Introduction

On a Friday afternoon in August 2015, Trude was sorting her youngest daughter's overcrowded wardrobe while listening on the radio to a story about the unprecedented number of refugees arriving on the Greek Islands in flimsy dinghies. While standing in her daughter's bedroom, amidst her family's physical and economic comforts, she experienced what she would later describe as 'an uncanny and powerful call to *do something*'. Eight days after this epiphany, she was on a plane to Lesvos with fourteen suitcases of clothes and blankets donated by her family and friends. Trude, who had no previous experience in humanitarian or social work, had not planned to assist the boat landings, nor did she have any intention to rescue people. However, after driving to the northern coast of Lesvos, where most of the boats were arriving, she was shocked to witness the lack of professional and organised assistance. Realising that she could not simply stand by and watch, she spent three days and nights helping receive boats and distribute warm clothes and blankets to refugees arriving onshore. Transformed by this experience, she returned home to Norway 'a different person' and resigned from her job as a production manager for a Nordic television service provider. With the help of some of her female friends, Trude established the Norwegian humanitarian organisation 'Dråpen i Havet' (A Drop in the Ocean).

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In the summer of 2015, the Greek island of Lesvos was thrust into the world's spotlight as the epicentre of what was misguidedly labelled the 'European refugee crisis' (Cabot 2019; Rozakou 2017a). That year, over 800,000 people risked their lives by crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece in overloaded rubber dinghies. Lesvos alone received more than half of the boat refugees,

most of whom were escaping war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Eritrea (UNHCR 2015). Moved to action by imagery of suffering and rescue, ordinary citizens from foreign countries flocked to the scene to assist the refugees and 'volunteer at the frontline of history' (Papataxiarchis 2016: 8).

The international volunteers who came to help were from different countries and professional backgrounds but had generally limited experience of humanitarian work (Afouxenidis et al. 2017). Intervening in the gaps resulting from the absence of public authorities, the European Union (EU) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), they worked alongside more experienced local actors[1] to improvise *ad hoc* assistance (Guribye and Mydland 2018; Rozakou 2016). Besides patrolling the coast and assisting with boat landings, volunteers helped to meet basic needs such as clothing, water and food, transport and even medical support and rescue (Kitching et al. 2016). During the autumn of 2015, some volunteers also established more robust organisations to provide better structured and more sustainable humanitarian responses (Hernandez 2016). While several of these organisations were dissolved or co-opted in the years that followed, others survived by formalising or reinventing themselves and assuming new roles and responsibilities.

This book explores the humanitarian and political trajectory of one of these initiatives, the Norwegian volunteer humanitarian organisation 'Dråpen i Havet' (A Drop in the Ocean), hereafter referred to as DiH. As described in the vignette above, DiH was established in September 2015 by a Norwegian mother of five with no prior experience in humanitarian or social work. While initially working to assist incoming refugees on the beaches of Lesvos, the organisation relocated and shifted its operations many times since its birth in 2015, and gradually assumed larger roles and responsibilities. During my fieldwork (2018–2020), the organisation worked primarily inside two refugee camps on the Greek mainland: Skaramagas on the outskirts of Athens and Nea Kavala in northern Greece. The organisation also returned to Lesvos, where volunteers resumed 'boat spotting' and opened an activity and educational centre in Moria village promoting empowerment and integration. In the spring of 2019, DiH also started providing recreational activities to unaccompanied minors inside the notorious Moria camp, a decision that we shall see provoked much criticism and debate.

Besides helping refugees, DiH aspires to 'make it easy for ordinary people to help refugees'. From September 2015 to the end of my fieldwork in January 2020, DiH sent more than seven thousand volunteers from sixty-seven countries to help refugees in Greece. The organisation was proud to attract volunteers from across the world, from different generations, backgrounds, professions and experiences. However, as I discuss below, most volunteers were white, relatively well-off, and came from countries in the Global North.

Figure 0.1. • Female volunteers posing outside DiH's mother and baby space in Skaramagas refugee camp on the outskirts of Athens. © DiH.

Moreover, women were clearly over-represented among staff and volunteers both at home and abroad. This book focuses primarily on Norwegian citizens, who constituted nearly 40 percent of DiH's volunteers in Greece, and all of the organisation's staff and domestic volunteers in Norway.

While DiH shares several commonalities with other volunteer humanitarian organisations in Europe,[2] two points deserve special mention. First, in parallel with assuming increasing responsibilities in Greece, the organisation underwent a gradual and partial formalisation and professionalisation. Nonetheless, throughout my fieldwork, DiH continued to rely predominantly on short-term volunteers with limited experience and training. As we shall see, part of the rationale of this organisational model is that volunteering is imagined as a *transformative experience* that will change volunteers' perspectives and attitudes and empower them to engage in further humanitarian work or political advocacy once they return home. Yet DiH's leadership also emphasised volunteers' 'ability to think outside the box' and their conviction that 'one does not need a master's degree in humanitarian work to do good'.

Second, while initially guided by humanitarian concerns, DiH challenged the traditional division between humanitarian actors and social movements and engaged in political advocacy (Kynsilehto 2018). At the organisation's annual meeting in 2018, the board voted for an amendment to the organisation's statement of purpose, adding 'spreading information about the plight of

refugees' to the initial aim of providing aid to displaced persons. Subsequently, DiH increasingly emphasised volunteers' responsibility to witness and thereby 'wake up' the Norwegian public and politicians. The organisation also began to mobilise for humanitarian evacuation and positive public perceptions towards refugees at home through campaigning and storytelling.

This book follows recent calls for more empirical and theoretical investigations of volunteer humanitarianism in Europe (Fechter and Schwittay 2019; Bendixsen and Sandberg 2021). To this end, it explores three sets of anthropological, political and 'intimate questions' (Malkki 2015) about DiH's humanitarian and political work and volunteers' personal motivations and experiences.

The first set of questions addresses DiH's popular appeal and the desire to 'do something' to help refugees. More specifically, I ask: what moral-political convictions and emotions moved Trude and later thousands of other 'ordinary' Norwegian citizens to leave their daily routines to help refugees in Greece? Moreover, what is it about DiH's organisational model and imagery that appealed to so many Norwegians across the country, across generations, and with different backgrounds and life situations?

The second set of questions explores DiH's shifting and contested efforts to 'fill humanitarian gaps' on the European borderland. After European border restrictions transformed Greece from a transit country to a place of containment and limbo for people seeking asylum (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016), the humanitarian landscape on Europe's southern frontier has been characterised by increased fragmentation (Rozakou 2019) and hostility, including policing and criminalisation of aid and rescue (Carrera et al. 2019; Tazzioli and Walters 2019). During my fieldwork on Lesvos, there were also escalating tensions and resistance towards the enduring presence of overcrowded refugee camps and foreign NGOs, with local citizens voicing demands to 'get their island back'. Additionally, refugees responded to the EU's containment policies and the violent conditions in Moria camp by demonstrating, going on hunger strikes and self-organising – demanding human rights and freedom. How did DiH negotiate access and legitimacy with Greek authorities, more professional humanitarian organisations, local citizens and refugees? Moreover, how did the organisation understand and respond to new and enduring humanitarian risks and dilemmas, including depoliticisation, bureaucratisation, local discontent and criminalisation?

