

FORCED MIGRANTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

BETWEEN TRANSIT AND SETTLEMENT

Not since the aftermath of World War II has the world witnessed as many forcibly displaced people as today, with over 79.5 million refugees and displaced people worldwide. During 2015 Europe witnessed 950,469 arrivals through the Mediterranean. Across the EU region, migrants and asylum seekers face pushbacks at borders, unlawful and/or degrading detention, containment in specific designated areas and local measures designed to create a hostile environment by limiting or denying access to basic humanitarian and protection services.

AIMS

Conceived as a multi-sited ethnography and involving research sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, this research project will look into realities of the refugee shelters, asylum seeker centers and transit points. Conducted within forced migrant groups, humanitarian organizations and local communities through which the migrants have been transiting, or where they have settled (or 'got stuck in transit') on a temporary or long-term basis unable to continue their journeys to the desired destinations in Europe. This study will be the first regional study of this kind, evaluating the effects of forced displacement in relation to migratory experiences and outcomes for people on the move across three "transit" countries in the Western Balkans region.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the realities of day to day life for forced migrants on the move in the Balkans?
- How is the ongoing flow of people through the Balkans to the EU perceived, interpreted and dealt with in practice and policy?
- How has the European refugee crisis become a political crisis for the Balkan countries and the communities hosting (albeit often unwillingly) the 'illegal migrants'?
- What are the impacts of poor public policy resulting in protracted stay on displaced communities and what does this mean for the future?

METHODOLOGY



Acquire permissions and access



Participant Observation



1 on 1 semi-structured interviews to develop personal narratives



Photo-Voice



Collect archival data



Code and analyze data

IMPACT

To understand the range of issues faced by forced migrants in order to comprehend the lived experiences and needs of these groups and so develop more appropriate and effective policy and properly targeted humanitarian responses particularly concerning psychosocial, mental health and integration support.

To humanise the ongoing conflicts and wars in the Middle East to promote tolerance and integration through awareness raising and education.

To contribute to debates concerning forced migration in both National and International contexts, including advocating for the development of sensitive timebound refugee policies grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and calling the EU to action on a funded solution of shared responsibility.

Evidence to publicly contest the current response of multilateral agencies, Government's and other social and political institutions concerning the plight of forced migrants trapped behind Europe's closed borders.

Principle Supervisor | Associate Professor Hariz Hallilovich
Supervisor | Dr Alexis Bergantz
GUSS PhD Student | Nadeane Heiajzen