

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL MEDIA AND REFUGEE
CRISIS IN EUROPE

A CASE STUDY ON TRAIN OF HOPE

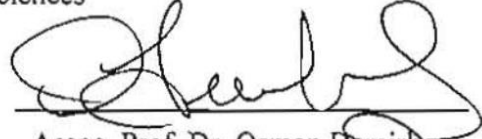
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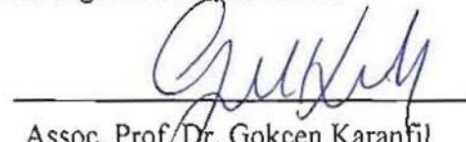
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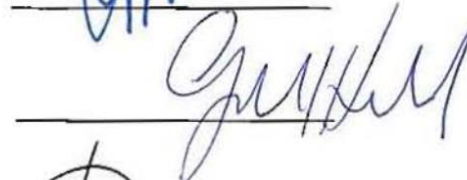

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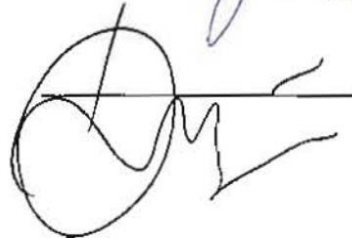
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ABSTRACT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL MEDIA AND REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE CASE STUDY OF TRAIN OF HOPE

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The refugee crisis in Europe that started at the end of summer 2015 is marked by how EU policy makers and EU at large failed to respond jointly to a humanitarian crisis on its soil. On the other hand it also showed that where governments fall short, civil society can take a lead. By looking at a self-organized group of volunteers helping refugees at the train station in Vienna, Austria and on the borders, this thesis analyzes how ordinary people in times of crisis using ICTs and social media in particular, were empowered to an off-line collective action. Furthermore, the thesis looks at how social media was enhancing the mobilization and organization of the help to refugees. Thus, the thesis attempts to show, how people enhanced by social media and by networks facilitated peer to peer mentality and crowdfunding solutions created out of their simple, but powerful collective sense of humanity towards refugees an organization, which was contesting the limits and constraints of conventional organizational forms such as can be represented by policy makers and governments. In order to analyze this, semi-structured in-depth interviews with five members of the group, Train of Hope, have been conducted and complemented by participant observations and qualitative content analysis of Facebook and Twitter accounts of Train of Hope. As a conclusion of this thesis it can be claimed that ordinary people can have the power to change things and even challenge already for years established institutions and their constraints. This power is supported by the network society we live in with its profound presence of ICTs and in particular social media.

Keywords: civic engagement, social movements, social media, ICTs, peer to peer networks, network society, Train of Hope, refugees, Europe



ÖZET

YURTTAŞ KATILIMI, SOSYAL MEDYA VE AVRUPA'DA MÜLTECİ KRİZİ UMUT TRENİ ÜZERİNE BİR VAKA İNCELEMESİ

Másová, Sabina

Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları

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Avrupa'nın 2015 yazının sonunda karşı karşıya kaldığı mülteci krizi, AB politika yapıcılarının ve daha genel anlamda AB'nin bütününün kendi topraklarındaki insani bir krize uygun bir yanıt üretmek konusundaki yetersizliğini ortaya koydu. Öte yandan bu kriz, hükümetlerin yetersiz kaldığı noktalarda sivil toplumun öncü bir rol üstleneileceğini de gösterdi. Viyana merkez tren garında ve sınırlarda topraklarına ayak basan mültecilere yardımcı olmak amacıyla kendiliğinden organize olan ve kendi kendisini finanse eden gönüllü gruplarına odaklanan bu çalışma, sıradan insanların bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileriyle sosyal medyayı kullanarak kriz anlarında insanlara nasıl yardım edebildiğini incelemektedir. Online araçların mültecilere yardım etmek bakımından yarattığı mobilizasyon ve örgütlenme kapasitesi de yine bu tezin kapsamı dahilinde yer almaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada günümüzün uçtan uca (*peer to peer*) ilişkilere ve kitle fonlamasına (*crowdfunding*) dayalı ağ toplumlarında insanların insanlık kavrayışına duydukları basit ama güçlü kolektif bağlılığın mülteciler bakımından yarattığı etkiler, hükümetlerin ve politika yapıcılarının alışlagelmiş örgütlenme biçimlerinin sınırlarını aşması ve yeni bir toplumsal hareket anlayışı ortaya koyması bağlamında konu edilecektir. Bu incelemeyi gerçekleştirmek amacıyla kendi kendisine örgütlenen *Umut Treni* hareketinden beş temsilciyle yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yapılmış, buna ek olarak katılımcı gözlem tekniği kullanılmıştır. Sıradan insanların bir şeyleri değiştirme ve uzun geçmişlere sahip kurumların sınırlılıklarını aşabilme gücüne sahip oldukları gerçeği, bu tezin en belirgin sonucu olarak ortaya koyulabilir. Sıradan insanların

elinde tuttuđu bu güç ise günümüzün medya ve iletişim teknolojileriyle ve sosyal medyayla iç içe geçmiş ağ toplumunun bir sonucudur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: yurttaş katılımı, toplumsal hareketler, sosyal medya, medya ve iletişim teknolojileri, uçtan uca ağlar, ağ toplumu, Umut Treni, mülteciler, Avrupa



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.' Margaret Mead

1.1. Background statement

The movements of people, either forced in the case of refugees, or voluntary as in the case of migrants have been a part of various periods in history while shaping society for years. People have been part of smaller or larger movements from one place to another locally as well as globally. As a matter of fact, globalization is seen as one of the factors in the changing pattern of movement of people due to the improved transportation and communication systems. However, the impact of globalization on movements is not always a positive one and bound in parallel with global opportunities by global scale. According to Cetti (2012) neoliberal globalization creates 'global insiders', citizens who have the unconditional freedom to move around the world, but on the other, also 'global outsiders', whose movement and also existence are condemned as 'illegal' or even threatening (p.19). Cetti could not predict the future, but her theory of 'global insiders' and 'global outsiders' could not be more fitting nowadays with the movement of people to Europe.

In 2015 more than one million refugees arrived to the shores of Europe.¹ Many of them in 'smuggler boats' in an attempt to arrive in Europe but only to find tragic destinies at the sea or endure harsh treatment of police at the borders of some European countries. The wide scale influx of refugees within just a few months has caught Europe and especially its leaders in the European Union (EU) unprepared. Since the 'outbreak' this movement has been regarded as a refugee crisis, largest since the end of WWII. At this stage it is important for me to note that while I consider the movement of people that has happened and still is as a mixed migratory flow, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, throughout the thesis I will refer to the phenomenon that started in summer 2015 as a 'refugee crisis'. First of all, 'refugee' considering the majority of people are people fleeing war or other life threatening conditions and secondly 'crisis' because it became a polarizing 'issue' worrying supranational and national governments and the public in Europe due to its scale and speed. In particular, it has unleashed problems of unity in the EU regarding how to handle the crisis and mainly how to help people in need. Furthermore, it led to disputes about the matters of immigration policies, fair share of refugees among EU countries and opening up the weak spots of the *Common European Asylum System*.

During the biggest peak of the influx of refugees in the months of August, September and October 2015, the European Union has kept a rather low profile in addressing real attempts of helping incoming refugees. On the other hand, why I also decided to engage in a study based on the refugee crisis in Europe, is that unlike many governments, like my own in Slovakia, that showed a hard-line stance towards refugees, there are in the EU individuals- philanthropic actors, volunteers and organized groups of citizens that showed empathy, solidarity and humanity. They proved actions over words and cultural openness over 'national sentiments'. In a bigger picture they were contesting the notorious 'Fortress Europe' notion and conventional institutional organizational structures.

The scope and interest behind my thesis is about a phenomenon that I have observed during the current refugee crisis. This phenomenon is the emergence or 'awakening' of civil society in the form of self-organized volunteers, groups and individual

¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

philanthropic actors, who were actively engaged during the refugee crisis with newcomers. Assisted by the pervasive use of social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter civic engagement of ordinary people for the help of refugees became possible and multiplied.

Due to the outstanding examples of the use of social media during the Arab Spring or Occupy movements we already know that social media has a wide scope of tools that are not only used for personal purposes and entertainment, but also for reaching social and political changes in a collective action manner. (Castells, 2015; Kavada 2015). Sometimes activism via social media is dismissed as 'slacktivism' where change happens only in the online sphere. However, what I am going to argue in my thesis is that online activism was interlinked with real change outside of the online environment. That, in fact, social media platforms, enhance people in their efforts to bring an off-line change, namely to help refugees in the current refugee crisis.

The engagement of people in Europe with and for refugees emerged with the simple #refugeeswelcome hashtag. In the yearly Twitter overview this hashtag has been, in fact, rated as one of the most influential hashtags of 2015.² In the Austrian capital, Vienna, individuals of different ages, cultural and religious backgrounds- volunteers at the end of August 2015 also gathered under the motto #refugeeswelcome on the Vienna Main Railway Station, but not only to show symbolic solidarity on social media, but to live these words day by day as many more refugees started to arrive to the train station. The diverse groups of ordinary people found a common ground to offer help and assistance to refugees in need. As their name Train of Hope (ToH) suggests, they were giving refugees hope with an active welcome culture, quick and non-complicated unbureacracic support and civic engagement in different spheres.

Due to social media, this group of ordinary people was able to find each other to form a self-organizing and self-sustainable organization. An organization which resembles Internet itself as a linear, non-hierarchical structure and a type of organization so pervasive for how things can be organized in a new way in a network

² <https://2015.twitter.com/most-influential>

society. As noted by Manuel Castells information and communication technologies (ICTs) facilitate new types of networks (2010):

...while networks are an old form of organization in the human experience, digital networking technologies, characteristic of the Information Age, powered social and organizational networks in ways that allowed their endless expansion and reconfiguration, overcoming the traditional limitations of networking forms of organization to manage complexity beyond a certain size of the network (p. xvii)

The utilization of social media aided functioning of such group of people via crowd-funded and peer based solutions to help and assist refugees. Solutions which in today's world embedded in networking can serve as examples that using social media as online tools for an off-line change can work hand in hand. Moreover, that in crisis situations such solutions formed via social media by ordinary people can outrun more institutionalized solutions.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

The goal of this thesis is to understand civic engagement of ordinary people assisted by ICTs in general and social media platforms in particular, during the refugee crisis. This aim will be addressed by the following research objectives:

- to explore the role of social media in mobilizing people to help during the refugee crisis
- to understand the role of social media in organizing and managing human and material resources in order to help refugees
- to explore the ways in which social media can be utilized as crisis management and crisis relief responses by ordinary people
- to understand how social media affects the actual off-line participation of people
- to explain how peer based networks of people can with the pervasive use of social media and crowd-funded solutions serve as a new form of organizational structure
- to enhance the understanding of the use and possibilities of use of social media by self-functioning and self-sustaining organizations

1.3. Importance of the thesis

While previous research studies in the context of ICTs and migration were based on the role of social media in facilitating migration (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012) or studies of the importance of new media among transnational and diasporic individuals in connecting them with homeland country (McGregor & Siegel, 2013). Only a few studies have focused on how social media can facilitate the interaction between locals and newcomers (refugees, migrants) during 'crisis' events. My thesis contributes to field of social media that looks specifically into the engagement of citizens during crisis while extending this research branch with my case study based on a humanitarian crisis. There are some similarities to Harlow's research (2014) on how immigrants rights activists and advocates in the U.S. employ digital communication tools and conceive of their usefulness for aiding or even engendering – activism. I research the issue of European citizen engagement with newcomers (refugees and migrants) though social media and the role social media play in offline engagement. I believe it is necessary to research this field to know whether social media can, in fact, facilitate and motivate offline engagement of locals towards refugees and migrants and help them move beyond the sphere of the online environment.

Furthermore, this study can enrich online activism's research area that is a proponent of the power of social media to help enact real social change. The movement of people to Europe that started to peak during the late summer of 2015 has been just a beginning, as many conflicts including the Syrian civil war or tensions in sub-Saharan Africa are ongoing. Most likely months and even years will be marked by further movements that are going to challenge Europe in large, but also citizens in particular. Thus the know-how of civil society responses towards refugees and migrants like Train of Hope, that combine online and offline activities, can lead to a future pattern and good example of how to effectively apply social media into real life engagement during humanitarian crisis.

1.4. Methodology

In order to collect primary source data I will apply qualitative research methods. Qualitative research according to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) "is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds" (p. 3). The refugee crisis in Europe has been and is about people (refugees, migrants and locals), their actions, which is the volunteering or activism and beliefs in solidarity and humanity. As expressed by Merriam (2009) in qualitative research "rather than determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population, we might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved" (p. 5). While it is possible to engage in quantitative research for the topic of refugee crisis in Europe, to give numbers and volumes to what is happening, in order to understand the different aspects and dimensions that relate to the refugee crisis I prefer to take a holistic approach that qualitative methods is more appropriate for.

Within the scope of qualitative research for obtaining primary source data I conduct face to face in-depth interviews. According to deMarrais and Lapan (2004):

An interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. These questions usually ask participants for their thoughts, opinions, perspectives, or description of specific experiences (p. 54).

Futhermore as Seidman says (2006) "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). Volunteers have been part of civic engagement towards refugees from the beginning, have been at the heart of the refugee crisis, reliving every day the scope of the crisis, they have actively and intensively engaged online and offline, thus they can within an interview provide direct first hand information that might not be possible to otherwise access within quantitative research methods.

Despite the fact that my interviews have been unstructured, key topics discussed have been focusing, firstly, on the volunteers themselves. Our conversations have revolved around questions such as, how they got engaged with Train of Hope, if they volunteered before Train of Hope and how was the lived experience of being part of this organization for them. This has been complemented by questions to discover the nature and structure of the organization. For instance I have asked them how was everything organized and managed, how many people were part of Train of Hope and how many refugees have been helped and taken care of. The second key topic discussed with the interviewees has been regarding the social media platforms at Train of Hope. We discussed for what purposes was social media being used, what role social media played in daily usage and overall in Train of Hope, what sort of information was being communicated via social media platforms, and how were the social media activities interlinked with offline participation of volunteers. Thirdly, we discussed with the interviewees the general context of the refugee crisis and its dimensions in Austria, and the effects of the refugee crisis on civil society in Austria and in particular on the civic engagement of people involved in Train of Hope.