The third set of questions shifts the focus to Norway and staff and volunteers' experiences of returning home to their friends and family and mobilising for political change. Unlike Greece, Norway received fewer asylum seekers in 2018 and 2019 than the country had since the Balkan Wars in the early 1990s, even forcing local reception centres to close. Nevertheless, the Norwegian government continued to follow the European race to the bottom in refugee protection and implemented increasingly restrictive asylum policies. Typically

legitimised on the basis of 'liberal' concerns with equality, freedom and welfare chauvinism (Bangstad 2015; Eriksen 2018), these restrictions unsettled the country's public self-image as a *'humanitær stormakt'* (humanitarian superpower) (De Carvalho and Neumann 2015; Tvedt 2017; Witoszek 2011). They also fuelled polarisation in Norwegian society, crystallised in heated public debates over national culture, identity and future (Talleraas and Erdal 2015). How did volunteers experience coming home to Norway after volunteering and reintegrating into their everyday lives? Furthermore, how did staff and volunteers seek to scale up their acts of hospitality and care to the Norwegian state and influence co-nationals who did not share their humanitarian sensibilities?

Taken together, my descriptive and analytical responses to these questions might be said to answer two overarching questions: first, what form of humanitarianism is this and what politics does it engender? Second, what can DiH's humanitarian and political interventions teach us about European liberalism and cosmopolitanism, as well as the potentials and barriers for a 'borderless world' (Mbembe 2018) in this 'post-utopian age' (Redfield 2013: 6)?

On a theoretical level, this book is first and foremost a contribution to the study of European humanitarianism and border politics. While other publications have analysed the care and politics of citizen-led aid in Europe (Jumbert and Pascucci 2021; Pallister-Wilkins 2022), in-depth case studies are hitherto rare in the literature. Moreover, most studies have relied on shorter fieldwork or interviews, thus failing to trace volunteers' practices and politics across time and space (Ishkanian and Shutes 2022). As I elaborate on below, several of the contributions this book makes are thus a result of my choice of methodology: the extended-case study and long-term participant observation. Additionally, the book's engagement with Nordic postcolonialism and feminist theorising on emotions offers fresh perspectives on humanitarianism and refugee advocacy.

In the book, I have also tried to avoid some analytical pitfalls that I believe characterise contemporary work on humanitarian volunteers in Europe. First, I have deliberately avoided reducing volunteers' motivations to help refugees to a question of self-realisation or self-cultivation. Whether we frame these motivations as 'neoliberal' or 'post-humanitarian' (Chouliaraki 2013), or analyse them as a kind of Foucauldian care of the self (Campbell 2020; Givoni 2016), these motivations were certainly present in volunteers' narratives. However, what is lost by focusing exclusively on volunteers' desires and self-fulfilment is the sense of moral obligation to 'do something' that Trude and many other interlocutors narrated, and which makes their decision to help refugees not merely subjective but also intersubjective (Englund 2008: 43; Jackson 2011).[3] Analysing volunteering to help refugees as a route to self-growth, self-gratification or prestige also fails to take seriously volunteers' moral and political ambitions (Trundle 2014: 112).

Second, I am critical of the tendency to take volunteers' cosmopolitan or transnational outlooks as a given or leave these sensibilities unexamined (Di Matteo 2021; James 2019; Knott 2018; Papataxiarchis 2016). As anthropologists Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield maintain, the desire to 'do something' to help suffering others might be widespread and characteristic of the contemporary age. However, an anthropological perspective must engage with such desires in the context of 'the actual places they unfold and the larger histories they draw upon' (2011: 27). More specifically, Liisa Malkki's (2015) study of Finnish Red Cross workers and volunteers demonstrates that anthropologists are wrong to approach humanitarian actors as rootless and 'culturally anonymous' cosmopolitan figures. Challenging the image of a generic aid worker, Malkki shows that the practices and desires to aid distant others are as much about the home society (and its specific history and characteristics) and the emotional needs of the helper as they are about global sensibilities of foreign others. Likewise, Čarna Brković (2017) and Katerina Rozakou (2016) show how vernacular forms of humanitarianism are embedded into local frameworks of morality and sociality and shaped by particular ideas of humanity and solidarity.

Building on this work, this book challenges enduring representations of international humanitarian actors and volunteers as 'rootless cosmopolitans' or 'transnationals' motivated primarily or solely by global or universalistic concerns and values. I do so partly by highlighting my interlocutors' situatedness within, and affective attachments to, particular localities, including Europe, Greece and most notably Norway. I specifically show that DiH staff and volunteers felt deeply ashamed of Norwegian affluence and their government's restrictive asylum policies, and increasingly worried about the moral health and future of the Norwegian state and society. I further show that DiH's political interventions were just as much inward-looking as outward-looking, as staff and volunteers considered helping and accepting more refugees as essential to rescue the humanitarian values and identity of the Norwegian welfare state.

As indicated by the book's title, my analysis focuses particularly on volunteers' feelings of shame and desires for national and personal redemption. In both popular and scholarly discourses, humanitarianism is often associated with generic feelings of 'white' or 'Western guilt' and desires for religious or secular salvation (Pallister-Wilkins 2021; Redfield 2013). Placing my ethnography in conversation with Nordic postcolonialism and literary studies, I complicate these generalisations and show that volunteers' expressions of shame and redemption are guided by Norwegian particularities and modes of being in the world.

Last, a few words must be said about my approach to critique. As Miriam Ticktin argues in her review of anthropological studies of humanitarianism, there has been a noticeable shift from 'alliance to critique' and, more recently, a

'push back at diagnoses and condemnations of humanitarianism' and ensuing focus on 'ambiguities, limits and constraints' (2014: 274, 281). However, recent scholarship on humanitarian volunteers in Europe (and here I also include work by scholars who are not anthropologists) has seldom embraced this trend and consequently presented quite polarising analyses.

On the one hand, several scholars have been suspicious or denunciatory, questioning volunteers' intentions and referring to them as 'humanitarian tourists' or 'voluntourists' (Knott 2018; Papataxiarchis 2016). Echoing earlier critiques of humanitarian aid, some have also suggested that humanitarian volunteers are part of the same border regime or 'border/migration industrial complex' as commercial and governmental players (Franck 2018; Rozakou 2019), or that they have been 'consolidated and brought under control' by the global refugee regime in the interest of maintaining a liberal order at home (Pallister-Wilkins 2018). According to most of these scholars, the result of this is that humanitarian volunteers do more harm than good, or unintentionally contribute to the reproduction of an unequal and unjust global order (Knott 2018; Pallister-Wilkins 2022).

On the other hand, other scholars have been overly optimistic about the contemporary proliferation of volunteer humanitarianism in Europe. For instance, some have suggested that independent volunteers and volunteer organisations are more dynamic and can work with greater independence than more established and bureaucratised organisations (Haaland and Wallevik 2019; Larsen 2018; Sandri 2018; see also Dunn and Kaliszewska 2023). Others have observed that volunteer organisations have created more dignified, 'migrant-centric' or egalitarian approaches (Ishkanian and Shutes 2022; Stavinoha and Ramakrishnan 2020). Several scholars have also celebrated the politically empowering effects of citizen-led aid in Europe and highlighted its transformative or subversive potential (Della Porta 2018; Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017; Vandevoordt 2019). While most of these scholars underscore that volunteer humanitarianism is characterised by internal and external limitations, they seem attracted by the 'utopic visions' and possibilities these actors resonate (Rozakou 2017a). In fact, some have even defined volunteer-based humanitarian organisations as alternatives not only to the established aid sector, but also to the entire border regime and neoliberalism (Sandri 2018; cf. Rozakou 2016).

