is an ideal that workers might stream towards not knowing if they may ever accomplish the right balance. In that sense, affect management should be understood as an aspiration and a continuous attempt to, for example, avoid becoming indifferent while maintaining emotional distance, or, taking care of yourself while providing care for the others. Precisely this process, and particularly the effort invested to apprehend the balance and the self-management techniques that professional aid work entails, should be seen as affective labor that was largely performed within the humanitarian workscape of the Croatian camp for refugees.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to depict the enactment of humanitarian enterprise in a local camp for refugees during the mass refugee transit through Croatia. In the first section, I presented the context from which I drew the narratives about the labor that was performed in this specific camp. This part dealt with the functioning of the transit camp with an emphasis on features of the locally created aid workscape, such as local employment measures, tense relationships between different humanitarian actors, and effects of the dominant discourses of the contemporary humanitarian sector including the rationalization of aid resources and the standardization of work procedures. The second part of the article shifted the attention to individual aspirations to engage in the provision of aid and presented the ways in which the humanitarian workscape affected locally employed workers. What binds these two parts together is the fact that the discourse on the professional humanitarian enterprise can produce morally, emotionally, and mentally unsettling affects in the same way as the process of witnessing the suffering of others can. More precisely, the complementary relationship between these two domains formulates the contemporary aid workscape. This is the site where the rational and emotional dimensions of aid come together in a professional humanitarian setting that introduces methods for humanitarians on how to successfully manage the challenges posed by the discomforts of such a work place. Examples of these discomforting aspects of the local aid workscape are analyzed as human(itarian) affects and traced within interviews exemplifying the state of distress and burnout among several interviewees. Even though there is a tendency of professional humanitarianism to tame the emotional impulse of humanitarian work as a self-protection measure, these local workers were not trained international staff members who had previously worked in different crisis settings around the world. Importantly, despite the fact that many workers and volunteers, including my interlocutors, went through training which, apart from addressing their area of work in the camp, tackled the importance of self-care (some associations even organized psychological supervision) and emphasized that workers should not get too emotionally and socially close to refugees, it is possible to conclude that this was not sufficient to actually implement these instructions daily. They simply did not have enough working experience to inhabit the figure of a compassionate aid professional. Their experiences were intensive because they were yet to master the aforementioned methods. I argue that the efforts invested in reflecting on these affects and in adopting the ways to manage them can be understood as affective labor. In addition, I believe that exploring affective labor with regards to different contexts and scales of humanitar-

ian interventions can help to unveil the complexity of the expanding humanitarian workscape more generally.

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