The interviews have been conducted during the months of February and March of 2016 with overall five people.³ One of them was the founding member of Train of Hope, two local Austrian volunteers, one volunteer that has been at the same time a refugee and currently an asylum seeker and lastly, local Austrian volunteer at the organization and at the same time a volunteer on the borders of Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. Three of the interviews have been conducted personally and two interviews via video calling. Each of the interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes and all the data from interviews have been afterwards transcribed.⁴

First source data obtained via interviews has been, furthermore, complemented by participant observations. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989) as cited in Kawulich (2005) observation is "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79). As stated in deMarrais and Lapan (2004) participant research requires to some extent a social participation in order to document or record some ongoing event and the researcher participates in this event in order to observe (p. 163). At the end of December 2015 I have spent one

³ In order to protect the identity of the interviewees all the names have been changed to pseudonyms

⁴ Full transcription of the data from the interviews can be found in the appendix

day at the main train station where Train of Hope has been operating to get a better insight and idea on how the actual help to refugees has been executed.

Moreover, in the analysis part of my thesis I conducted qualitative content analysis of Facebook and Twitter accounts of Train of Hope. I analyzed particular features of these social media as these platforms have been the most commonly and widely used social media in Train of Hope. Train of Hope has been using also Youtube as a channel for presenting videos about volunteers and refugees to its fans and followers, however in comparison with the wide and daily usage of Facebook and Twitter, Youtube channel was used less and the interaction with fans and followers was limited on Youtube, therefore I have not focused on this platform.

On Facebook I have firstly focused on the general nature of the posts since the beginning of Train of Hope in September 2015 until late December 2015 in order to get to know what kind of information is Train of Hope communicating to its fans and followers, and what kind of content is being produced by Train of Hope. Secondly, I have focused on the rating and experience feature of Facebook in order to have an understanding of the direct on-spot experience of former volunteers at Train of Hope and have an understanding of the popularity of Train of Hope among the general public. Moreover via Facebook donate button I focused also on Train of Hope's Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign to understand if and how many people engaged in pure online based civic engagement. Due to the limitations of the thesis I have not looked at the comment section of the posts on Facebook.

On Twitter, I have looked on the Train of Hope account and focused on tweets and retweets starting in September 2015 until and going late December 2015. Before its official establishment as an organization, Train of Hope consisted of individuals who interacted online and off-line. Therefore, in addition to the official Twitter account of Train of Hope, I have also focused on the Twitter account of the founding member of Train of Hope, Amanda, who was one of the first people to tweet about volunteering and helping refugees at the train station. Even further, in order to have a better understanding of the volunteering experience of an individual volunteer on the border, I have focused on Robert's Twitter account (one of my interviewees) to find out what information and content he was communicating. Since the other interviewees that I talked with had not been tweeting anything from their personal

accounts during the time of their volunteering at the train station, I have not considered other Twitter accounts.

Secondary source data have been obtained from studies, books and articles already on the topics of migration, globalization, social media, social movements, civic engagement and online activism. Official statistics on refugee income to Europe and movements of people and articles written on the current refugee crisis will be consulted.

1.5. Limitations

Although the thesis was carefully prepared, I am aware of its limitations and shortcomings. First of all, due to the constant motion of the nature of the refugee crisis generally and Train of Hope in particular, which brought an acute change as suddenly the flux of refugees to the train station at the beginning of November 2015 started to drop and was as I did my observation in January 2016 almost completely stopped, it was not for me possible to get the full grasp of the physical space as it was when Train of Hope was on the peak of the helping. Thus, to portray in-depth to the reader the train station and how this space has been appropriated by the people that were part of Train of Hope in order to help refugees I see as one of the main shortcomings.

Secondly, due to the time limitation and the fact that Train of Hope was using actively two social media channels my thesis lacks an in-depth analysis of Facebook. Facebook itself is offering to people that decide to take this tool for their civic engagement numerous features, options and tools. In my thesis I have looked only on one particular Facebook group, which was the main public group of Train of Hope. Although, Train of Hope was using internally many Facebook groups which served for internal communication among members of Train of Hope for my thesis I have not considered opening a subsection on these groups due to the insufficient information provided by the interviewees on this particular topic when I conducted my interviews. Furthermore, on Train of Hopes Facebook page even though it included multiscoped content and various posts, I have looked only on certain types of posts, which were connected to the way social media presence helped in certain

way to boost Train of Hope, this particular posts that I looked on have been the missing people posts and ratings of the experiences of people with volunteering at Train of Hope. Thus, I see the lack of a in-depth analysis of other types of posts on Facebook page of Train of Hope as another shortcoming of this thesis.

Thirdly, I am aware that social movements studies focus not only on cultural implications of social movements, as theoreticized in this thesis, but as well on the political economy perspective. I am aware of the more critical approaches that are conceptualizing and analyzing the current mobilizations through the prism of the political economy, however, due to the limitations my thesis neglects these approaches.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, in which the background statement, the overall purpose of the thesis, importance, methodology and the structure are described and explained. The following two chapters are outlining the theoretical framework. In Chapter Two I am engaging the relevant literature based on migration history to Europe, European Union policies on migration, refugees and asylum seekers. Chapter Two presents, furthermore, the background of the current refugee crisis and its dimensions. Chapter three is based on discussing relevant theoretical concepts regarding network society, social media, social movements, online activism and civic engagement. Chapter Four offers analysis and results of the conducted in-depth interview with the association Train of Hope, their use of social media in mobilizing citizens and helping refugees offline. The final chapter includes a summary of the research findings, draws conclusions and proposes recommendations regarding future research.

CHAPTER II

THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE AND ASYLUM/REFUGEE POLICIES IN THE EU

2.1. Europe and population movements in history

The scope of this thesis includes the refugee movements to Europe, particularly the current refugee crisis. However, in order to comprehend it and understand why Europe became a destination for mobile people, it is imperative to briefly remember how forced and voluntary migration to and within Europe evolved through recent history. This is important because the current influx of refugees has occurred onto these experiences of Europe with mobile populations. Due to the limitations of the thesis, I will suffice to very briefly remind the reader of the history of migration to Europe.

For Europe one of the first encounters with migration has been from 16th Century onwards during the colonization period in form of slavery and discoveries of the 'New World'. However it was the events of the World War II (WWII) and the immediate aftermath which for the first time challenged Europe as a continent with topics of mass displacement and refugee movements. According to the The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the WWII and post-war period produced the largest displacement in modern history, in which over 40 million people were estimated to be displaced in Europe (UNHCR, 2000a, p.13).

Therefore, this period was and nowadays still is perceived as the biggest refugee crisis that Europe faced. Moreover from the 1950s besides of after war internal displacement another type of movement started to mushroom in Europe. According to Castles and Miller (2009) recognized as migration in which workers from the European periphery were coming to Western Europe though what is known as the 'guestworker system' (p.97) and in parallel migration in which 'colonial' workers were coming to work to the former colonial powers (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 97).

Furthermore, in later years political crises and instability in Europe, and other parts of the world, in parallel with labour migration, indisputably also led to the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, internally and externally. Especially, from 1990s, at the end of Cold War era and break of the Soviet Union brought changed to movements in Europe. One of the trends was the rise of asylum seekers and non-European refugees. As noted by Cohen (2006): "The refugee problem, previously regarded as a factor in East-West relations, now had a North-South dimension added to it (p. 145). Another important trend has been the merging of various forms of migration, known as 'mixed flows'. According to International Organization for Migration (IOM) referring to "complex population movements including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants and other migrants" (IOM, 2009, p. 1). This changed nature of movements of people from previous years resulted in tighter immigration policies imposed by Western Europe. As recognized by UNHCR (2000b) new more restricted policies were aimed at combating illegal migration and abuse of asylum system, as a result it shifted the balance between the protection of refugees and control of immigration (p. 161). As further noted by Castles and Lougha (2003) tighter policies and less legal ways to enter Europe caused migratory flows to shift to 'illegal' means of entry enabled by smugglers (p. 3). Nowadays we can see some of these trends re-occurring in the refugee movements to Europe.

Overall the short history of migration to Europe, forced and voluntary, tells us that Europe before this current refugee crisis had direct experience with dealing with refugees not only from Eastern Europe, but from various parts of the world. The outlined movements of people created the idea of Europe as a continent of movement, or as noted by Münz (2010) a "continent of immigration" (p. 6). From this point on it would be a matter of course to assume that all the multifold

experiences gained would lead to 'good practices' and guide on future influxes of refugees and migrants such as is the current one. But part of my thesis is also about critically examining despite all the know-how with movement of people to Europe, policy makers and the European Union at large struggled to cope and manage the current refugee crisis. In fact, historical experiences did not serve to ease dilemmas surrounding this refugee crisis.

Important to note is also that in the new millennium, from the 2000s onwards refugee movements have undergone even more changes than in previous years. They became more globalized, meaning refugees resulting from war crises and political instability in one parts of the world could easily affect not only surrounding countries, but reach transnational. Because of the advancement in the latest communication technologies and transportation generally movement of people became more intense, people got more opportunities and ways for mobility. However, one of the phenomenon is that while global world promotes free flow of people for everyone there is a inequality in movement of people. There is a differentiation between privileged 'welcomed' mobility of people and underprivileged 'undesired' mobility. This can be observed in Europe, where depending on the nature of the movement, policies oscillate between open and closed doors, between inclusion and exclusion. It can be observed as noted by Castles (1998) on the fronts of labour migration or as examined by Cetti (2012) on asylum seekers. According to Cetti (2012) globalization on one hand creates 'global insiders', people who can move unconditionally and on the other 'stateless' 'global outsiders' whose movement and existence is perceived as either illegal or threatening (p. 19). As furthermore noted by Cetti in the context of Europe this inclusion and exclusion is understood as open and liberal free movement of EU-nationals versus restricted and controlled movement of third country nationals (p. 1). Newer studies such as the one from Alexander Betts (2009) suggest that welcoming and unwelcoming attitudes towards movement of people are effecting also forced migrants. Betts (2009) notes that new policies such as 'protection in the region'(p. 159) or 'extra-territorial asylum processing' are part of a broader strategy by Northern states to decrease the need for the movement of people from South to North (p. 159).

2.2 The current state of mobility towards Europe

In April 2015 the deadliest incident in the Mediterranean involving refugees and migrants occurred, when 800 people died near the Libyan coast in an attempt to reach Europe (UNHCR, 2015). It was a moment that shocked Europe but at the same time a beginning of a series of deadly sea crossings and perilous journeys of people in search for protection in the European Union (EU). The onset of what has been perceived as the most challenging refugee crisis in Europe since WWII, but at the same time a crisis of EU politics had occurred. Instead of genuine humanitarian help to people fleeing war, but also serious socio-economic deprivations, many EU governments reacted with hostility towards asylum seekers from closing borders to building fences and military deployments. Chaos and human tragedies were enforced as the EU was sinking deeper into its disparities to find a common approach. The unwillingness or inability of some Member States to act on behalf of a union rather than national interests, thus negatively impacted the ultimate commitment of the EU of the protection of people in need. Consequently, the implementation of this commitment has been further complicated as refugees and asylum seekers became embedded in the discourse of the migration-refugee nexus, the 'management of migration', externalization of protection and securing of internal and external borders.

2.2.1. Statistics of refugee arrivals in 2015 and mixed migratory flows

In 2015, overall 1,046,599 people arrived by land and sea to Europe (IOM, 2015). According to the UNHCR Refugees/migrants emergency response- Mediterranean in comparison with previous years when 216,054 migrants and refugees arrived, it shows a dramatic increase (UNHCR, n.d). The first point of entry countries of refugees are Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, Bulgaria (IOM, 2015). This reflects also the current trends in the migration routes to Europe. In 2015 the most frequent transit route was the Eastern Mediterranean route. According to Frontex (n.d.), the EU agency for external border management detecting and stopping illegal immigration, the passage is used by migrants crossing through Turkey to the European Union via Greece, southern Bulgaria or Cyprus. The majority of people entering through this

route further take the Western Balkan routes into Hungary or Croatia as has been the trend after the introduction of border fences in Hungary. From Croatia the route goes through Slovenia, Austria to Germany or further to the North. Another frequent route to the EU in 2015 was the Central Mediterranean route, according to Frontex (n.d.) this route refers to the migratory flow coming from Northern Africa towards Italy and Malta through the Mediterranean Sea. When we look specifically at the member states in the EU, the highest numbers of refugees and asylum seekers were in Germany. The German branch of IOM (2016) recorded inflows of 1.1 million asylum seekers. According to Eurostat's *Asylum Quarterly Report (2015a)* five countries of the EU shared 75% of all first time applicants, while the highest number was recorded in Germany and Hungary, followed by Sweden, Italy and Austria ('Main destination countries'). The main nationalities of refugees arriving to Europe according to statistics of UNHCR and IOM are people from Syria as the largest group, Afghanistan and Iraq, thus 84% of all movements coming to Europe are from countries from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries.

From the 1990s onwards the trend of mixed migratory flows accelerated in Europe as the result of the speeding up of globalization. More than twenty years later that trend is reconfirmed, emphasizing that multifold and complex movements of people are the currency of today. However, what was new or 'sudden' about the current refugee crisis is that all these mixed migratory flows are happening on an unplanned basis, simultaneously with volume and speed. And perhaps the majority of the refugees and asylum seekers unlike previous years are solely third country nationals.

Why the mobility of people fleeing from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq but also from sub-Saharan African countries are creating currently an influx is a complex issue with numerous factors. It is necessary to look outside of the European landscape to the situation in the Middle East and Africa to understand why the decision to move to Europe as a destination came. For instance Hadfield and Zwitter (2015) provide a good summary with what they see as the key sources of movement to Europe today:

- (1) ongoing post-Arab Spring volatilities in North Africa;
- (2) the current failed state of post-intervention Libya;
- (3) the political and environmental consequences

of Sahel-based fundamentalism upon North and East Africa; (4) the ongoing upheavals of the Middle East; (5) uneven post-conflict settlement in Afghanistan; (6) the impact of the Syrian civil war; and (6) recent ISIS incursions into Syria and Iraq (p. 130).