In place of such sweeping claims, this book foregrounds the ambiguities, limitations and dilemmas that characterise DiH's efforts to navigate a 'broken system' (Cabot 2014). I do this partly by letting my interlocutors' own critiques and uncertainties – some of which echo scholarly critiques – animate my prose (Russo 2018). However, I also highlight some of what remained unquestioned or unsaid by my interlocutors, which is an important part of the ethnographic story (Bornstein 2017). Finally, this book analyses DiH staff and volunteers'

'sticky attachments' (Ahmed 2014) to humanitarian hierarchies and national frames and imaginaries. Both adding to and challenging the literature on the 'politicisation of refugee support' (Monforte and Maestri 2023), I also examine my interlocutors' uneasy entanglements with the regimes and discourses they are trying to challenge.

Methodology

The book is based on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted for my doctoral thesis in the Social Anthropology department at Cambridge University. My fieldwork took place from June 2018 to January 2020 during the relatively unexplored aftermath of the frantic 2015–2016 'crisis' (Jumbert and Pascucci 2021). During this period, I followed and participated in DiH's humanitarian and political work in Norway and Greece as a full-time volunteer. I also traced volunteers' personal pathways to help refugees in Greece, and ambivalent experiences of returning to Norway and negotiating different worlds and relationships. However, the narrative presented in this book has an even longer temporality, as it is based on my close and ongoing contact with DiH since an initial pilot study on Chios in 2016.

Why focus on a Norwegian volunteer organisation? To some extent, my research follows Heath Cabot's (2019) recent call for anthropologists to (re) direct the ethnographic gaze towards the 'elites' in the refugee regime, including humanitarian workers (see also Malkki 2015). Following the late Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002), I further believe that an important part of decolonising anthropology entails studying majority populations and cultures in Europe (see also Lewis 1973). By examining Norwegian citizens' uneasy feelings towards their personal and national wealth, this book has also followed Laura Nader's earlier (but still important) call for anthropologists to study 'the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty' (1972: 5).

However, besides these overarching concerns, my decision to study a Norwegian organisation was also motivated by practical and theoretical interests. With regards to the former, conducting research in the country in which I was born and socialised was a new experience. While sometimes involving 'defamiliarisation', I could not always claim familiarity (Vike 2018: 31–50), nor was I everywhere positioned as an unambiguous 'insider' (Carling et al. 2014; Narayan 1993).[4] Nevertheless, my previous familiarity with the organisation and 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld [1997] 2016) eased my ability to gain access and build rapport with DiH's leaders and volunteers. Since Norwegian is my native language, I could also easily follow the organisation's political work and communication in Norway. Regarding the latter, I argue that exploring humanitarianism and refugee advocacy in Norway raises critical and timely questions

about the much-celebrated Nordic welfare state and society. As I try to show, it also helps to complicate or 'provincialise'[5] scholarly generalisations of Western humanitarianism, coloniality and liberalism.

The Extended-Case Method

To study DiH, I approached the organisation as an extended-case study. Initially developed by anthropologists associated with the Manchester School, the extended-case method is characterised by its injunction to follow events and developments as they unfold across time and space (Englund 2018). Similar approaches have been used by anthropologists studying transnational humanitarian organisations (Bornstein 2012), illegalised migration (Andersson 2014; Holmes 2013; Lucht 2011) and struggles for mobility (El-Shaarawi and Razsa 2018). However, these studies have often been framed as 'multi-sited' (Marcus 1995), underplaying the early innovation of the Manchester School and its attention to temporality and emergence in social life (Englund 2018: 128). Some migration scholars have also attempted to sidestep localities, framing their field site as 'arbitrary' and calling for a 'nonlocal ethnography' (Feldman 2011). While challenging methodological nationalism, this approach loses sight of what Max Gluckman and his colleagues in the Manchester School referred to as the 'always situated nature of lived existence' (Kapferer 2015: 8).

Adopting the extended-case method enabled me to address at least two limitations with much contemporary work on volunteer humanitarianism. First, by following and participating in DiH's work across time and space, I was able to observe and experience first-hand how the organisation responded to new humanitarian needs and policies in Greece and political inertia at home. I also explored connections and frictions (Tsing 2005) between the administration and the field, Norway and Greece and the northern and southern borders of Europe. As anthropologist Nefissa Naguib (2016) observes, such translocal links and breaks remain largely unexplored in the study of humanitarian practices and encounters in general (see also Fassin 2012) and have arguably been particularly absent in recent work on humanitarian volunteers. Moreover, scholarship relying on shorter fieldwork or interviews has been largely unable to track volunteers' shifting operations, practices and politics (Ishkanian and Shutes 2022).

Second, the extended-case method enabled me to treat my interlocutors as people with histories and relationships extending beyond the event of volunteering (Englund 2002). This book thus explores volunteers' ambivalent experiences of returning home to their everyday lives in Norway, highlighting some of the immediate and longer-term repercussions of volunteering to help refugees on the European borderland. I also demonstrate how my interlocutors' subjectivities changed in response to their humanitarian encounters, new

insights and developments, thus avoiding the tendency to 'freeze' or 'anchor' people to specific identities or self-representations (Andersson 2014; Faier 2009).

The Politics of Affect and Emotions

Theoretically, this book places scholarship on humanitarianism in conversation with rich and diverse bodies of literature, including the anthropology of ethics, liberal and existential philosophy and Nordic postcolonialism. However, my main theoretical inspiration is feminist and literary work on the politics of affect and emotions (Ahmed 2014; Ngai 2005; Oxfeldt 2018).

Before I proceed, it is important to note something about this body of work as well as my understanding and use of the two terms. In the wake of the so-called 'affective turn' in the social sciences, much ink has been spilled to discuss what affect is, how it is different (or not) from emotions, and whether and how we can study it. Contrary to the Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi's (2002) influential view of affect as a pre-linguistic and non-conscious force disconnected from language and subjectivity, I follow feminist critiques of the affective turn who have stressed the social and cultural history and underpinnings of these.[6] As feminist scholar Marianne Liljeström notes, 'this positioning of affects in relation to norms and power understands them as formative for subjects, social relations, politics and political mobilization' (2016: 18). It also recognises that affects are not easily distinguishable from emotions, as both are mediated by social norms, power and history (Ahmed 2014; Mazzarella 2009).

In this book, I thus consider the difference between affects and emotions as 'a modal difference of intensity or degree, rather than a formal difference of quality or kind' (Ngai 2005: 27). More specifically, I take affect to be a force that 'variously energizes, contradicts, deconstructs and overwhelms the narratives through which we live' (White 2017: para 4) and therefore 'less formed and structured than emotions' (Ngai 2005: 27). Furthermore, I take emotions to be neither private nor psychological states but 'social and cultural practices' that mediate social life and the relationship between individuals, objects and communities (Ahmed 2014). I further assume that both affects and emotions can be studied ethnographically by attending to what people say and how they interact with the material world (Lutz 2017; Navaro 2017).

However, the question I address in this book is not what affects or emotions *are* but what they *do*. More specifically, the book explores how culturally and historically contingent affects and emotions shaped and traversed DiH staff and volunteers' humanitarian and political mobilisations, and contoured tensions both among and within volunteers (Naples and Méndez 2015). Drawing

heavily on the work of feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2014), I also examine how feelings *move* my interlocutors away from some bodies and objects – such as the nation – and toward others, and sometimes make them 'stuck'. I further describe how emotions are taken up, articulated and used by my interlocutors for social and political purposes.

Negative Emotions

Certainly, the focus on emotions in humanitarianism is anything but new. Some scholars have even defined humanitarianism as 'a politics of emotion' (Suski 2012). Moreover, recent scholarship on refugee support and volunteer humanitarianism has explored the role of emotions in mobilising citizens (Armbruster 2019; Karakayali 2017; Sirriyeh 2018). However, this work has overwhelmingly focused on compassion and other 'positive' and other-oriented emotions. Moving beyond these and more well-known critiques of 'positive' humanitarian sentiments like pity, empathy and compassion (Arendt [1983] 2006; Boltanski 1999; Chouliaraki 2006; Fassin 2012; Gullestad 2007), this book focuses specifically on the work of 'negative' emotions. Moreover, I focus less on 'strong' feelings like anger and hate than so-called 'weaker' (Antonsich and Skey 2020) or 'uglier' feelings (Ngai 2005) like frustration, alienation, doubt and – most notably – shame. I further attend to my interlocutors' ambivalent feelings or oscillations between attachment and detachment, affection and disaffection, shame and (a desire for) pride (Antonsich and Skey 2020). Finally, I examine my interlocutors' complex and sometimes difficult relationships to their own feelings which, as Ahmed insightfully notes, might vary even when the feelings they express are the same (2014: 10).

The book's attention to the work of 'negative' emotions contributes to a richer understanding of the contemporary proliferation of volunteer humanitarianism in Europe. As Malkki suggests, attending to humanitarians' unsettling experiences is particularly crucial for grasping the ambiguities of this kind of work and the politics associated with it (Malkki 2015: 75; see also Sharma 2017). Moreover, the focus on emotions and affects is important in the study of border politics and nationalism, which tends to be 'dominated by representational approaches that often struggle to go beyond the idea of nations as imagined communities' (Antonsich and Skey 2020: 580; see also Navaro-Yashin 2002; Shoshan 2016).

Humanitarian Shame

While this book considers several different affects and emotions, shame is of particular importance. This is partly an emic term (*skam*), frequently expressed by my interlocutors in personal conversations and interviews, as well as in their

public and political interventions. In this sense, it is not unique, as shame and shaming have been prevalent concepts and tactics in humanitarian and political discourses in response to the 'refugee crisis' (Naguib 2016). However, like other emic concepts, *skam* has a specific social and political history, as well as significance in the Norwegian context. In the following paragraphs, I will start to unpack this, drawing specifically on the work of literary scholar Elizabeth Oxfeldt.

In a series of publications, Oxfeldt and her colleagues (Oxfeldt 2016, Oxfeldt 2017, Oxfeldt et al 2017; Oxfeldt 2018) discuss what they describe as a particular form of Scandinavian guilt or shame. While suggesting that Scandinavian guilt/shame is a 'variant of Western guilt', they maintain that 'each nation (and region) has its particular history of privilege and guilt' that must be understood in the context of both local particularities and globalisation (Oxfeldt 2018: 2). The Scandinavian guilt/shame is, in their analysis, a symptom of the discomfort most Scandinavians feel when confronted with global injustice. While noting that many Scandinavian guilt traditions have pietistic roots, they underscore that contemporary expressions of Scandinavian guilt/shame are not primarily about people's relationship to God, but to suffering or less privileged others.

They further suggest that Scandinavian guilt/shame distinguishes itself from that of many other Anglo-American nations due to prevailing assumptions of Nordic exceptionalism and innocence in relation to colonialism, slavery and imperialism. Specifically, they argue that Scandinavians do not typically feel guilty or ashamed because of historical wrongs, or vis-à-vis particular national groups or minorities, but rather when confronted with the suffering of global others (Oxfeldt 2016, 2018; see also Tvedt 2016). Historically, these suffering others are people from the Global South, and often sub-Saharan Africa, which harkens back to missionary campaigns (Gullestad 2007) and is also reinforced by popular culture and socialisation. For instance, Oxfeldt (2018) notes how Scandinavian parents often remind their children about 'the starving children in Africa' to encourage them to 'eat everything on their plate or feel grateful for what they have', a parental approach I remember vividly from my own upbringing. Yet the suffering others who challenge or 'disrupt' Scandinavian happiness and become 'the source of bad conscience' are increasingly also refugees fleeing from war and persecution, or even a post-human being: the planet or the environment (Oxfeldt et al. 2017: 432).

Oxfeldt and her colleagues make several important observations that resonate with my findings and help sharpen my analysis. First, whereas many social theorists define shame and guilt as morally and experimentally different feelings, typically relating guilt to actions and shame to one's being (Leys 2007), Oxfeldt remarks that the two commonly converge as 'what one does reflects who one is' (2018:1). This also corresponds with my interlocutors' usage of the

terms: although using shame more frequently than guilt, volunteers generally did not observe the action/being distinction and regularly described actions or inactions as shameful.

Second, they usefully highlight how Scandinavians typically relate to questions of shame and guilt in a context where they consider themselves to be good and innocent. Arguably, this is particularly true regarding Norway and Norwegians who, according to the late anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2006a), typically consider themselves as 'moral and innocent helpers' abroad. However, as I describe in Chapter 1, this self-congratulatory public image is based on a hegemonic and whitewashed version of Norwegian history and a number of historical and contemporary silences.

Third, Oxfeldt and her colleagues suggest that feeling guilty or ashamed by global injustices is typical of Scandinavians and is experienced as particularly heavy and burdensome, not only because of these countries' egalitarian ideals, but also because Scandinavians generally conceive of themselves as 'on the top of the world' in terms of happiness, wealth, peace and equality (Oxfeldt et al. 2016: 13–14). This sense of being exceptionally privileged in a radically unjust world was expressed by nearly all Norwegian interlocutors. However, as we shall see, they not only expressed shame in response to global inequalities and injustice, but also personal and national shame in response to Norwegian excess or overabundance (*overflod*), and the government's increasingly restrictive and 'inhumane' refugee politics.

Finally, while not distinguishing between shame and guilt, Oxfeldt notes a morally relevant and important distinction between (1) feeling guilty or ashamed 'based on a realization that one's personal happiness and privileges are, or have been, attained at the expense of suffering others' versus (2) not seeing a direct or causal connection between one's privileges and the suffering of global others, but nevertheless feeling responsible for alleviating the latter and guilty or ashamed if not succeeding in doing so (2018: 1). This distinction resembles the one made by philosopher Alejandra Mancilla between so-called 'justice cosmopolitans' (represented by Thomas Pogge) and 'assistance cosmopolitans' (represented by Peter Singer), where only the former traces 'causal connections between the actions of the wealthy and the plight of the needy in order to ground the duties of the former' (2016: 2; see also Robbins 2017: 6).

In this book, I build on and extend Oxfeldt's analysis by studying how shame was felt and expressed on both personal and collective/national levels, and accompanied by other emotions and aspirations, including gratitude, luck, national pride and desire for political change and redemption. I chose the term 'humanitarian shame' because my interlocutors most commonly articulated shame in response to what they perceived as 'humanitarian injustices' (defined by Naomi Zack [2018] as misfortunes beginning with bad luck) and violations of Norway's humanitarian traditions and values. However, as we shall see, their

political understanding and discourse developed and fit uneasily with critiques of humanitarian reason as depoliticising (Fassin 2012). Moreover, we shall see that humanitarian shame interacted with other, often overlapping forms of shame, including environmental- or 'eco-shame' (Bruhn 2018).

The book pays particular attention to the role (and use) of shame in mobilising my interlocutors to volunteer to help refugees in Greece. In doing so, I bring ethnographic specificity to the wealth of scholarship that in recent years has drawn on Malkki (2015) to highlight humanitarian workers and volunteers' 'need to help' or humanitarian impulse to 'do something' without situating these needs and impulses socially and historically. Notably, my analysis suggests that volunteers were not only or primarily moved to act by feelings of empathy or identification, as is often assumed in the humanitarian literature. Conversely, it was often the huge distance, or contrast, between their Norwegian privileges and excess vis-à-vis the plight of refugees that caused their affective and ethical response. I further show how DiH staff and volunteers rely on such contrasts or juxtapositions to shame the Norwegian public and politicians into action. By highlighting my interlocutors' expressions of national shame in response to their government's border policies, the book also challenges the widespread assumption that citizens in Europe acted primarily out of an apolitical humanitarian imperative, only later becoming politicised.