2.2.2. The case of Syrian refugees

As seen according to the statistics mentioned above, refugees from Syria are among the largest group to arrive to Europe due to the ongoing civil war, which currently has created one of the biggest humanitarian crises. So far it has mostly affected the neighboring countries, according to Amnesty International (2015) more than 4 million Syrian refugees were residing in five countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Additionally, Syria itself has 6,6 million internally displaced people (Internal displacement monitoring centre, 2015). Yet, since the middle of 2015 the situation changed, when more Syrian refugees were seeking protection also in the EU. According to Maha Yahya, the Senior Associate of the Middle East Center refugees (2015):

One of the most significant factors driving the recent surge of refugees is the sense of hopelessness that now prevails among Syrians. After four years of war, and with no political or diplomatic breakthrough in sight, their future in Syria looks bleak. This reality is also sinking in among Syrians hosted in neighboring countries. There is a sense of despair, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, where being a refugee means living in limbo... ('What's driving the refugee flows', para. 2-3).

Lack of response and support by the Gulf States to provide refuge to Syrians has been stated also among factors leading to movement of Syrian refugees towards newer destinations, such as Europe. According to Norris and Malknecht (2015) the Gulf States have not officially accepted refugees from Syria and none of the Gulf States is a signatory to the U.N. refugee convention, thus they do not have an obligation to accept refugees (p. 8). Some media outlets claim that also the open-door policy of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel was a possible reason that accelerated the refugee influx to Europe. In August 2015 according to the Spiegel Online (Abé et al., 2015) Angela Merkel decided to provide refuge to anyone coming from Syria and others that were seeking protection from violence and warfare (para.

1). As a result of a tweet, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees announced that the Dublin Regulation in the case of the Syrian refugees at the moment will not, in fact, be followed by Germany (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2015).

2.2.3. The case of migration from fragile states

Instability in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, Afghanistan and life-threats posed by the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq have led to a cumulative migration influx of refugees and asylum seekers from different regions to Europe. As noted by Gidron and Bueno (2016) asylum seekers arriving to Europe are driven to seek protection only after seeking and failing to find safety elsewhere (p. 36, para.1). For instance according to Majidi (2016) the driving factor for people from Afghanistan and Somalia to go to Europe are the struggles to cope with the post-conflict situations in their countries (p. 32). And for Eritreans according to Mogos O Brhane (2016) it's the deteriorating human rights situation in their country (p. 34), or the poor living standards in refugee camps (p. 35). To answer why other people that are not within the scope of an international understanding of refugee status or that are not prima facie refugees as expressed under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, are also trying to find a secure and stable place in Europe is not easy to comprehend from a standpoint of clearly defined terminology. Movements of people and the nature of that movement are usually scoped within a fixed dichotomy of 'economic' migration versus refugee movements. Thus, there is a tendency in which people who are not directly fleeing a war-zone as in case of the current migratory flows from the sub-Saharan region of Africa or Afghanistan are perceived as 'economic' migrants.

However, forced migration patterns have evolved and a very recent good explanation of how to perceive also the current migratory flows from other regions as Syria, that do not have a clear-cut war situation, is presented by Alexander Betts (2015) who points out that: "Environmental change, food insecurity, and generalized violence, for example represent also emerging sources of human displacement"(para. 15). And he further notes there are people who are fleeing serious socio-economic rights deprivations, however, they do not

fall into the international definition of a refugee, that is why people in this situation can be regarded as 'survival migrants' (Betts, 2015, para. 15). What this new term attempts to convey is first of all a newer category in which to place people on the move, but in a general context the attempt to provide "a new framework of protection" based on human rights (Betts, 2010).

We might attempt to call people from sub-Saharan Africa or people from the post-conflict Afghanistan 'survival migrants' or staying with classical dichotomies. The people deciding to move in the current refugee crisis are all people coming from fragile states. According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) fragile states can be countries recovering from conflict, states that have a long-term insecurity, localized conflicts or high level of criminality and violence (2014, p. 16). And for many people from these countries, Europe is seen as an opposite place to what they have to experience daily. A place of safety, but also for better life prospects and a brighter future, also as acknowledged by the words of the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker (2015): "It is Europe today that represents a beacon of hope, a haven of stability in the eyes of women and men in the Middle East and in Africa..."

2.2.4. Labelling people on the move

How to address people on the move proved to be one of the most important dimensions in the current refugee crisis. It has been a dilemma for the media and politicians how to properly refer to the incoming people. Yet, the use of correct terminology is not just an innocent debate. Thanks to the study of semantics it is well known, that each word has a meaning. The wording matters, because 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'economic migrant' or 'irregular migrant' are words that are part of complex processes under which identities of people on the move, their presence, future and public perception is negotiated. From an EU policy makers perspective each label refers to different policies and connotes different treatment and responses.

The main terms used to address incoming people in the current refugee crisis were first of all refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant or 'economic' migrant. The term

refugee under the 1951 Geneva Convention will be explained in full text in the EU policy part, in short the status refugee refers to a person that due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is seeking international protection because he can't be protected anymore in his own country (Chapter 1, Article 1A). According to the IOM (2011) the term 'economic' migrant refers to a person leaving his or her habitual place of residence to settle outside his or her country of origin to improve his or her quality of life (p. 32). Asylum seeker according to UNHCR (n.d.) "is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated."⁵

The confusion between terms and shifting from one to another is apparent in the media and politics. The German chancellor Angela Merkel used the word refugee in her speech: "If Europe fails on the question of refugees, then it won't be the Europe we wished for" (BBC, 2015). While British Prime Minister David Cameron used the term migrant with a negative connotation: "They met with a bunch of migrants in Calais, they said they could all come to Britain" (Elgot, 2015). On the institutional level in the EU law the preferred term is asylum seeker, referring to "applicants for international protection" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 43). The media outlet Aljazeera for instance abolished the use of migrant from its terminology, stating that: "The umbrella term migrant is no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean. It has evolved from its dictionary definition into a tool that dehumanizes and distances, a blunt pejorative" (Malone, 2015). BBC on the other hand uses also the term migrant: "In 2015 the largest migrant groups in Europe by nationality are Syrians, followed by Afghans, then migrants from Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia" (Peter, 2015).

Both media and politicians have influence over public opinion and thus what is being said may affect the way refugees are perceived by the public. According to Doherty (2015) analyzing the using of terminology on the case study of asylum seekers in Australia, he notes that the public image of refugees and asylum seekers is done in the line about them but without them: "Their image – the public's fundamental

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>

understanding of who they are - is created not by themselves, but by others" (p. 9). The problem of labeling refugees in the era of globalization and the mixed migratory flows is being analyzed by Roger Zetter (2007). He argues that newly emerging terms like 'genuine refugee' or 'asylum seeker' designed for different refugee claimants are a transformative process that create far less preferential categories of temporary protection (Zetter, 2007, p. 182). Furthermore, Zetter (2007) argues that fragmentation of the label refugee with newer terms like 'asylum seeker' or 'temporary protection' pushes the refugee status further back into the process of migration and thus reduces the opportunity to achieve that status (p. 189).

Zetter in his analysis of labeling, similar to Alexander Betts argument that nowadays people who do not come from explicit violence like persecution or flight in fear of their lives, but still from a perspective of human rights need protection and are forced migrants, have difficulty fitting within the refugee label status. He notes that "muted conditions for refugeehood' such in the case of people coming from sub-Saharan Africa makes it difficult for governments to distinguish between the categories of refugee vs. economic migrant, but usually these conditions are not enough for bureaucrats to claim the refugee label (Zetter, 2007, p. 178).

In the current refugee crisis this distinction could be reflected in the words of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel: "The hope for a better life is not a sufficient reason 'to seek asylum or residence permit here'...We should not be giving people the false hope that people can leave Afghanistan for Germany in order to pursue economic gain" (Euractiv, 2016b, para. 2).

Lastly Zetter also addresses the fact that the refugee label has become the ultimate status rather than a right: "The outcome is a new set of labels which compound the perception that the protective label 'refugee' is no longer a basic Convention right, but a highly privileged prize which few deserve and most claim illegally" (2007, p. 184). And this is only highlighted in the current refugee crisis in which according to the European Commission (2015a, p. 2) 1,5 million illegal border crossings have been detected between January and November 2015. This number shows the overall migratory flow, including refugees from Syria that have been largely using irregular ways to claim asylum in the EU. From the statistics of the Eurostat *Asylum quarterly report* (2015b, 'Increase in asylum applicants') officially 413,800 asylum

applications have been lodged in the third quarter of 2015. Additionally, according to the report (2015c, 'First instance decisions') refugee status has been decided in favor of the majority of Syrians, who come from a clear-cut war situation, high positive refugee status has been given also to people from Iraq, Eritrea, Iran and for half of the applications of people from Sudan. Whereas the most rejections on refugee status has been given to people from Albania, Kosovo, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Ukraine. From the statistics it's possible to observe that mostly other reasons than explicit violence and persecution, have not been considered when granting refugee status.

2.2.5. Asylum-migration nexus

The dimension under which the current discussion about refugee crisis with the distinction between various labels and thus also generally the differentiation between forced and voluntary migration unfolds is part of what has been called the asylum-migration nexus. According to Castles (2007) this nexus is "the blurring of the distinction between economic and forced migration" (p. 26). As he further noted in the hands of policy makers and opinion leaders this nexus is a "discourse that is used to meet certain economic, political or ideological objectives" (Castles, 2007, p. 27). This could in the current refugee crisis be reflected in the words of Austrian chancellor, Werner Faymann who said: "All refugees must be controlled, economic migrants must be sent to their countries of origin" (Euractiv, 2016a, para. 3).

In the context of migratory flows to Europe according to Papadopoulou (2010) the asylum-migration nexus unfolds when irregular migration and asylum meet in various ways (p. 83). Furthermore, the two phenomena overlap, firstly when people in need of international protection use irregular means or undocumented stays in a country, and secondly when people that are not in need of protection use the asylum system as an alternative to the immigration route (Papadopoulou, 2010, p. 83).

This nexus is used by politicians for distinguishing between categories and as a way to manage the general issues of migration, however, it serves also as a way to address the mixed migratory flows. For instance as noted by van Hear (2009): "It is increasingly recognized that few migrants are wholly voluntary or wholly forced and

that almost all migration involves some kind of compulsion; at the same time almost all migration involves choices" (p. 3).

As further noted by van Hear (2009) in the year 2006-2007 also the refugee protection agency UNHCR addressed this nexus and 'mixed flows' even though later distanced itself from it as their primary scope are refugees (p. 9). According to van Hear (2009) UNHCR in 2007 acknowledged 'mixed motivations' when people leave their country as a combination of fears, uncertainties, hopes and aspirations, furthermore, 'mixed migration' in which refugees and other migrants move alongside each other, making use of the same routes and means of transport and engaging in the services of the same smugglers. (van Hear, 2009, p. 10; UNHCR 2008). As noted by van Lear (2009) the UNHCR acknowledged also 'onward or secondary movement' of people, where people who have secured protection in one state move on to another country, or where asylum seekers moved through a number of different countries (some of which may be considered safe) before submitting a claim for refugee status. (van Hear, 2009, p. 10; UNHCR 2008)

That mixed flows are present in the current refugee crisis is clear from various official data on country of origin of people by UNHCR or IOM as stated previously that show a heterogeneous movement of people. While there are no surveys yet that explore the motivations of people that are nowadays coming to Europe from the country situations of the people on the move we can conclude that there are multiple factors and various motivations that are driving people to the same direction. At the same time refugees from Syria use the same routes, means of transportation and the services of smugglers, thus engaging in what is regarded by the EU laws as irregular migration with mobile people from other countries. Thus, people on the move in the current refugee crisis in a way reappeared to be 'stuck' in the asylum-migration nexus. This nexus, however, should not lead on the EU level to overlooking a fact that lies in statistics like the one from UNHCR, where it says that the majority of refugees that arrived to the EU in 2015 are people from countries that are either through the decades known for their ongoing conflicts and instability like Afghanistan or for their current war situation as in Syria. Thus, what is imperative to hold in mind in the current refugee crisis is that the 'nexus' should not lead EU policy makers to fall to the conclusions that there are abuses of the asylum system

going on and overshadow the fact that most of the people are really in search of protection and a safe place to live. Neither should it downplay the implementation of such protection in the EU. Even though some of that genuine seeking of protection might relate to their movement with also better life prospects.

2.2.6. Sharing the 'burden' and borders within and outside the EU

Burden-sharing has on the EU political level been a crucial element of the current refugee crisis. Burden-sharing according to Boswell (2003) in the European context refers to mechanisms for distributing refugees or the costs of receiving them (para. 7). On top of this mechanism in the current EU lies the mandatory scheme, known as 'refugee quota', which was proposed as an emergency response for relocating 120,000 refugees from Italy and Greece. But instead of sharing, the 'quota' caused a deep split between Northern EU and Eastern EU Member States. The starkest anti-refugee quota voices are from Hungary and Slovakia, who even filed lawsuits against the mandatory quotas as a violation of national parliament rights (Euronews, 2015a).

On the opposite end the strongest pro-quota and leading countries of this proposal have been Germany and France. However, as much as it was emphasized for all Member States to act according to the schema as a preferred solution to the refugee crisis, the effects were minimal, by the end of 2015 according to Guy Verhofstadt on the post-December EU summit meeting, from 120,000 only 290 people have been relocated (European Parliament, 2016). The lack of jointly co-operating in order to solve the refugee crisis in favor of refugees in the matter of relocation underlines what Geddes (2003) said twelve years ago about EU migration policy. According to Geddes while there have been attempts to develop common EU migration policies, it doesn't mean there is a common EU migration policy, there is a highly developed free movement framework that is supranational and that imposes real constraints on the member states, co-operation on immigration and asylums are less developed (p. 198).

Unity of EU member states under the refugee crisis has been tested also on the front of the external borders and the Schengen internal border area. Hungary in an attempt to stop the migration flow approved the building of a 175 km long fence along the border with Serbia (Euronews, 2015b). The sealed border to Serbia came into use in September and is part of Hungary's overall hard-line anti-immigration stance to the

refugee influx. After Hungary sealed its border with Croatia, refugees had to alter their route and the chain reaction of responsibility of pushing refugees from one country to another has been put on Croatia and Slovenia. As pressure mounted these relatively small Balkan countries also started to have problems with dealing with the influx of refugees on the borders since their capacities in comparison with other larger EU countries to accommodate refugees is lower. Slovenia in November 2015 decided to build on the border with Croatia 'temporary technical obstacles', including fences to manage the inflow of refugees (The Telegraph, 2015). The domino effect of 'burden shifting' continued to Austria, which later approved building a fence on the border with Slovenia, but as stated in Euractiv with a different reason than Hungary: "It is intended to help regulate the flow of refugees and register them more efficiently. At the same time, Vienna has avoided shutting itself off completely, like Hungary has done in the past few months" (Vytiska, 2015).

Apart from border fences to either manage or stop the influx of refugees the current refugee crisis on the EU level has been met with challenges about the Schengen area and its internal borders. Some EU member states as a reaction to the influx of refugees or as in the case of France as a reaction to the terrorist attacks imposed temporary border controls. In November 2015 Austria introduced temporary border controls of all borders with a special focus on the Slovenian border, Germany with special focus on the Austrian border and the whole of France as an emergency reaction after the terrorist attack in Paris. Member states that also introduced temporary border controls on all borders in January 2016 are Sweden, Norway and Denmark (European Commission, 2015b).

2.3. EU immigration and asylum policies and mechanisms

The scope of my thesis is about the role of civil society, the ordinary local people that were engaging with refugees during the current refugee crisis by helping and assisting them. However, in order to understand why the engagement of ordinary people stood out as opposed to the EU policy makers and their solutions, it is imperative to look on the various policies and mechanisms in the EU that are related to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. Even a brief study on the policies can tell

the reader that there is a vast majority of policies, mechanisms and agendas, however in the current refugee crisis many of these approaches from EU policy makers were many times too bureaucratic and difficult to transform to a real life solution. This in turn, ended up being a problem to help refugees in this particular situation of sudden unplanned influx, where member states did not share the same outlook.

Having said this, by providing the information on the policies, I also want to stress that these policies are important, and that of course the power and means to decide about the asylum seeking and asylum application processes lies in the hands of local governments or supra-national institutions such as EU. In short, we have to realize that the fates about the new lives of incoming people to the country are in the hands of the bureaucratic institutions, but the civil society acts towards filling the gaps that stem from bureaucratic handicaps. In this sense, I argue in this thesis that civil society is important, as will be shown in the analysis chapter, with their non-bureaucratic ways of helping and assisting refugees in acute emergency situations, the civil society initiatives can provide solutions that are in contrast to a policy or policy maker's solutions and views on the incoming refugee or asylum seeker in general.

Since the official establishment of the European Union in 1993 the free movement of nationals of the Member States has been one of the main principles of the union. This translated in the same year to the Single market, where goods, services, capital and persons can circulate freely. The Single Market also ensured that European citizens are free to live, work, study and do business in other member states of the EU (European Commission, 2011). The free movement of members of the EU was put in effect in 1995 under the name Schengen Agreement. Thus, the Schengen zone that created a territory without internal borders was established (EUR-Lex 2009).

While countries joining the EU could be part of this openness that included the liberation of citizens, meaning the most visible barrier between nations, the internal border has been abolished, it also meant more difficult entry for non-EU nationals. Internal 'borderlessness' had to be replaced by strengthening the external borders and the movement of non-EU nationals regulated. Through the years this has been done by various mechanisms and policies directly related to common border protection, for instance Schengen Information System, established within the Schengen

Agreement, and replaced by the new system SIS II as defined in the *Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 December 2006 on the establishment, operation and use of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II) [2006] OJ L381/4*. According to Article 93 of the *Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic, on the Gradual Abolition of Checks at their Common Borders ("Schengen Implementation Agreement")* the Schengen Information System was to be established in order to maintain public order and security related to the movement of people.

2.3.1. Migration and asylum in the EU

The movement of people that are not members of the EU and especially the recognition that the EU is and will be a destination for migration, but also of people seeking international protection led to the formation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Generally "the migration to and within Europe is regulated by a combination of national laws, EU laws, the ECHR, the ESC and by other international obligations entered into by European states" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 23). One of the fundamental international obligations of the EU is the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which was implemented into the EU Charter of Fundamental rights and from there to other directives related to refugees, asylum seekers, and persons seeking international protection.

In the EU laws thus Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Human rights guarantees the right to asylum and Article 19 the principle of 'non-refoulement' (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 21). The principle is the cornerstone of the 1951 Geneva Convention, explained as:

No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Chapter V, Article 33).

Another main pillar of the 1951 Geneva Convention and the EU laws regarding refugees is the explanation of who is to be regarded and understood as a refugee:

Person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it" (Chapter 1, Article 1A).

Under the EU law's fundamental legal document that sets out common standards among Member States for qualifying people as refugees in need of international protection (Article 13) and people that are to be granted subsidiary protection in case they don't qualify for refugee status (Article 18) is the *Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011*. This directive is on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast). [2011] OJ L337/9. This directive also grants to third-country nationals or stateless people who don't qualify for refugee status, but if returned to their country would face serious risk of harm as a subsidiary protection (Article 2f). In case of large numbers of refugees the EU can grant to groups temporary protection as regulated by the *Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof*.

Furthermore, the common standards for granting and withdrawing international protection are determined in the *Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection*. [2013] OJ L180/60. According to the EU laws asylum seeker is an "applicant for international protection" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 43). As noted by the Council of Europe (2014) even though there is a right to asylum as such, the EU laws do not provide for ways to facilitate the arrival of asylum seekers, those who seek asylum are mostly third country nationals in need of a visa to enter the EU and as these people often do not qualify for a normal visa they may have to cross the border irregularly (p. 35). As further noted the EU asylum

"only applies from the moment an individual has already arrived at the border, including territorial waters and transit zones" (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 35).

The above noted Qualification directive and Asylum procedure directive, as well as the *Reception Condition Directive 2013/33/EU regulating guaranteed dignified standards of living (access to housing, food, healthcare and employment) while asylum applicants are waiting for the result of the application*, and directive of the Dublin System and EURODAC constitute the backbone structure of the Common European Asylum System.

2.3.2. Common European Asylum System

CEAS is a legal framework for protection and solidarity, but at the same time as stated by official documents about it, it is also cooperation between member states in the area of migration, asylum and security. The first time in 1999 on the Tampere meeting Member States made a commitment to work on a common schema for protection of people fleeing persecution or serious harm, therefore, in need of international protection. However, at the same time the discussions were based not solely on the common grounds for the right of asylum, but also in matters of the general migration context and the management of migration flows (European Union, 1999). In relation to that in the year 2000 the European Fund for Refugees (ERF) was established to redistribute finances for member states in favor of refugees and displaced persons, but also for funding emergency situations of the massive influx of refugees (EUR-Lex, 2005).

The first phase of the CEAS's objective has been outlined in the Hague Programme for the period of 2005-2010. In this period apart from setting up the ERF, asylum finger print database EURODAC was one of the key instruments within the overall Dublin Regulation scheme. The 'Dublin' first applied in 2003, and amended in 2013 under the name *Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast)*. It defines which Member State is responsible for examining asylum application to ensure that only one country can examine the application at a time and only one asylum application by an applicant can be logged, thus avoiding

multiple applications in different Member States. Furthermore, Dublin Regulation deals also with transfers of individuals to another Member State, if found that another state is responsible for examining an application. In practice 'Dublin' is bound to a hierarchy of countries responsible for examining the application according to the 'first country of entry' principle, as noted by the Council of Europe (2014) "the state responsible for allowing the applicant to enter the common area is typically determined to be the state responsible for reviewing the application" (p. 85).

The EURODAC Mechanism under the Dublin regulation serves as a database of finger prints of asylum applicants, where Member States can view if an asylum seeker, irregular migrants or illegal national crossed territory unlawfully previously or already applied for asylum in one of the Member States. (Council Regulation No. 2725/2000, 3)

In 2004 the Frontex agency for protection and surveillance on the external border was established, this in practice can be imagined as an external border management 'police' working on operations of illegal migrant crossings. Frontex mandates among others are oriented on control and surveillance of the external borders and joint operations at the external borders (Council Regulation (EC) No. 2007/2004, Article 2d, Article 3).

2.3.3. The ambivalence of Common European Asylum System

Although there were many attempts since Tampere to harmonize the asylum system where all Member States would be entitled to the same standards and effectively also apply them in order to make it also easier for potential asylum seekers. The 2008 European pact on Immigration and Asylum reviewing the CEAS first phase by the Council of European Union was lacking in shared responsibility and solidarity, even though progress in common visa policies or harmonization of external borders and asylum standards were present (European Union: Council of the European Union, 2008).

Thus, this pact was also a statement for improvements that should have been met in the second phase of the CEAS that set its objectives for the period 2010-2014 under the name Stockholm Programme. Five key elements of improvement in the next CEAS phase have been to organize legal migration with the focus on highly qualified

workers, control of illegal migration, border controls, construct Europe of asylum and partnership with countries of origin and transit (European Union: Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 4). Under the objective of constructing Europe of asylum incentive it was also mentioned that in case of massive influx of asylum seekers, there should be solidarity and quick mobilization of Member States especially to assist countries that face the biggest pressures with voluntary reallocation schemes (European Union: Council of the European Union, 2008, IVc, p. 12). As was noted above in the current refugee crisis the reallocation scheme was, in fact, proposed as a matter of burden-sharing with the 'frontline' country of the refugee crisis, Greece, but even though unlike the recommendation of 2008, the reallocation was mandatory this time, real solidarity did not take place in the EU.

The improvements in the second phase of CEAS were also regarding the amendments of concrete legal instruments, especially the reformation of the Dublin Regulation and its criteria. According to Peers (2013) the amendment in the second phase of CEAS of the Dublin Regulation did not, however, change the real controversy about this regulation, that it pushes the responsibility of examining asylum applications to southern EU Member States that have less experience in managing large numbers of asylum seekers (p. 5). Criticism of this nature was to be found viable in the refugee crisis, in which the first country of entry for many refugees, Greece, was not able to respond in a coordinated manner to the influx, leaving many refugees unregistered to pass through other countries which led to an ad hoc non-functioning of the whole 'Dublin'.

2.3.4. European Agenda on Migration in the current refugee crisis

A wake up call for EU policy makers that something within the CEAS and general migration issues is still not functioning came as noted above in April 2015 after the Lampedusa tragedy near the Libyan coast. The EU decided to strengthen cooperation and action of the Member States on the management of migration under the name *European Agenda on Migration*. Among the top priorities of the agenda was to save lives of migrants at sea and targeting smuggler networks by enforcing the Frontex and Europol⁶ operations. The agenda also for the first time began to address the joint

⁶European Police Office is European Union's law enforcement agency handling criminal intelligence and combating international organized crime

and fair share of relocation of a large number of refugees and asylum seekers among Member States in the current refugee crisis and the approach to resettlement of people in need of international protection (European Commission, 2015c, p. 3-4).

Four months after the introduction of this agenda, in September 2015 the European Commission presented concrete measures on the tackling of the refugee crisis that by this month was reaching its peak. First, was the already mentioned emergency relocation proposal for 120,000 refugees from namely Greece, Hungary and Italy. A permanent relocation of refugees for all member states, establishing a list of Safe countries of origin, based on the premise of a quicker processing of asylum applications of candidates coming from a country stated under EU Asylum law as safe. Furthermore, EU policy makers decided to address the external dimensions of the refugee crisis by providing financial support for Syria's neighboring countries- Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, opening a trust fund for Africa and implementing immediate action- 'Hotspots' in frontline Member States of the EU, that deals with the most influx of refugees (European Commission, 2015d).

In December 2015 the European Union has adopted another package of measures, a progress report on Greece, Italy and the Westerns Balkans as well as border packages. (European Commission: DG Migration and Home affairs, 2015e). The Border package included proposals on amendments of the Schengen Borders Code to strengthen external border checks of all EU and non-EU citizens in order to prevent any threat to public order and internal security in the EU. (European Commission, 2015f, p. 2) Furthermore, the proposal amends the stipulation that third-country nationals should also be checked on exit of the Schengen zone. (European Commision, 2015f p.2) The proposal is formulated as a response to the increased terrorist attacks in the wake of Paris and threats for other potential attacks within the EU and thus to strengthen internal security.

Another measure proposed in December 2015 was the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey for refugees from Syria. This schema is an extension of the October 2015 *Join Action plan for Turkey*, cooperation of EU and Turkey on tackling the refugee crisis. Part of the cooperation between Turkey and the EU has been firstly the agreed upon 3 billion financial aid facility for humanitarian assistance of refugees in Turkey. (European Commision, 2015g) The Voluntary

Humanitarian Admission Scheme is an 'action' plan to reduce the number of people that irregularly cross the border from Turkey to the EU. Second, part of the voluntary scheme is about Member States burden-sharing, once the irregular flows into Europe from Turkey is reduced, Member States can voluntarily accept people in need of international protection from Turkey (European Commission, 2015h). As seen this recommendation scheme is about burden-sharing, however, if Member States that in this proposal should voluntarily resettle refugees from Turkey will not, more than burden-sharing it will be about 'burden shifting', as one of the key measures of the whole cooperation is about preventing irregular migration as well. In a more general scale this concrete 'action' plan relates to the idea of external EU 'gatekeeping' of the borders against forms of unplanned and irregular migration. Turkey is a major transit country for people on the move to Europe from different proximate countries and currently at the same time it is the world biggest host of Syrian refugees. Thus, Turkey serves as a strategic partner for the EU in the current refugee crisis to decrease the inflow to the EU, but also as a way to generally reduce as noted above irregular migration. From an EU perspective Turkey plays a role in the overall management of migration. As noted by İçduygu and Yüksek (2010) one of the agendas of the EU-Turkey relations that will remain relevant is "the question on how will Turkey protect the EU's south-eastern border from migration waves" (p. 452). However, from a Turkish perspective this outsourcing of migration management to the periphery countries of the EU, such as Turkey is concerning Turkish policy makers as it may create a burden-shifting situation and as well a potential buffer zone out of Turkey (İçduygu & Yüksek, 2010, p. 453).