In considering feelings of shame as a catalysing factor for volunteering and advocacy, I echo other anthropologists who have shown how 'negative' affect can stimulate social and political action (Greenberg 2014; Wright 2018). Following volunteers across time and space, the book also describes how their feelings of shame intensified, were taken on as 'mine' or 'ours' (Ahmed 2014), or *scaled up* to the level of the nation. While shame is commonly described as personally harmful or paralysing (Every 2013; Leys 2007; Nussbaum 2013; Probyn 2005; Tarrow 1998), I show that many volunteers experienced it as appropriate, self-affirming and productive. However, analysing its political potential, I argue that it often turned volunteers inwards and reproduced their prior attachments to the Norwegian nation-state.

Drawing on Oxfeldt's and Mancilla's distinctions above, I further make a distinction between (1) feeling ashamed because you consider Norway and/or yourself to be *complicit* in refugees' suffering versus (2) merely conceiving of Norway and/or yourself as *morally responsible* (because of Norwegian wealth and privileges). In the latter part of the book, I use this distinction to analyse my interlocutors' political subjectivities and interventions, and show that only the former unsettles hegemonic and whitewashed narratives of Norwegians as peaceful and innocent helpers.

Redemption

Like shame, redemption and associated terms such as atonement and salvation are important parts of the vocabulary of many humanitarian actors (Redfield 2012b: 463). In fact, according to political geographer and border scholar Polly Pallister-Wilkins (2021), humanitarianism is chiefly motivated by the desire for redemption, which she explicitly links to the maintenance of white supremacy. In this book, I examine desires for redemption on both collective and individual levels. However, rather than treating these desires as generic or inherent to humanitarian practice, I explore their situated character in Norwegian social and political life. Unlike shame (*skam*), redemption is not an emic term. However, as we shall see, my interlocutors were strongly influenced by a desire to atone for their Norwegian affluence and privilege. While my interlocutors cared deeply about the plight of refugees stuck on Europe's border, I further argue that their political interventions were principally motivated by a desire for national redemption. By convincing the Norwegian government to welcome more refugees, they wished to save their country's 'warm' and 'humane' welfare society and restore its national identity as a 'humanitarian superpower'. Finally, we shall see that several volunteers expressed redemptive desires to distance themselves from their government's 'inhumane' treatment of refugees or secure their place on 'the right side of history'. However, desires are not always fulfilled or analogue to experience. In the Conclusion chapter, I thus ask whether helping refugees and advocating on their behalf were truly experienced as redemptive.

The Volunteers

Before I discuss my fieldwork in greater detail, a bit more must be said about the demographic characteristics of my my interlocutors, focusing mainly on Norwegian citizens and volunteers.

As mentioned, DiH was proud to have attracted volunteers from different countries, cultures, generations, backgrounds and professions. However, apart from an increasing number of refugee volunteers, the overwhelming majority of DiH's volunteers came from countries in the Global North. A large minority were also Norwegian citizens (nearly 40 percent in 2018 and 2019 according to DiH's own estimate), though the relative proportion of Norwegian volunteers in Greece varied considerably throughout my fieldwork. Crucially, DiH's Norwegian volunteers came from all of Norway's eleven counties, though the majority lived in the more populated cities in the south.

Volunteers were self-recruited and self-funded. After learning about the organisation and possibly attending an information meeting in Norway, they

contacted DiH via email or registered their 'trip' on the organisation's website. Some applied for positions as 'coordinators', which entailed managing DiH's projects, supervising volunteers on site and communicating with staff in Norway. During my fieldwork, coordinators had to commit to at least two months and ideally have some relevant work experience. In contrast to volunteers, coordinators were provided with shared housing, rental cars and a modest stipend of 300 euros per month to cover food and other essentials.

Besides the self-recruited volunteers and coordinators, DiH also engaged many volunteers among the refugee populations they sought to help. Most were single men in their twenties or thirties, but there were also some women and men who had come to Greece with their partners or families. Following the organisational lingo, these volunteers were 'resident volunteers' or 'community volunteers', but in this book I refer to them as 'refugee volunteers'. They were generally assigned normal volunteer tasks, but because of their cultural and linguistic skills, intimate knowledge of the needs and conditions in the camps, and generally lengthy participation, many assumed key roles as translators and consultants.

Regarding class, DiH's leadership proudly emphasised that the organisation draws volunteers from all professions, as well as a large number of pensioners, students and the unemployed. While my own observations largely support this, the requirement of being completely self-funded created financial barriers, and most DiH volunteers seemed to be relatively resourceful and well-off even by Norwegian standards. The cost of living in Greece is also relatively cheap, which, for most volunteers, facilitated a comfortable lifestyle involving nice accommodation and frequent restaurant visits in the evenings. Many volunteers also came with private funds or donations to spend on DiH's projects in Greece. To borrow from social anthropologist Peter Redfield's study of Doctors Without Borders (MSF), we might say that they were 'materially heavy and socially light', especially compared to the refugee volunteers who were often 'materially light and socially heavy' (Redfield 2012a: 360).

Nevertheless, there were clearly economic differences between volunteers. This was sometimes reflected in their choice of accommodation or willingness to rent a car versus getting rides or using public transport or bikes to get around. While some of my Norwegian interlocutors owned property in Greece or were used to going on vacation abroad every year, others told me they had to save money to afford to volunteer or complained about how expensive it was. These differences seemed to be mostly related to volunteers' age, job status and security. Nevertheless, many of my interlocutors were students or retirees who had more time and flexibility (and apparently enough money) to volunteer. Some were also between jobs or currently unemployed, and a few received disability benefits. Among the working volunteers, the most common professions were teacher and nurse, though I also met several government bureaucrats,

social workers, journalists, psychologists, artists and people working in commerce or finance.

The average age of DiH volunteers in Greece in 2019 was 38.5 years, but the majority came from two age groups: 20–30 and 50+. While most foreign volunteer organisations I encountered in Greece relied heavily on young adults and students, DiH had a comparably large number of volunteers in their late sixties and seventies. Many of these were Norwegian mothers and grandmothers who often had experience volunteering at home but had never previously worked or volunteered abroad or in a crisis situation.

More generally, DiH was also an organisation that appealed specifically to women. While the gender balance was quite even during the early and more frenzied phase of the crisis, recent years saw primarily the engagement of female volunteers (Jumbert 2020). During my fieldwork, approximately 75 percent of DiH's volunteers in Greece were women. Moreover, women were even more over-represented among the domestic staff and volunteers and occupied all of the organisation's leadership roles. As I discuss later, this gender imbalance might be partly explained by Trude's personal story and mobilisation of motherhood, which has had a decisive impact on DiH's work and discourse. While femininity is often associated with affectionate and harmless relations (Wekker 2016), the large number of women and mothers volunteering for DiH also created special power dynamics which occasionally reproduced practices of colonial maternalism (Braun 2017; Sahraoui and Tyszler 2021).