2.3.5. Agenda on Migration and the refugee crisis in 2016

The priorities for the EU in 2016 remain the full implementation of the relocation and deployment of support teams under the 'Hotspots' approach, so that countries under the biggest pressure can fulfill the responsibilities towards incoming asylum seekers and returning those who do not qualify for refugee status (European Commission, 2016a). Under the *European Agenda on Migration State of play: January 2016* one of the key measures for spring of 2016 will be also the reformation of the Dublin Regulation as well as the proposal for a structured system of resettlement. (European Commission, 2016b) On the other hand, as noted by the February 2016 statement about the priorities of the Agenda on Migration restoring of

the transfer of asylum seekers to Greece under the Dublin Regulation remains urgent along with the securing of the external borders. (European Commission, 2016c)

As this chapter showed many policies and mechanisms have been employed under the Common European Asylum System, which set as its objective to harmonize immigration and asylum legislation in the EU to provide universal standards and guidelines to ensure that people in need of international protection would have high standards of protection and be treated commonly EU-wide. The current refugee crisis provided a solid ground for EU policy makers to show these high standards of protection to people in need, but also 'unity' in a union. But as already echoed the EU was instead fragmenting itself. The lack of solidarity, fairness and pushing of responsibility among Member States has had primarily unprecedented consequences for refugees and asylum seekers, but secondarily it showed and still is that the CEAS and policies relating to asylum seekers and migration have deficiencies.

In the bigger picture it became evident that movements of people, especially large-scale and mixed became politicized and that such movements are undesirable/unwelcomed by EU policy makers. The approach can be observed through different dimensions in the forms of top and lesser priorities that EU policy makers state.

Among the downplayed priorities have been the legal and safe pathways to the EU. Generally EU policies give the right to asylum, but it applies only from the moment the applicant enters the EU zone and while most of the people are third country nationals that need visas, there are no legal pathways also and namely for refugees, thus the only option is to enter irregularly, which was the case in the current refugee crisis. Although the need for providing legal ways for people in need of international protection to prevent the use of smuggling services that endanger their lives is recognized, there are so far no real incentives or they are only limited in scope. The latest measure of the *Implementing the European agenda on migration: Progress on priority actions* in this matter is oriented to refugees from Syria via resettlement programmes and voluntary humanitarian admissions (2016c, p. 20). But these incentives are questionable, if they will show any real effects in short and long term, as experience shows that a lot of Member States were unwilling yet to even relocate refugees or only slowly relocating those already in the EU. The experience of

resettlement of EU Member States also shows only slow progress and mainly by Northern EU countries. The limitations in scope for resettlement are also so far applied only to refugees in immediate need of protection such as Syrian refugees. While it is a positive sign, it does not cover a long-term strategy in case other conflicts that will produce refugees will arise. The EU has at hand also an option of granting humanitarian visas or providing temporary protection in case of influx of refugees, however, these incentives have not even been mentioned in any documents related to the current refugee crisis. Mostly these two incentives are being taken or not taken into account on an individual national basis.

Secondly, the lack of appeal of such movements by EU policy makers can be observed also in the way that people in need of international protection are not debated only within the CEAS scope, but at large within migration issues, or in the case of policy makers in the concept of the 'management of migration. At the one hand the overlap as noted above is because of the mixed migration flows that are so prevailing in the global era. But on the other hand also because positioning refugees and asylum seekers within larger migration contexts can allow policy makers to form a meta-issue within which for instance border control or security issues are discussed and under which the protection per sé and making sure that it takes place gets downplayed or shifted to the South of the EU or periphery of the EU. In the current refugee crisis it seems it is the case.

The measures that according to the EU are needed and are often stressed as main priorities is the focus on borders- securing and controlling of external borders. This in turn is connected with 'burden-shifting' to the Southern EU border 'guards', Italy and Greece and further to Turkey as the main transit zone for various movement of people which serves the needs of the EU as a 'manager' of reducing the flows into Europe. At the same time priority in controlling external borders relates to internal borders, to the Schengen area in which EU-nationals and goods have free flow. Along those lines it has been often the case that the influx of refugees and asylum seekers that led some countries to introduce temporary internal border control have been by EU policy makers unwelcomed. What is more prioritized is that the Schengen as the main feature of the EU regarding flows of people and goods stay uncontested and unconditional even if that means that all the responsibility will lie on the shoulders of the EU border guarding countries.

The tactics of strong external borders that are prioritized should also then be related to irregular migration, to the priority of the EU to combat irregular migration by providing financial aid or opening up funds for regions of Africa or the Middle East and thus addressing root causes of why people move.

Lastly, in what is more likely seen as the 'unwelcoming' approach to migration generally, but also in terms of refugees and asylum seekers in the EU is the fact that on the one hand the EU at large of course has to and is keeping in mind the primacy of the Geneva Convention for protection of refugees and gives that status accordingly. However, at the same time the EU is providing other forms of protection schemas such as subsidiary protection. It gives people in need the chance to obtain at least some form protection, but that protection because it is just a temporary solution can be viewed as a strategy of limited stay in the EU.

At the same time the kind of externalization of its protection responsibility is the case made by the EU policy makers. As noted in the latest agenda on the refugee crisis the priority is better cooperation in return for rejected asylum applicants, the safe third country concept, as well as increased humanitarian aid to countries that are hosting refugees. While none of these measures are unimportant, in fact, humanitarian aid is crucial in helping refugees. What all these priorities combined have in common is that they mostly only contribute to already perceived fortification of Europe as a place that wants to humanitarily help and be responsible on one hand, but on the other not necessarily on its territory. And if it is already happening on its soil then push the responsibility as far as possible, or in the case of the current refugee crisis as South as possible. That problem is of course also brought about by the fact that Member States persist when it comes to their own national interest and solutions rather than looking for the common answers and common good for people in need of protection.

In the current refugee crisis the previous and still continuing disagreement among Member States as well as the still continuing focus on vast bureaucracy and 'management of migration' what is missing is the main- the moral responsibility and the human aspect, the idea of full respect of human rights of all people and ad hoc unconditional help to people that are in need no matter what their reason for moving is, if for a clear-cut war or other serious socio-economic reasons. That void left by

EU policy makers has been filled by civil society of various Member States in the current refugee crisis. As will be presented in the analysis chapter different individuals, like the volunteers from Train of Hope, took on that moral responsibility with the approach of common human response to people in need with a collective action. Especially powered by information and communication technologies, particularly social media which will be discussed in the next chapter, civil society was able to form an unbureaucratic common response towards the refugees.



CHAPTER III

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

From 1990s onwards a 'revolution' in technologies started to be in the making. One to one communication — sms messaging email communication for sending and receiving digital texts, growth of personal computing, the Internet, the world wide web and various browsers operating on the web amplified communication and information exchange among people. According to Friedman (2007) starting from 2000 changes in information and communication technologies started the 'flattening of the world', a process which is about connecting and collaborating of communities, companies and individuals (p. 8). Friedman's notion of 'Globalization 3.0' is about individuals who use the power of technology for collaboration and connection worldwide (2007, p. 9-10).

These changes in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and how they affect civic engagement and ordinary people's interaction with refugees in order to help them will be discussed in this chapter. However, I would like to present to the reader briefly that ICTs effect also the movements of people itself, they affect the ways in which migrants and refugees move around while making use of the newer technologies.

For mobile people ICTs are nowadays crucial element on the prior departure, on the movement to a destination, at the arrival as well as during their further presence in a new place. Thus ICTs are used in the whole process of the movement where migrants and refugees are embedded in complex networking at all times. The constant connection and networking of mobile people is currently dominated by the use of mobile phone devices and wireless Internet communication. As stated by Wellman (2001) mobile-ization is suitable for mobile lifestyles and physically dispersed relationships (p. 239). And as noted by Urry (2006) "mobile communications increasingly support life on the move" (p. 369). At the same time ICTs unlike previous methods of communication enable even more intensified and faster communication for the reasons of maintaining family or friend ties for diasporic communities. Moreover, portable and wireless communication with the contemporary option of logging into social media sites is used by mobile people for information seeking and gathering. And as noted by Dekker and Engbersen (2013) it is social media that can not only strengthen people's ability to migrate, but also to feed their aspiration to migrate (p. 404). Furthermore, social media in terms of information seeking serves as a platform for 'insider knowledge' and a space as noted by McGregor and Siegel (2013) for "creating weak ties to individuals that assist in the process of migration and (integration)" (p.5).

Thus, in general newer technologies for migrants and refugees enhanced the already multiple options of communication that are available for use nowadays. As Ros, Gonzalez, Marín and Sow (2007) point out contemporary international migration is embedded in the dynamics of the information society, following common patterns and interconnected dynamics (p. 4). Through the use of newer communication technologies, mobile phones, Internet and social media, migrants and refugees both became empowered and highly connected individuals with no difference in how non-migrant population use them.

Internet as the new communication platform improved the way in which individuals, but also groups and companies relate to each other, exchange information, connect, communicate, cooperate and collaborate. In the bigger picture ICTs have in contemporary society reached profound proportions on our lives and society at large, that some scholars define this era as 'information society'. According to Webster

(2006) "information is seen as the distinguishing feature of the modern world" (p. 2). More precise understanding of the society we live in can be explained also by Manuel Castells' 'network society', he defines it as "society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technology" (Castells, 2004, p. 3). The understanding of the advancements and changes in ICTs in relations to contemporary society as will be presented further in this chapter is crucial within the scope of my thesis. Because in order to better understand how ICTs, in particular the Internet and social media changed the ways in which civic engagement happens and how ordinary people, as presented in this thesis represented by Train of Hope, help refugees by using new technologies, firstly we need to also understand what these changes in ICTs are, how they came to be and what they brought to the society as we know it.

The overall changes are very much characterized by the significant digitalization upon society. In order to understand the dimensions of networks and information in our society, first of all the developments that have taken place before the Internet, after the launch of the World Wide Web and later Web 2.0 with the rise of social media sites need to be studied carefully. Secondly, the internet and especially social media sites will later be analyzed in the concrete sector of society, the engagement of civil society in public life on matters of political or social issues will be studied. How the various forms of civic engagement are transformed in contemporary society and how tools such as the Internet and social media are used by activists and volunteers in pursuing their goals will be questioned. This chapter will outline examples and theories on online civic engagement. This will aim at presenting ideas in which online tools in the hands of committed people serve at large as 'tactics' of challenging and balancing the dominant powers in society.

3.1. Technical developments in ICTs and the fostering of network society

Manuel Castells in his theory about the network society in *Volume I: Raise of the Network Society* (2010) analyzes how ICTs changed contemporary society, and gives a complex idea on the technological revolution taking place. This revolution

according to Castells has the following characteristics: first of all it is constituted by technologies that act on information (2010, p. 70); secondly the effects on new technology on individual and collective existence (2010, p. 70); thirdly the logic of networking (2010, p. 70); and lastly flexibility where society is characterized by constant change and organizational fluidity and the converging of technologies to an integrated system (2010, p. 71). The influence of Internet on society has been studied also by Paul Levinson (1999) who applied Marshall McLuhan's influential *medium theory* with its various prognoses and implications on the digital age. For instance as noted by Levinson (1999) the most famous metaphor of McLuhan's 'global village' (1964) is a fulfilled reality thanks to the Internet:

The online villager who can live anywhere in the world with a personal computer, telephone line, Web browser, can engage in dialogue, seek out rather than merely receive news stories, and in general exchange information across the globe much like any inhabitants of any village or stadium (Levinson, 1999, p. 7).

Neither the idea of the network society nor the notion of 'global village' would become a reality without the development, innovation and sophistication first of all in computer technology, the communication between computers and transfer of data from one computer to another. This has been worked on since the 1960s by various researchers in institutions and universities. Although Manuel Castells in his book *The Internet Galaxy* (2001) is not engaging in heavy technological determinism, the history of formation of the Internet as explained by him is giving a good understanding on how we got to perceive the Internet as a space of free flow of information that led to the rise and importance of the networks in our society.

Secondly, to comprehend the Internet and the World Wide Web in contemporary society we have to look at its origins. The roots of the Internet as recognized by other scholars (Abbate 1999; Sherman 2003), but namely by Castells (2001) are found in the computer network ARPANET. According to Castells (2001) ARPANET was developed by the agency ARPA in 1969 and was originally intended to be an internal computing system among the agency and based on the premise of research in computing to form a technological military advantage over the former Soviet Union during the Cold War (p. 10).

Another important step was computer networks communicating with other networks which was achieved by applying communication protocols (Castells, 2001, p. 11). This led to another step towards designing the Internet as we know it and under which the Internet nowadays works, with the introduction of the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) in the 1970's as noted by Abatte (1999, p. 127). Furthermore as expressed by Abatte (1999) this would enable not just setting up the connection between two hosts, but to create an overall reliable communication over a network (p. 128).

The Internet was booming in these years, however it was generally in the realm of the academic community. According to Castells (2001):

What made it for possible for the Internet to embrace the world was the development of the world wide web. This is an information-sharing application developed in 1990 by an English programmer, Tim Berners-Lee, working at CERN, the Geneva-based, European high-energy physics research center (p. 14-15).

Furthermore, as stated by Castells (2001) Tim Berners-Lee "defined and implemented a software that made it possible to retrieve and contribute information from and to any computer connected via the Internet: HTTP, HTML, and URI (later called URL)" (p. 15). Tim Berners-Lee's (2000) idea was to "create a space in which anything could be linked to anything" (p. 4). Nowadays we use the words Internet and Web interchangeably but, in fact, they are two separate entities referring to different aspects. According to Tim Berners-Lee (2000) "the Internet is a very general communication infrastructure that links computers together" (p. 17) and the web is part of the Internet "it would give information a place to persist" (p. 18). Later in the years as expressed by Tim Berners-Lee (2000) the web would be embedded in the competitions that had taken place with the introduction of various web browsers among the most well known Mozilla and Internet Explorer (p. 103).

In 1995 when the battle about browsers started the world had 16 million Internet users while today there are 3,366 billion Internet users worldwide.⁷ The Internet revolution and connectivity of people and the introduction of the World Wide Web

⁷ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

(www) largely contributed to this increase in the Internet users. Tim Berners-Lee's insights in his autobiography about the invention of the web are interesting, because it's not just about the technical aspects that led to creation of the www, but it's a unique story that tells about the raw idea behind it, about his beliefs in what the web can achieve. Nonetheless, it is a story about a man with a vision about connectivity and a society that is going to be different than what we knew before:

What that first bit of Enquire code led me to was something much larger, a vision encompassing the decentralized, organic growth of ideas, technology, and society. The vision I have for the Web is about anything being potentially connected with anything. It is a vision that provides us with new freedom, and allows us to grow faster than we ever could when we were fettered by the hierarchical classification systems into which we bound ourselves (Berners-Lee, 2000, p. 1).

His ideas are influential, because what he envisioned are attributes that still circulate among the public about the www, Web and Internet is almost synonymously linked with a free space, openness, freedom, non-hierarchy and decentralization, on top of it the idea about the web as a connective space for interaction of people. These ideas accelerated even more with the concept called Web 2.0.

Due to its complexness it is often difficult to grasp and explain what actually Web 2.0 is, according to Tom O'Reilly (2005), who was one of the first people to use this word, it refers to the transformation that took place on the web as new applications and sites started to emerge (O'Reilly, 2005, "Design Patterns and Business Models," para. 2). Furthermore, these applications and websites have a set of a wide range of practises or principles that define them, it can include for instance cost per click, search engine optimization, torrent sites, blogging, wikis or tagging (known also as folksonomy). (O'Reilly, 2005, "The Web As Platform", para. 1). According to Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) Web 2.0 includes various concepts:

Web sites based on a particular set of technologies such as AJAX; Web sites which incorporate a strong social component, involving user profiles, friend links; Web sites which encourage user-generated content in the form of text, video, and photo postings along with comments, tags, and ratings; or just Web sites that have gained popularity in recent years and are subject to fevered speculations about valuations and IPO prospects (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008, "What is Web 2.0", para. 1).

What connects the implications of Web 2.0 is that users are unlike the previous Web era, not just consumers of web content, but producers of various web content. It also allows more participation and collaboration for users and communities in cyberspace. As the next chapter of this thesis on the case study of Train of Hope will outline, the Internet and its endless options within the Web 2.0 in reality enable people to be more active, interact more with another and above all participate and collaborate on ideas and causes.

3.2. Social media — Facebook and Twitter

Social media platforms, mainly Facebook and Twitter are important to mention within the scope of my thesis first of all because these platforms are the most popular ones often used by individuals and group not only for personal use, but in order to reach social or political changes as examples of recent social movements can show us. Secondly, Facebook and Twitter are wide-spread, very accessible and used by different populations, including migrants, refugees, thus it are platforms suitable for utilizing in order to reach this sector in the society nowadays. Thirdly, and most importantly Facebook and Twitter are discussed within the scope of this thesis because both of these platforms have been actively used by Train of Hope. The multiscoped and varied features of both of these platforms have been utilized as well as various practices by Train of Hope have been originating from both of these platforms in order to help and assist incoming refugees.

Within the scope of the different applications and websites of the Web 2.0 as expressed above the term social media emerged to address specific web platforms. As stated by Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) the term social media "is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users" (p. 61). Furthermore, as stated by van Dijk (2013):

The very word 'social' associated with media implies that platforms are user centered and that they facilitate communal activities, just as the term "participatory" emphasizes human collaboration. Indeed, social media can be seen as online facilitators or enhancers of *human* networks—webs of people that promote connectedness as a social value (p.11).

It is very important to note that social media as expressed by van Dijk are enhancing human networks. As will be presented in the analysis chapter one of the primary utilization of social media by Train of Hope has been to reach people, to find human resources and create a map of people that interact online via social media, but at the same time off-line as a real human network. Furthermore, social media can be divided into various types as noted by van Dijk (2013) one of the major categories are 'social network sites' (SNS) (p. 8). For instance, Kaplan and Haenlein (2009), among the different types of social media look specifically at SNS:

Social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other. These personal profiles can include any type of information, including photos, video, audio files, and blogs (p.63).

The most popular and leading SNS with 1,55 billion active users is Facebook according to The Statistics Portal (2016). It was founded in 2004 and according to the Facebook website, its mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them. ⁸

Another popular SNS launched in 2006 is Twitter that has according to The Statistics Portal (2016) by now 320 million active users.⁹ Twitter is described on the one hand as a service for friends, family, and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. ¹⁰ From this description, we can see that it has similar features with social network sites like Facebook. But at the same time, Twitter is an information network, where people can discover various information and get news as they are happening. Due to this other added feature of Twitter in jargon the service is called microblogging and through the years Twitter has been associated more with the 'media' part of social media.

⁸ https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info?tab=page_info

⁹ <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

¹⁰ <https://support.twitter.com/articles/13920>

At latest since the protest movements that emerged during the 'Arab Spring' where people largely used social media to communicate, both Twitter and Facebook are debated as tools for civic engagement in contemporary networked society. Each of these platforms serves a purpose in its own way. For instance as noted by Kirkpatrick (2010) both platforms emphasize rapid sharing of information between individuals, but "Twitter is a broadcast platform- a medium perfect for companies, brands, bloggers, celebrities, and anyone who has something they want lots of people to know about" (p. 304). On the other hand according to Kirkpatrick (2010) Facebook "is an identity-based platform to communicate with people you know offline" (p. 304). Furthermore, as noted by van Dijck (2013):

...users and government embraced Twitter as a tool for connecting individuals and communities of users- a platform that empowers citizens to voice opinions and emotions, that help stage public dialogues and support groups or ideas to garner attention (p. 73).

On the other hand Facebook with its option of creating Facebook pages or groups can serve also as a platform for organizational purposes for individuals and communities, and at the same time a place for non-profits to fundraise via the donate button feature. For the civilians in Train of Hope both platforms Twitter and Facebook as in case of social movements served as a way to communicate with diverse groups and individuals, connect with them, spread and receive information, make their ideas get more attention, as well as use both platforms for organizational and managerial purposes. Therefore the outlined theory about social media in relation to my case study Train of Hope grasps why social media has such an impactful presence for groups and individuals that decide to utilize them for reaching social or political changes in society.

3.3. Civic engagement - tactics and strategies

The involvement of citizens in public life on matters of politics or community issues is not something recent or modern, through history people have showed devotion and will take things in their own hands. According to Thomas Ehrlich (2000):

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes (p. vi).

The ways in which the public participates can take many forms, for instance Zukin et al. (2006) distinguish civic from political engagement. Civic engagement is participation that aims to achieve a public good directly in cooperation with others, it can occur within non-governmental organizations, but this participation is rarely part of electoral politics (Zukin et.al, 2006, p. 51). In my thesis the people involved in Train of Hope have been as civil society participating to achieve a goal in society, helping refugees, however they were not involved in politics.

The different practices of civic engagement as noted by Pancer (2015) can on a civic level include community problem solving, volunteering, active membership in groups or organizations, and fundraising and on an electoral level, practices are the following: voting, campaigning or volunteering for political candidates; thirdly on the political level people can get engaged in forms of protesting, written or email petition, or boycotting (p. 5-6). It is important to note this here because civilians who were engaged in Train of Hope were also part of the community problem solving and volunteering as a form of civic engagement, but at the same time engaging in specific activities such as fundraising.

The scope of this thesis is on two specific forms of civic engagement, on the one hand activism practices and on the other hand volunteering. Under both forms people participate in public life in order to form a dialogue on issues and try to solve that issue, however the general idea and means in which they do so is different. Scholars recognize the blurring lines between these two forms of civil participation, but they also highlight the disparities. According to Pancer (2015) "social responsibility values can lead to civic behaviors such as volunteering, while social justice values might be expected to lead to involvement in social activism" (p. 16). Activism is according to Taib and Imran (2000) associated with a cause or ideal that goes beyond services, it is about advocacy:

To be an activist is to be a mover and galvanizer of a particular cause that one thinks ought to form a permanent landscape of an ideal society. It can be a particularistic form of advocacy (such as movement against animal abuse, domestic violence, gender inequality and such) or a more general form (such as religious reform, greater freedom of expression, democratic change and such) (p. 2).

Regardless of the disparities they both equally contribute to the discussion on how the participation of citizens transformed or enhanced itself in the age of the Internet and social media. According to Castells (2001): "The Internet offers extraordinary potential for the expression of citizen rights, and for the communication of human values...The Internet brings people into contact in a public agora, to voice their concerns and share their hopes" (p. 164). Traditionally both forms of civic engagement outlined have taken place on the 'streets', but in contemporary society citizens can engage in much more diverse ways that can include both online and offline participation or solely online, that was not previously possible without the advances of Internet and social media. At the same time Facebook and Twitter enable various tools for activists for even more fragmented forms of participation for a social or political cause. The next chapter analyzing Train of Hope will outline how both of these platforms and their features served the purposes of a varied participation of people.

3.4. Online activism

Online activism can be described as an action or bringing attention to a cause or participating in an idea of changing some aspect in society using specific tools of social media or SNS. McCaughey and Ayers (2003) define online activism as simply "a politically motivated movement relying on the Internet" (p. 71). The strategies that activists can take via the Internet are by McCaughey and Ayers (2003) divided into strategies that are Internet-enhanced and Internet-based (p. 71). Internet-enhanced activities serve only to support already existing traditional forms of advocacy techniques and Internet-based strategies include activities only possible due to the Internet (McCaughy & Ayers, 2003, p. 72). The civilians engaged in Train of Hope as will be in depth analyzed in the next chapter have been using both of the online

activism strategies, the ones that are purely Internet-based and at the same time strategies that were only enhanced by the Internet.

Furthermore, the term online activism is often interchangeably used with Internet activism, cyberactivism, e-activism or digital activism. Because activism on the Internet is not only limited to social media, some authors like Mary Joyce (2010) prefer to use the term digital activism, that takes into account the technological devices on which social media is for instance used:

The context of digital activism refers both to the digital technology that is used in a given activism campaign and to the economic, social, and political context in which such technology use occurs. Digital technology infrastructure—the combination of networks, code, applications, and devices that make up the physical infrastructure of digital activism—is a starting point but not an ending point (p. 2).

Activists trying to achieve social change or a particular goal use various tactics and practices. It can range from simply setting up a weblog expressing views to sophisticated forms such as cultural jamming or hacktivism. The best known examples of hacktivism tactics are offered by *Anonymous*, an international online group of hackers and activists that are known for carrying out cyber attacks on different websites of governments or corporations.

Online activism can be related also to solely online campaigns, this can be included as a strategy of online activism that is 'Internet-based' term coined by McCaughey and Ayers (2003). These campaigns can be in the form of hashtag or keyword campaigns, that want to draw attention to or facilitate awareness about a social issue. For instance, the Twitter campaign #bringbackourgirls¹¹ is one such example. Secondly, there can be viral campaigns to draw attention and mobilize action such as the KONY 2012¹² campaign or various fundraising campaigns on crowdfunding platforms such as Indiegogo.¹³ Lastly activists can as a community create support

¹¹ In 2014 in Nigeria Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls the hashtag has been used to draw international attention to this story and raise awareness

¹² KONY 2012 is a short documentary that went viral about Ugandan leader Joseph Kony created by a charity called Invisible Children to draw public attention to the leader's crimes

¹³ International crowdfunding website founded in 2008 in which people can fund various ideas, projects or start-ups

through online campaigns that require more hands-on activism, such as the Dark Glasses campaign where Chinese Internet users posted pictures of themselves in support of blind activist Chen Guangcheng.¹⁴ Furthermore, activists via the Internet can create interactive projects with their own applications or multimedia projects in order to track or monitor an issue. Some activists also pursue a creative and interactive way to draw attention to an issue, for instance the political and artistic videogame *Zaytoun*, the little refugee though which players can get an understanding of the people caught in the war in Syria.¹⁵ The online tools that activists can use are diverse ranging from the classic use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or video-sharing website Youtube that have been among the most popular ones used by activists to various other newer platforms that take into account that some activists need their anonymity. For instance, the Crabgrass platform provides secure tools for collaboration and organization and is specifically designed for activists.¹⁶

An important tool has also become the use of smartphones with various communication applications such as Whatsapp to more sophisticated ones used for a particular situation. For instance, protesters during the Hong Kong protest used the FireChat app, that enabled people to send messages from phone to phone without mobile reception or Internet (Bland, 2014, para. 3). Furthermore, livestreaming has also become a part of the activism culture as an alternative source of information. Nowadays, there are enormous amounts of other tools and everyday a lot more are being developed to serve the needs of online activists, websites like *Tactical Technology Collective* or *Socialbrite* provide an overview on the many options that activists have.

3.5. Social movements

Within the scope of online activism, apart from the focus on clearly 'Internet-based' activism one type of activism that has a correlation between offline and online gets extensive attention in the field of social movements (Lievrouw 2011; Castells 2015;

¹⁴ https://informationactivism.org/en/mobilising_for_action#resisting-harmony-chinese-activists-challenge-online-censorship

¹⁵ <http://www.dw.com/en/dw-award-the-bobs-names-its-winners-for-2015/a-18425484>

¹⁶ <https://securityinabox.org/en/lgbti-mena/crabgrass/internet>

Joyce 2010; Gerbaudo 2012). As stated by Mario Diani (2000): "Social movements can be regarded as networks of informal relationships between a multiplicity of individuals and organizations, who share a distinctive collective identity, and mobilize resources on conflictual issues" (p. 387). In my thesis the group of people that were part of Train of Hope can be from this perspective regarded partly as a social movement as they have been driven by informal relationships, they shared collective identity as people that want to help refugees and believe in that it's the right thing to do and were mobilizing resources, human and material to support their cause, thus helping refugees. On the other hand, in order to understand Train of Hope further theories on civic engagement of people during a disaster or emergency situations will be presented to develop a description of the nature of Train of Hope. Social movement and especially with the focus on protest movements have been described by the scholar Manuel Castells (2015). According to Castells (2015):

...social movements do not arise just from poverty or political despair. They require an emotional mobilization triggered by outrage against blatant injustice, and by hope of a possible change as a result of examples of successful uprisings in other parts of the world, each revolt inspiring the next one by networking images and messages in the Internet (p. 248-249).