Regarding religious affiliation, I met several volunteers in Greece who identified as Christian and expressed missionary values, but only a few of my Norwegian interlocutors talked openly about their Christian beliefs. Since Norway is a relatively secular country, this was not surprising (on Norwegian secularism, see Bangstad et al. 2011). However, as we shall see, Norwegian values and vocabulary remain deeply influenced by the country's Christian heritage (Bendixsen and Wyller 2019). Apart from refugee volunteers, I only met a handful of volunteers who identified as Muslim (and only two Norwegians). Despite DiH's emphasis on the diversity of their volunteers, the organisation also attracted relatively few volunteers with immigrant or minority backgrounds.

Moreover, DiH's volunteer population was overwhelmingly white, evoking neocolonial imagery of white men and women 'helping' or 'rescuing' black or brown bodies (Spivak 1988; see also Mohanty 1984). Notably, this was rarely problematised among DiH staff and volunteers, who generally had little to say about race. For instance, I almost never heard staff or volunteers reflect on whether DiH embodied or reproduced racial hierarchies and inequalities (Benton 2016). Despite the massive attention to Black Lives Matter and white supremacy in the US, very few of my interlocutors also seemed to acknowledge whiteness as a racial positioning (Wekker 2016). This was particularly the case with the Norwegians who tend to see colour-blindness ('not seeing race') as a

virtue (Harlap and Riese 2021). Indeed, while many of my Norwegian interlocutors reflected on their privileges as Norwegian citizens, only a few understood themselves as members of a racial group that enjoys unearned privileges or 'capital' (Hage 1998; see also Bonilla-Silva 2006). Following gender scholar and anthropologist Gloria Wekker (2016), we might thus say that they displayed a 'white innocence': a satisfying way of being in the world that involves disavowing or evading race, including whiteness – which nevertheless works as an unspoken norm and is connected to privilege, entitlement and national belonging.

Nonetheless, I am wary of tendencies to categorise humanitarian volunteers as (neo)colonial without specifying this further. Significantly, this is not because DiH volunteers' ways of thinking and acting were not influenced by the workings of coloniality (Quijano 2000), but rather that attention to historical and ethnographic specificities is necessary to unpack these dynamics. More specifically, I suggest that DiH staff and volunteers were not only shaped by globalised ideas about race and difference (Loftsdóttir 2020b; Vuorela 2009) and presumptions of white innocence. Drawing on the work of Nordic postcolonial scholars, I argue that they were also influenced by national presumptions of colonial innocence and benevolence (Keskinen et al. 2009, 2019; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012). Briefly summarised, Norwegians typically consider themselves as 'innocent outsiders' of the European colonial project (Gullestad 2006a). This belief is part of what I later describe as a narrative of Norwegian exceptionalism (see Chapter 1) and is frequently made to legitimise the country's self-image as a 'humanitarian superpower', as well as popular ideas of Norway as a small and harmless, anti-racist, peace-loving society (Gullestad 2002; Harlap and Riese 2021). As I will try to show, these assumptions further extend to Greece. As a non-member of the EU remotely located on the north-eastern periphery of the European continent, Norwegians also typically consider their country as outside many intra-European conflicts and power dynamics. This includes what anthropologists have described as central European powers' guardianship over Greece (Herzfeld 2002; Theodossopoulos 2013a) and practices of domination, marginalisation and paternalism directed towards Greece and the Greek people, specifically in the wake of the financial crisis (Cabot 2014; Dalakoglou and Angelopoulos 2018). Here, I suggest that these twofold presumptions of innocence worked to render Norwegian volunteers' presence in Greece harmless and unproblematic in the eyes of many interlocutors – despite the fact that many local Greeks accused northern European volunteers of attracting more refugees, disregarding local needs and colonising their islands (see Chapter 3). As we shall see, presumptions of historical innocence also influenced my interlocutors' political appeals and redemptive national project (see Chapter 6).

Fieldwork

My fieldwork took place between June 2018 and January 2020. During this period, I spent about nine months in Greece conducting participant observation as a full-time volunteer for the organisation on Lesvos (for six months), in Skaramagas refugee camp in Athens (for two months), and Nea Kavala refugee camp in northern Greece (for three weeks). I also spent about three weeks volunteering for two smaller organisations started and run by former DiH volunteers on Chios. My fieldwork in Greece was intimate and all-consuming. As a full-time volunteer, I spent nearly all day working together with other volunteers and often shared transportation, dinner and accommodations with them as well. While sometimes tiring, it was mostly enjoyable and rewarding. As an organisational insider, I could track staff and volunteers' internal discussions and debates, as well as ethical and political dilemmas as they unfolded in response to new policies and needs, identifying both points of contestation and areas seemingly 'beyond debate'. I also had privileged access to volunteers' 'frontstage' and 'backstage' performances (Goffman 1958), including frustrations and gossip and the emergence of new rationales, convictions and doubts.

How we are situated and positioned in the field affects not only what we observe and experience, but also our ability to build relationships and trust with our interlocutors (Hurston 1990; Mogstad and Tse 2018). In my experience, participating in DiH's work as a fellow volunteer was crucial to build trust and gain shared and embodied understanding (Lenhard and Samanani 2020: 22–33). Following anthropologist David Howes, it allowed me to both sense and make sense with my interlocutors (2021: 129).

In addition to sharing cultural intimacy with most interlocutors as a fellow 'drop' and co-national, my position as a long-term and returning volunteer was also significant. For instance, by staying longer than most other volunteers, I became close friends with several coordinators and other 'long-termers'. This was especially fruitful on Lesvos, where coordinators had an inclusive leadership style and often involved me in meetings and discussions. Being a long-term and returning volunteer also enabled me to build friendships and rapport with many refugees, locals and aid workers from other organisations. I became particularly close with some of the refugees volunteering for DiH as we spent many hours together on a daily basis working, chatting, sharing food, drinking tea, playing cards, listening to music and learning each other's languages. While the main characters in this book are Norwegian citizens, some of these refugee volunteers became key interlocutors: not only did they have unique perspectives and experiences of DiH, but they also provided linguistic and cultural translations and clarifications. The arguments in this book are also based on interviews and conversations with other refugees, local Greeks, and

Figure 0.2. • Nea Kavala refugee camp in northern Greece. © Stephen Dover.

humanitarian workers and volunteers from other countries and organisations, reflecting on the past, present and future.

My fieldwork in Norway was simultaneously a study of personal, organisational and national trajectories. I mainly stayed in Oslo, Norway's capital, where DiH's office is based, and many volunteers lived and worked. During this period, I was involved in two large projects for DiH involving research, logistical support and political advocacy. This allowed me to work closely with staff members and domestic volunteers and provided insight into organisational dynamics and bureaucracy. I also hung out with staff and volunteers outside of work and accompanied them on demonstrations, seminars and events, including an annual week-long political festival on the southern coast of Norway. Finally, I travelled across the country to meet and interview volunteers in their homes and communities.

During the course of my research, I conducted around fifty interviews with volunteers, coordinators and staff. On average, the interviews lasted around two hours, but could occasionally go for much longer or take place over several meetings. The majority of interviewees were people I already knew from volunteering or working together in Greece or Norway. Often we had shared powerful and everyday experiences and had many common friends and acquaintances. This helped to create an informal and intimate atmosphere and elicited retrospective contemplation and expression of personal qualms and emotions, as well as gossip and critique. It also made it possible for me to compare my interlocutors' responses during the interview with their unsolicited accounts and opinions expressed while volunteering. I also interviewed some volunteers whom I had not met before but knew had interesting stories or

experiences to share. While the limitations of interviews became more visible in these instances, I found, like Malkki, that we had enough shared experiences and understanding to facilitate 'intersubjective, ethnographic engagement' (2015: 22). Like the Finnish aid workers Malkki interviewed, many volunteers also 'needed to talk' and described our interviews as therapeutic or cathartic (ibid.: 6).