In case of civilians in Train of Hope even though they are not a protest movement their mobilization to help refugees has been triggered by emotions and outrage about the tragedies unfolding and inhuman treatment of the refugees on their journey to Europe. As noted by another scholar social movements and theories on social movements have undergone a transformation. According to Lievrouw (2011) nowadays the theory about social movements is constituted around the new social movements concept with several characteristics. The new movements as stated by Lievrouw (2011) 'movement as social networks' are being loosely affiliated, informal, anti-hierarchical, there is micromobilization and the organizational form is segmented, diffused and decentralized (p. 48). Furthermore, these movements are small, with diverse groups in ad hoc linkages, they focus on particular, local concerns and are in constant flux and reorganization and use media and ICTs (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 48). Train of Hope as a form of organization as will be further discussed in the next chapter has been internalizing the logic of networking. In that sense people were using ICTs and social media in particular, and by using them,

creating networks of people, which did not have a centralized command, but rather a loose and decentralized one.

Furthermore one of the important factors in researching social movements in the social media context has become the analysis of firstly, mobilization of collective action and secondly, the construction of collective identity. According to Diani (2000): "Collective action requires long term commitments and the willingness to engage in projects which rely upon the contribution of all the parties involved for their success" (p. 391). The people involved in Train of Hope even though consisting of individuals and very diverse one have acted in their efforts to help and assist refugees as a united collective of people. As will be analyzed in the next chapter thought social media they were able engaged more and more people to join and act upon a common idea of helping. Moreover, as the history of their active participation shows the collective action was not only short-termed, but throughout four months of active engagement many of the civilians were involved in Train of Hope and kept the spirit of the collective action alive in a longer run. The Internet as noted to Mary Joyce (2010) provides opportunities for collective action, the information that spreads via social networks can mobilize because people are likely to read messages from people they know and also trust (p. 108). Furthermore, Joyce (2010) stresses that collective action in a movement has been further enabled through the ease that activists can join protest movements, mostly by subscribing to email or joining a Facebook group (p. 109).

Scholars have further asked how social media within social movements contributes to the construction of a collective identity. Anastasia Kavada for example analyses the role of social media in the construction of collective identity by using the case study of the Occupy Wall Street movement and its activists. According to Kavada (2015) "social media helps to blur the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the movement in a manner that fits its inclusive character and its claims that it speaks for the 99%" (p. 883-884) Furthermore:

Social media were used to broadcast and amplify the process of 'identization' taking place face-to-face. 'Likes' and comments were also useful metrics of the

movement's resonance, allowing core activists to reflect on the movement's identity and increase its appeal to the public (Kavada, 2015, p. 884).

Paulo Gerbaudo in his book *Tweets and the Streets Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (2012) analyzed collective identity as a relevant feature of contemporary protest movements using the case study of the Spanish indignados (15-M movement). According to Gerbaudo (2012): "Social media like Facebook and Twitter contributed to transforming individual sentiments of anger into a collective identity animated by a desire to take back the streets after years of demobilization" (p.77). Similarly, in case of Train of Hope the collective identity was triggered by a wish to take things into own hands, as will be analyzed in the next chapter there was a collective sense among people that the government and state is not doing enough for the refugees, that is why people decided collectively to substitute this role. In the case of the 'Arab Spring' protests or the Occupy protest in the United States according to Gerbaudo (2015) what contributed to the identity of a collective were "protest avatars, digital images that act as collective symbols for protest movements" used in the movements (p. 1). Also Mary Joyce is a proponent of the effect of the Internet on collective identity construction of movements, according to her (2010):

The Internet further allows activists to discuss and interact around these issues and to reflect on common experiences. Email lists, discussion groups, comments on Facebook and YouTube all contribute to this process of defining and identifying with the movement (p. 111).

Interesting insights into the discussion of contemporary social movements and the collective action and identity nexus is brought by Bennett and Segerberg (2012), that apply logic of connective action. According to them social movements do not need strong organizational control neither the construction of a unified 'we' (p. 748), in the sense that in connective logic:

...taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships. Sometimes the people in these exchanges may be on the other side of the world, but they do not require a club, a party, or a shared ideological frame to make the connection (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012, p. 752-753).

The process of collective action and identity construction of social movements enabled by the Internet and social media has been so far viewed positively. But as Van Lear and Van Aelst (2010) point out in their study sometimes the construction of collective action is not strong enough, for instance making a person take part in an activism event abroad and sometimes that form of collective action is too easy, when it requires only a click of a button (p. 1161). Sometimes this lowers the motivation of people to engage in what they call 'higher threshold actions', because being politically active by clicking something on a website is much more convenient for some activists. (Van Lear & Van Aelst, 2010, p. 1162) Lastly as noted by the authors of this study "new media are unable to create stable ties between activists" (2010, p. 1160).

Other authors that are less enthusiastic about the power of social media in social movements or activism critically engage in the debate with similar concerns about the limitation of social media in social movements. For instance, Malcolm Gladwell (2010) in comparison with traditional activism says that activism via social media has been built around weak ties and that these weak ties only rarely lead to high-risk activism (para. 15-16). Another point that Gladwell (2010) makes is that the only way so many people can engage in a social cause is that they are not asked to do much, as he says signing up for a donor registry is easier than actions that would involve higher financial or personal risk (para. 18). The online collective action that Malcolm Gladwell highlights are what Evgeny Morozov calls 'slacktivism' practices. According to Morozov (2011): " 'slacktivism' its the more dangerous sibling of online activism, which lead to civic promiscuity, that makes online activists feel useful and important while having previously little political impact" (p. 189-190). Furthermore, Morozov (2011) points out that Twitter or Facebook which promotes 'slacktivist' global campaigns on the Internet are not so successful in transforming initial awareness to action (p. 191).

Thus, what the critics can remind us of is that not all forms of online activism are equal, donating, signing up for a social cause or tweeting an already trending topic is not the same as engaging in the real life world with much higher risk found in a protest movements. In this field where offline participation, besides online

engagement, is needed has to be further studied in-depth by scholars interested in the power of social media in social movements in order to draw some conclusions. However, this thesis shows to the reader that there can be an interlink between online and off-line engagement and activism. While civilians in Train of Hope could have used pure online based activism such as only tweeting about refugees or support them financially via crowdfunding campaign, many of the people that were engaged in Train of Hope were participating, thus helping refugees at the spot while learning online about this form of participation and activism.

3.6. Volunteering, volunteerism and NGOs

Extensive analysis and research over the years has been carried out on social movements and activism, how social media transforms or affects the traditional notion of social movement and activism as stated above. Activism either traditional or online is understood as civic engagement that is mostly political or embedded in politics, on the other hand only a few studies are dealing with the more subtle forms of civic engagement – volunteering. One reason might be that volunteering does not usually have a political aim as noted by Passy and Giugni (2001, p. 7). As these authors further note the action of volunteering for organizations can be considered "a form of social altruism, type of action that takes place in 'the form of generously offered gift'." (Passy & Giugni, 2000, p. 67).

Thus, in this research area, maybe also due to its apolitical nature, volunteering is in a sense swallowed by the more 'heroic' form of civic engagement – activism. In activism collective action or collective identity is crucial, while in volunteering it is about individual identity in a group, there has to be a strong individual pro-action. Also motivation, at the same time, has to be stronger than in the case of activism. In the context of my thesis it is important to outline shortly also theories on volunteering as a form of civic engagement, because while Train of Hope shares similarities with social movements and online activism, in parallel their engagement has been about altruism and prosocial behavior, thus volunteering as well. Apart of the politics under which the refugee crisis is unfolding and framed the motivation for people to participate and help refugees within Train of Hope has been a very simple one, to show humanity by helping people in need. And this was not necessarily a

political expression, meaning that people did not advocate for better asylum or migration procedures, but first and for most providing an ad hoc help and assistance to refugees. At the same time the motivation and personal persuasion to actually participate had to be stronger.

And it is motivation that is so profound in volunteering that studies focus on this aspect when they look at the nature of volunteering. Many studies focus on motivation, values or beliefs of an individual through a functional theory of volunteerism. Scholars ask what are the motives of people to volunteer (Snyder et al., 1998); who and why gets involved in volunteering from a psychological and behaviorism perspective (Snyder, Omoto 2009) or if motives can predict task preference (Houle, Sagarin, Kaplan, 2005). Another approach to volunteerism theory is the theory of personality, for instance the analysis of prosocial behavior. (Penner et al., 2004) There are also combined studies of motivation and personality theory, how prosocial value motivation but also personality traits can lead individuals to volunteering. (Carlo et al., 2005) These analysis can answer crucial questions raised by volunteering to understand why people decide to volunteer, on the other hand the focus of this study is to look at the big picture of volunteering in contemporary networked society, if and how the Internet and social media effect volunteering, how the tools enabled by Internet and social media affect the operation of a voluntary organization, if they give volunteering organizations or individuals that want to help the capacity for new opportunities.

Firstly, we have to define volunteering. According to Musick and Wilson (2008) "Volunteering is a form of altruistic behavior. Its goal is to provide help to others, a group, an organization, a cause, or the community at large, without expectation of material reward" (p.3). Thus, the ultimate sense of volunteering is the orientation towards altruistic acts and a sense of strong prosocial behavior.

According to Dingle et al. (2001):

By bringing people together to act for the good of the community, voluntary action creates bonds of trust and encourages cooperation; in other words, it creates social capital. If the people who volunteer happen to be of different ethnic origins, religions, and economic status, the fact of their acting together can help to increase social harmony (p. 6).

Similarly, Train of Hope was consisting of volunteering people who were from different walks of life, different cultural and religious backgrounds and working together side by side without any internal or external conflicts between them. Furthermore, as in the case of activism, we can say that volunteering in the age of the Internet has two dimensions- volunteering that is solely 'Internet-based' and 'Internet-enhanced' (McCaughey & Ayers, 2003). For instance Yair Amichai-Hamburger (2007) analyses the phenomenon of online volunteer projects. According to Amichai-Hamburger (2007) the Internet is used as an outlet for social development and volunteers that are being recruited via the Internet can engage in work for improving the lives of different people around the world (p. 544). This research offers insight into how the Internet can serve as a place of 'recruiting' potential volunteers that can be involved in different projects according to their interests or what they care about. Internet's ability as a tool for 'recruiting' potential volunteers has had a profound place by the civilians of Train of Hope as will be analyzed in detail in the upcoming chapter.

Furthermore, authors Sproull, Conley and Moon (2004) elaborate on volunteering on the Internet through the context of collaborative work groups and discussion groups on the internet (p.142). According to them people can show their prosocial behavior and voluntary help towards one another, for instance by donating financially or donating in the form of contributing software, setting up electronic groups for disadvantaged people or organizing and maintaining voluntary online discussion groups (Sproull, Conley & Moon, 2004, p. 140). Furthermore, the study also showed that prosocial behavior on the Internet in some ways resembles prosocial behavior taking place offline (Sproull et al., 2004, p. 142). Both of the observations from these authors are important to mention because in my thesis the civilians from Train of Hope made use also from this form of pure online volunteering, especially donating financially via crowdfunding campaign. And people equally showed their prosocial behavior online and off-line.

Another layer of studying online volunteering is by looking at the context of volunteering in structured or institutionally organized forms of volunteering, at non-

governmental organizations (NGO). According to Raja-Yusof, Norman, Abdul-Rahman, Nazri and Mohd-Yusoff (2015) "social media such as Facebook and Twitter have become popular within and outside the NGO context" (p. 389). The authors in this study are discussing voluntary behavior in fulfilling NGO social missions through social media, how social media helps cyber volunteering activities of Malaysia based NGOs representing social missions of Islamic education. They found that these NGOs used social media in five key activities promoting, training, fundraising, knowledge sharing and problem solving (Raja-Yusof et al., 2015, p. 391). Similar research concentrating on adoption of social media by NGOs has been done by Nah and Saxton (2012), they analyze if NGOs use social media, how often they use it, and also if they employ "dialogic relationship-building messages" (p. 295). It was based on the premise of how NGOs via social media fulfill their social mission through 3 strategic approaches which are fundraising, lobbying and market-based (Nah & Saxton 2012, p. 297). This research, however, focused on large scale NGOs and it might not be fitting to apply the result to small scale NGOs.

Although, there are similarities between NGOs and volunteering organizations in the aim of helping, NGOs also engage a lot in lobbying, advocacy and focus on donations or charity, volunteering organizations engage in fundraising too, but the other elements might be missing. Most of the time it might only be about passing help without advocating or lobbying as was the case in my research with the volunteers of Train of Hope. In their daily functioning and operating they were not engaged in advocacy or lobbying.

Furthermore, as stated above like activism, NGOs also have a political aim, thus the model of usage of social media by voluntary groups could be better understood through the research done by the *Volunteering Validation Highway* (VVH) project that is focusing on the use of social media and online tools in the recognition and validation of the skill of volunteers. According to VVH, volunteers are motivated to use social media for finding information and sharing ideas, raising awareness, but only some use them for fundraising purposes or problem solving.¹⁷ Furthermore, there is also a study by Nick J. Fox (2001) about how for instance medical voluntary

¹⁷ http://vvh.euroinnov.eu/files/social_media_in_volunteering.pdf

groups in the UK use the Internet, which came the closest to analysis of volunteers and voluntary groups in the context of 'networked society'.

However, there is a general lack of contemporary studies in this context to explain why, if and for what purposes social media is employed by volunteers in their offline participation. Therefore this thesis by looking at volunteering group, Train of Hope, tries to fill in this gap. Firstly, studies focus broadly on the Internet and are older, or when they focus on particularly social media it's in the context of how activists or NGOs employ the tools of social media. That is why civic engagement during an emergency event that will be described next could also serve to fit the puzzle on how to theoretically grasp the utilization of social media tools by volunteers. In the case study of the civilians from Train of Hope and their engagement with refugees it became clear that, because of their structure, that they are not an NGO neither a pure social movement, but they have been volunteering there has to be another forms to describe their actions and behavior. At the same time my thesis and the case study of Train of Hope is surrounded by the refugee crisis, by a situation which has been described as an exceptional or emergency event, in fact crisis, because of its scale, volume and acuteness. Therefore, by looking at civic engagement, online based or online supported volunteering of people during crisis events and emergencies the case study of Train of Hope can be better understood and grasped.