While conducting fieldwork in Norway, I also followed the 'flow of movement of public life' (Navaro-Yashin 2002), focusing specifically on Norway's asylum and immigration politics. In practice, this meant that I observed and analysed political events, speeches and debates in social and mainstream media and the parliament. I also spent considerable time communicating with volunteers and refugees via social media. Moreover, I followed DiH's official website, blog and Facebook page, Facebook groups for previous volunteers, and staff and volunteers' personal blogs and Facebook pages. As criminologist Mareile Kaufmann observes, 'social media is not only a place where useful information is circulated but where emotions are expressed and dealt with' (2015: 975). Moreover, the internet was an embodied and embedded part of my interlocutors' everyday life (Hine 2015) and often a space for political activism and performances (Chouliaraki 2013; Frosh and Pincheski 2009). While not initially a part of my research design, digital ethnography (Horst and Miller 2012) thus became a central part of my fieldwork. I also examined the organisation's material culture and self-representation as found in written reports, brochures, the organisation's logo, shifting slogans, apparel, merchandise and other branding efforts.

Crucially, some anthropologists have warned about 'NGO-dependent anthropology' and called for more analytical distance (Sampson 2017). From their perspective, the issue is not only that NGOs try to influence the anthropologist's views and observations. In most places and situations, it is also NGOs that present the anthropologist to the field, and the field to the anthropologist (ibid.). As Katherine Lemons (2017) argues, it is difficult to maintain an independent and critical voice in such a complicated environment. Moreover, after gaining trust, anthropologists working with NGOs are confronted with complex ethical dilemmas regarding what to reveal and which voices to amplify, knowing that an unflattering picture might jeopardise an NGO's reputation or ability to secure access or funding (Bornstein 2017). Following on from this, I emphasise the power relations that enabled my research, and recognise that they might have directed both my analytical gaze and sympathies. Moreover, my status as an organisational insider did not merely facilitate access and trust; it also foreclosed other spaces and conversations, thus marginalising the voices and perspectives of other people and lifeworlds (Cabot 2016; Sampson 2017). Nevertheless, I concur with those who maintain that deep engagement, not only with the NGO but also the cause they are advocating for, often provides

Figure 0.3. • Participant observation: Heidi Mogstad boat spotting on Lesvos. Heidi Mogstad's personal collection.

richer and more nuanced insight (Woomer 2017). As Catherine Trundle (2018) argues, this is true even if – or perhaps precisely because – it can make the ethnographer feel uncomfortable and complicit.

Ethics

As alluded to above, my close and long-term relationship with DiH had ethical bearings on my research. So too did the fact that much of my research involved

interactions with marginalised or over-researched populations (refugees and residents in Moria village in particular). A few general points should be highlighted. First, I approached research ethics as an ongoing and interactive process involving continuous reflection, situated judgement and open-ended dialogue with my interlocutors (Posel and Ross 2015). However, while sharing many of my interlocutors' concerns and convictions, I did not agree with everything the organisation or individual staff and volunteers said or did. Rather than concealing my disagreement, I tried to be present in the field as a 'welcome self' whose person and beliefs are 'enabling and hosting, rather than dominant yet absent' (Green 2005: 98; see also Woomer 2017). While this approach sometimes resulted in mutual learning and reflection (Schneider 2020: 636), not all tensions and disagreements were resolved. Although reflecting on these frictions can be revealing, I have chosen to foreground my interlocutors' internal debates and critiques – some of which echo my own. However, in Chapters 5 and 6, I address a few of my personal qualms and disagreements.

Secondly, I have tried to be reflexive about my subject position as a white, Norwegian student and anthropologist from Cambridge University, and the larger political-economic structures and histories I am implicated in (Cabot 2019; Posel and Ross 2015). While I cannot escape my complicity with the border regime/industry (Andersson 2014), I tried my best not to reinforce practices of domination and intrusion in my research. In practice, this meant that I did not push refugees and locals for interviews or access and was sensitive to the changing atmosphere in my field site. In 2016, many refugees and locals were eager to tell their stories and commonly urged volunteers to share their experiences with the world. However, recent years have been characterised by increasing hopelessness and crisis fatigue (see Chapter 1). During my fieldwork, several refugees and locals (on Lesvos in particular) also said they were sick and tired of sharing their stories with journalists and researchers. While I was clearly interested in hearing their voices and experiences, I thus tried to respect their silences (Ross 2003) and rights to refusal (Simpson 2007) or opacity (Cabot 2016).

I also tried to find tangible and practical ways to assist my refugee interlocutors beyond regular volunteering. Following anthropologist and public health researcher Christopher Colvin (2015: 74), I consider such efforts a form of compensation or 'fair return' that can 'fill the space between abstract knowledge and direct payment and exchange'. I further hope that some of the knowledge I have produced and disseminated to wider audiences has or can inform humanitarian work or refugee advocacy in Norway or elsewhere. As anthropologists, we cannot expect that our scholarship will make a difference on its own. However, as Cabot (2019) maintains, engaging in different forms of action outside the academy is one way of addressing – though not escaping – the discipline's complicity with the border regime (see also Gullestad 2006b).

In writing this book, I have also tried to exercise care and some restraint so as to not inflict unnecessary harm (Abu-Lughod 2016; Tsing 2005). This is manifested in different narrative decisions, including portraying my interlocutors as historical beings with complex personhood and capacity to learn and change. (Boochani 2019; Faier 2009). Following Lieba Faier (2009), I have also used the past tense rather than the 'ethnographic present' to indicate that things were said in the moment and might thus no longer hold true for people whose ideas about themselves and the world are in constant flux.

Further, this is not an exposé, but rather an attempt to describe some of the moral, institutional and political complexities of DiH's humanitarian and advocacy work (cf. Cabot 2019: 271). Apart from DiH and Trude (whom I, in dialogue with the organisation, judged to be impossible to anonymise due to their public role in Norwegian society), all interlocutors have been given fictitious names, and I have occasionally changed or omitted details to protect their confidentiality. When requested, or dealing with personal or sensitive information, my interlocutors were further offered a chance to read and object to my representations of them (Mosse 2006). Cognisant of the politics of citation, I have also engaged with the work of many Greek scholars, too often misrecognised in contemporary accounts of humanitarianism and migration in Greece (Cabot 2019; Rozakou 2019).

Last, I have tried to remain accessible and responsive to the people on whose time and generosity my research depended, rather than seek a clean break or 'cut the networks' of fieldwork (Strathern 1996) to make space and time for writing. This was not always easy and raised difficult questions about where (if at all) my obligations end. Like the Norwegian staff and volunteers on whom this book centres, I have had to negotiate competing and unresolved responsibilities and often felt uneasy and ambivalent about my own role and work.

More than anything, my fieldwork has thus taught me that NGO anthropology can be seductive but also complicated and messy. However, in this messiness lies the potential for new insights and arguably more ethical research (Sampson 2017: 4; see also Trundle 2018).

Chapter Outline

In this Introduction, I have presented the organisation under study and described by main research questions and contributions. I have also outlined my methodological, theoretical and conceptual framework, including the two key terms that make up the title of this book: 'humanitarian shame' and 'redemption'. Finally, I have discussed my fieldwork and some of the ethical quandaries I encountered and wrestled with during and after my fieldwork.

The remainder of this book is organised as follows. Chapter 1 contextualises the study by describing the emergence of a new humanitarian geography and assemblage of humanitarian actors in Europe. I also discuss how the 'refugee crisis' has affected political dynamics and reinforced tensions and divisions across Europe, focusing mainly on my two field sites: Greece and Norway. Chapter 2 unpacks Trude's personal story of 'revelation' and 'transformation'. After providing an ethnographic analysis of the founder's call to help in her daughter's bedroom, I argue that the story serves as a founding myth for DiH and show that it does important work for the organisation. Chapter 3 traces DiH's organisational trajectory from spontaneous volunteering to 'NGOisation' and shifting and contentious efforts to fill humanitarian gaps in the context of growing encampment, criminalisation and local resistance. I further highlight some of the ethical and political debates and dilemmas that have followed, focusing especially on the question of professionalisation and the risks of depoliticisation and normalisation. Chapter 4 examines DiH's widespread appeal among Norwegian citizens. I focus particularly on the impact of the founder's personal story and character, but also analyse the work of DiH's organisational model and imagery.

Chapter 5 examines and complicates DiH's transformation narrative by discussing my interlocutors' ambivalent experiences of returning home to Norway after volunteering and negotiating different worlds and relationships. I specifically highlight volunteers' intensified feelings of shame and estrangement and ask what these feelings *do* to my interlocutors and their relationships to the nation, friends and family and other co-nationals. Chapter 6 examines DiH's political turn and efforts to 'wake up' and shame the Norwegian public and politicians into action through witnessing and campaigning. Drawing on the work of Israeli anthropologist Nitzan Shoshan (2016), I argue that DiH can be understood as an affective public advancing a *competing national project*, but highlight my interlocutors' 'sticky attachments' (Ahmed 2014) to hegemonic national and humanitarian imaginaries. The book's Conclusion summarises and discusses the implications of my main findings before reflecting on the redemptive potential of volunteering. It ends with an epilogue in which I consider some of the developments that took place in the aftermath of my fieldwork, including the fire that burned down Moria camp, COVID-19 and Russia's escalation of the war in Ukraine.

Terminology and Translations

Before I proceed, a few words must be said about language and terminology. Writing about asylum and migration politics is fraught with ethical and political dilemmas, several revolving around terminology. In the context of this book, two of my terminological choices in particular need explanation. First,

I frequently refer to the 'refugee crisis' despite the many convincing critiques of 'crisiology' in general (De Lauri 2019; Ramsay 2019; Roitman 2014) and the notion of a 'European refugee crisis' in particular (Cabot 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). I have chosen this mainly because the 'refugee crisis' (*flyktningkrisen*) remained a central emic concept throughout my fieldwork. Prevalent in my interlocutors' personal narratives and political appeals, but also Norwegian public life and political debate, the notion of the 'refugee crisis' shaped my interlocutors' engagement and sharpened the political discourse and fault lines in Norwegian society (Bendixsen and Wyller 2019). To avoid this concept entirely would thus be a missed opportunity to engage with my interlocutors' experience of moral awakening and rupture and cloud my analysis of political debates and developments in Norway (see also El-Shaarawi and Razsa 2019; Rozakou 2019). I nevertheless put 'refugee crisis' in quotation marks to recognise the Eurocentric assumptions and depoliticising and de-historicising effects of the term. I also examine some of the limitations of 'crisiology' in Chapter 6.

Second, I generally refer to the people crossing the Mediterranean to apply for asylum in Europe as refugees, though I occasionally also use other terms, including asylum seekers and people on the move. I use the term refugees hesitantly, as I am cognisant of the risk of homogenising the experiences of people on the move (Malkki 1995) and reproducing violent hierarchies casting migrants as undeserving or 'undesirable leftovers' (Carling 2017). While other researchers have used alternative terms to mitigate these risks, including 'forced nomads' (Fassin 2018), 'border crossers' (Kalir and Rozakou 2016; Cabot 2019) or 'life seekers' (Pallister-Wilkins 2018), I use refugees because this is what my interlocutors used to describe themselves or the people they sought to help. However, in contrast to the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), Al Jazeera and most of my interlocutors, I do not consider refugees and migrants as mutually exclusive categories. Instead, I take what migration scholar Jørgen Carling (2017) describes as an 'inclusivist view'. That is, I consider migrants as an umbrella term to describe everyone who has left their place of residence, irrespective of reason, but has not completed the legal process of claiming asylum. According to this view, the term migrants includes refugees and other people on the move whose life stories and motivations defy such neat categories. Hence, I occasionally write 'refugees and other migrants' but not 'refugees and migrants'. As Carling (2017) underscores, this choice of terminology does not undermine the right to seek asylum, as it recognises that all migrants might have protection needs or a well-founded fear of persecution, as stipulated by the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, it also avoids reproducing hierarchies of suffering and worthiness, including those stipulated by the convention.

Finally, a few words about translations. All interviews with Norwegian staff and volunteers were conducted in Norwegian and transcribed and translated

into English by me. Extracts from public speeches, Facebook posts, blogs and newspaper op-eds have also been translated from Norwegian to English unless otherwise indicated. As mentioned in the acknowledgements section, I was assisted by several Greek, Arabic and Farsi-speaking volunteers and coordinators in translating interviews, conversations and texts in these languages. However, I only specify this when using direct quotations. Norwegian and other non-English words and phrases are italicised with my English translation put in brackets (or vice versa).

Notes

1. While the situation on the Greek Islands was dramatic, it was not unprecedented. Due to its geopolitical location, Lesvos has been one of the most important gateways for asylum seekers to Europe since at least the mid-2000s (Cabot 2014; Papadimitriou and Papageorgiou 2005). Moreover, local residents provided hospitality and rescue for years prior to the arrival of large groups of foreign helpers in the summer of 2015 (Rozakou 2016; Trubeta 2015). What was new and unprecedented on Lesvos that year, therefore, was neither the arrival of boat refugees nor the care provided to them, but the scale and pace of the arrivals, and the surge in global attention and people arriving from the Global North to offer assistance (Knott 2018).
2. While this book focuses on volunteer humanitarianism in Europe, similar initiatives and organisations have emerged in other borderlands, including the US-Mexican border (Gomez et al. 2020) and the Thai-Burmese border (Chaisinthop 2017; see also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto 2016).
3. Observing the tendency of liberal philosophers and contemporary anthropologists to reduce ethics to a question of personal desires or self-cultivation, anthropologist Harri Englund suggests that both of these perspectives 'regard human relationships as secondary to human existence' (2008: 36). In doing so, they also overlook the existential importance of moral obligation, which itself is constitutive of, rather than external to, the person who gives or cares (ibid.).
4. The problem with treating 'anthropology at home' as a straightforward matter is partly that notions of 'nativity' and 'home' are entangled with nationalist discourses and imaginaries linking culture and affinity with a whole nation and territory (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 14; Vike 2018: 31–50). Moreover, my disciplinary training and 'home' in anthropology and the social sciences resulted in epistemic gaps and frictions that created distance and the need for clarification or translation (cf. Strathern 1987).
5. This term is inspired by the Indian postcolonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential call to 'provincialize Europe' (Chakrabarty 2000) and has generally been used by scholars interested in challenging Eurocentrism or decentring Europe in their scholarly work and theories of the world. However, like other anthropologists (Bendixsen and Sandberg 2021; Weiss 2015), I use the term here as a more general call to localise humanitarianism through empirical studies and historicisation (see also Chapter 1).
6. By drawing a sharp distinction between affect and emotions, affect scholars like Brian Massumi (2002) and Nigel Thrift (2008) have been able to declare a theoretical shift

or turn, and thus their own work as novel and original. However, this 'affective turn' has misrecognised many feminist scholars whose work on emotions, politics and racism do not operate with this binary, in part because it has depoliticising and de-historicising effects (Liljeström 2016; Navaro 2017).