3.7. Civic engagement online during crisis events, emergencies or disasters

As noted by Palen and Liu (2007): "High involvement by members of the public in disaster is not new, though ICT makes their role more visible and broadens the scope of their participation" (p. 728). As they also highlight in post-disaster like cases the first to respond are not professionals, but usually locals and even emergent volunteering groups (Palen & Liu, 2007, p. 728-729). Nowadays a major booster in active citizen involvement, peer-to-peer communication and crisis management following a natural disaster such as major floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, fire outbreaks, but also during sudden crisis events or emergencies of various kinds is as a direct result of social media. According to Hayley Watson and Kim Hagen (2015)

who analyzed the role of social media and citizen engagement before, during, and after a crisis: "Twitter and Facebook, have presented opportunities for transformations in the interactive nature of communication and the ease with which it is possible to share information and content during emergencies" (p. 142).

Furthermore, as they note the ICTs are nowadays important because "such technologies can enable the exchange of information with increasing speed and range, and assist in enhancing situational awareness, organizing response strategies, locating missing people and mobilizing resources and people" (Watson & Hagen, 2015, p. 142). Many of these features of ICTs have been utilized by Train of Hope, especially using ICTs in order to mobilize human and material resources to support refugee in the refugee crisis as well as looking for missing people.

Furthermore, these changes are supported by different case studies. For instance, Twitter's role has grown in disaster response as many people got engaged through this platform after the January 2011 earthquake in Japan. According to the *PewResearchCenter* (2011) the microblogging site served for getting breaking news from various sources and eyewitnesses, as an electronic bulletin board for passing on tips from locations of bathroom to the ways to track missing people (para. 5). It became also a platform for fundraising and expressing thoughts and condolences for the victims (para. 6). Furthermore, as noted by Lindsay (2011) during the earthquake in Japan, Twitter was used to request assistance by individuals who tweeted for help because they could not use a phone (p. 291).

Thus, from this example it's possible to say that Twitter can serve as a tool for the engagement of the public following a crisis or disaster for emergency response and emergency relief. In my case study, Train of Hope engaged in emergency response by providing as will be shown in the next chapter material support and donations to refugees assisted by the use of social media through which these responses have been called and coordinated. Other forms of emergency response represented by civilians of Train of Hope has been helping and assisting refugees by non-material support for instance engaging in helping to find missing refugees via Facebook. Train of Hope contributed to emergency relief also by setting up own crowdfunding campaign to raise money in support of the people affected by the refugee crisis.

As analyzed in other case studies Twitter can also support emergency coordination and crowdsourcing, a form of problem solving by distributing tasks to large groups of people. This has been analyzed by Palen and Starbird (2011) in their research on how 'voluntweeters' or people tweeting got self-organized on Twitter for crowdsourcing after the Haiti 2010 earthquake. Central to their study was also to see how the "Tweak to Tweet low tech-solution that enables crisis-specific hashtag syntax" (Starbird and Stamberger 2010, p. 2) would contribute to the efforts of voluntweeters. These researchers engage in the development field of crisis management via use of ICTs or in their jargon 'crisis informatics' for the needs of the public that engage in crisis. But the public itself is getting organized and more professional in this field as the importance of social media following disasters is growing. For instance, the website *Standby task force* already has a network of volunteers that are trained and ready to collaborate with communities online immediately in the aftermath of a natural disaster. The emergence of digital volunteers for emergency relief happened also after the Nepal Earthquake in May 2015, a part of hashtags drawing attention to the earthquake, there was a citizen led disaster-relief organization consisting of online volunteers called *VOICE* that were also engaging in crowdsourcing. Similarly, online volunteers engaged in 2010 during the fire outbreak in Russia, here Russian activists launched a citizen-based disaster response agency that was doing crisis mapping online (Meier, 2011, p. 1249).

Civic engagement in a crisis or disaster can thus take form from ad hoc citizen 'voluntweeters' to professional 'trained digital humanitarians' as in the case of *Standby task force* volunteers as they call themselves. Apart from that there are other ways in which people can voluntarily participate following an emergency event, these forms however are not about direct help or relief as seen by the tactics above. Sometimes participation takes only a form of solidarity expression, thus more related to 'slacktivism' practices, where only a hashtag or word of sympathy and condolence shows the action after a disaster or emergency occurred. This has happened recently for instance following the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris with the viral condolence campaign or changing profile pictures to a French flag on Facebook following the terrorist attack in Paris.

On the other hand, sometimes involvement of citizens online after an emergency can transform citizen journalism, or people can become as noted by Cooper (2015) 'accidental journalists' (p. 234). These people are on spot direct witnesses of a crisis or disaster, reporting and informing others live about the situations; this can be done through tweets and hashtags, geolocated images or videos. In my thesis an individual volunteer as will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter has been acting as a journalist by accident, because he happened to be in places, on the borders where many refugees have been living in ad hoc refugee camps, where no media was present, thus his role was also substituting the lack of information from these particular places on the borders. Thus as noted by Cooper (2015) Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and SMS messages allow survivors to play a role in the framing of a crises (p. 234). The analyzed individual volunteer in my case study has not been a survivor of a crisis situation, he was part of crisis relief responses, however, with his tweeting from the spot he added to the framing of the overall refugee crisis.

The theories mentioned above and explanations of online activism, social movement, NGOs, and civic participation after an emergency are important because many times the ways in which civic engagement takes place through Internet and social media are not clearly defined. Thus, some tactics used by social movements or activist are the same and also the same tactics can be used by volunteers or people responding to an emergency. The tactics used by these different forms of civic engagement are overlapping even though the context and purpose in which they use it are different. But in order to understand lesser researched areas and to formulate my analysis to answer how volunteers incorporated online tools of social media in their offline engagement it's imperative to look also at these other forms of civic engagement that can provide useful ground rather than limit research based on solely volunteering online.

As all the above forms of civic engagement showed they are a reaction to situations or events that create a sense of the need to either show solidarity or take action. And this is not something new that emerged with ICTs and namely social media. Neither has altruistic engagement for the help of others or activism emerged as something brand new due to technological and communication opportunities. Like Marshal McLuhan would say all these are just 'extensions' (1964) of our self. And all these online tools in use by ICTs are providing options. They did not replace real offline

engagement of thousands of concerned citizens. Hence, there will always become situations that require offline engagement and secondly, some people are still willing to also participate offline. Civic engagement as argued in this thesis did not drastically transform and shift to solely the online world, but online tools have complemented the efforts of civic engagement and effectiveness of namely volunteering organizations and volunteers will be presented in the case study in the next chapter. In my research I have also seen that online and off-line sphere are becoming blurred and linked. The people of Train of Hope that have voluntarily helped refugees did so powered by social media. Facebook and Twitter has been used for giving and spreading information about the needs of refugees and people would be bringing the needed material resources directly to the spot. Furthermore, both of the platforms have been used also for connecting with potential volunteers whom they asked to come to the place of the actual help. And while Train of Hope provided for its potential volunteers the option of only Internet-based activism such as donating money, the majority of the activism was only powered by online tools and performed off-line.

Important to note at this stage is that what combines all the forms of civic engagement and the use of ICTs and social media in their operating is that at large they challenge dominant forms of power or the status quo. ICTs and social media provide civil society with tools to form as noted by de Certeau (1984) 'tactics' and practices, simply "ways of operating" (p. xiv) with which people can re-employ, transform or adapt with creativity or 'little tricks' to a society that is driven by as noted by de Certeau (1984) 'strategies' that seek to manage and discipline (p. 36). They can empower citizens to become active rather than passive actors in society with establishing their own uses and ways that can balance power. In that way, civil society can also with the help of online tools form what is known by de Certeau (1984) as 'the network of an antidiscipline' (p. xv).

In the current refugee crisis civil engagement of individuals of Train of Hope with their 'tactics' of helping were challenging the dominant discourse created by EU policy makers in the years with tighter immigration and asylum policies, in short the 'Fortress Europe', the 'unwelcoming' Europe for refugees and migrants. The volunteers that have been active during the current refugee crisis with their everyday practice of determination for ad hoc and quick help, and support to refugees that was

organized and managed via social media, were showing that there is another side to that a more humane, rather than bureaucratic one. Social media and the Internet served as a trigger for people's activism and secondly it enabled the coordination and management of such activism.

People that engaged in help for refugees were not satisfied with 'the established order', they saw that while policies and regulations exist toward refugees and migrants something was still not working properly, thus citizens could be empowered by social media to fill that gap left by EU policy makers. Moreover, ordinary people from grassroots organizations filled the gap that had long been considered for the exclusivity of EU policy makers. As noted by de Certeau (1984) metaphorically 'tactics' are about maneuvering 'within the enemy's field of vision', within its territory (p. 37).

Never before have ordinary people got so engaged with the issues of refugees and migrants as in the current refugee crisis. Largely also thanks to ICTs and social media the networks of volunteers and power of volunteers accelerated. People instead of waiting for the official 'system' to handle the refugee crisis, handled it themselves with their immediate actions from within, because they had the opportunity for that due to the crisis being very proximate and also the means and ways do it, resources and online tools. As noted by de Certeau (1984) 'tactics' used by people in their everyday practices are exactly specified by the fact that they take advantage of the 'opportunities' on which they depend, on the moments that pop-up (p. 37).

The next chapter about the case study on the voluntary organization Train of Hope will elaborate on the premise of how ordinary citizens during the current refugee crisis by employing social media tools were creating offline the antithesis to EU policy maker's discourse of 'Fortress Europe' by an active welcoming culture.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Three days after Zafar was sent back home by the Austrian government, where he had applied for asylum with the realization that he is not allowed to work or study, neither was he assigned a German language course. From pure boredom , even though as he says: "I am not a Twitter guy", he was scrolling down the Twitter page. One of his friends retweeted something in German so he translated it and found out that the 'Train of Hope' needs Arabic translators. Not long after that, he became the coordinator for 500 other translators that were first contact point each day for incoming refugees. Today, as many of the asylum seekers have applied in Austria, he wants to use the Train of Hope social media platform to put a personality to refugees and a human face to the refugee crisis. By creating online content with refugees, he wants to change the stereotypes, but also break down the wall between locals and refugees.

One day at the beginning of September 2015, Robert was helping refugees at the main train station in Vienna when a call from Rözske, a city that lies on the border of Serbia and Hungary came. One of his colleagues asked who has a passport and wants to go to the border. Without a moment of hesitation Robert was sitting later that day in the convoy of five cars full of donations to Rözske.

What he and other volunteers did not know at that time was that Rözske was not actually a refugee camp at the beginning. There were no Doctors Without Borders or other humanitarian organizations, it was just a pitch black field with few lights from two police cars and burning fires where 2,000 refugees standing in a circle, women and kids freezing in the mud, were surrounded by 300 Hungarian masked police men. For the volunteers from Vienna, it was supposed to be just a task of delivering donations because many of them had their jobs to go to in the morning but Robert said: "I need to stay here I can't leave now it's too bad." He did not know anyone, it was just him and six other volunteers in a provisional camp with a 2x2m camping tent functioning as a medical station and a same-sized food tent where they had been dividing bananas into three pieces. Robert and other volunteers took over the coordination of the camp with limited possibilities.

In the first night, Robert tweeted from Rözske a call for more volunteers and even his phone number. Although as he says he hardly used Twitter before in one day he got 100 new followers. He and his fellow friends would be in the days to come, tweeting the needs for supplies and people would be sending donations even from as far as Glasgow.

The above two anecdotes exemplify the ways in which two different people from two different walks of life got involved in the 2015 refugee crisis through the use of social media and how they later made use of social media to increase their help and involvement. Zafar was a refugee from the Middle East who eventually started helping other refugees – a process initiated by social media. Robert, on the other hand, was born and bred in Europe and through the use of Twitter and other forms of social media, found himself in the midst of an environment where he started helping refugees who were arriving in Europe.

This shows us how social media has been employed by 'ordinary people' in society to provide help to refugees. Social media has offered ordinary people such as Robert, Zafar and many more a new way of being actively engaged during the current refugee crisis to provide systematic help to refugees. In the upcoming pages, through focusing on civic engagement, now referred to as Train of Hope, I will elaborate on the importance of the use of social media from those who have wished to give a helping hand to those who were seeking asylum in a foreign land.

As argued in this thesis, had it not been for social media the civic engagement and participation of ordinary people to help refugees and asylum seekers would look very different. As was already stated in the previous chapter, the engagement of people in the public realm for different causes or during crisis situations is not a new phenomenon that emerged because of ICTs and social media in particular. However, as claimed in this thesis and as will be presented on the case study of Train of Hope, civic engagement because of social media and online tools of the Internet has become multiplied. As noted by Gerbaudo (2012) modern media can constitute a channel through which for instance social movements can not only communicate, but organize their actions and mobilise their constituencies, furthermore, they can give shape to the way people come together and act together (p. 4).

It is argued in this thesis, through the example of the utilization of social media by ToH, that the use of forms of social media impact the way civic engagements take place. In other words, an important claim of this thesis is that had it not been for the availability of social media, the ToH experience would have been greatly different. The difference is supported also by the very nature of social media that is different from other types of media. According to Lievrouw (2011) one of the distinguishing feature of this type of 'new' media in comparison with more conventional communication systems is their ubiquity, "that they encourage- the seeming presence of new media everywhere, all the time which affects everyone in the societies where they are used..." (p. 12) and secondly their interactivity that at the same time supports conditions for participation (p. 13).

Thus, throughout this chapter, I will focus mainly on three processes that social media has been predominantly used in while organizing help for refugees in Austria by the ordinary public. The first of these processes has to do with the ways in which the use of social media becomes a valuable practice in fostering a well organized social network in and around refugees and people who are there to help. Secondly, I will focus on how social media makes it possible within a networked social group to utilize both crowdfunding but also peer to peer problem solving and social help. Finally, through a closer look at one of my interviewees, I will elaborate on how social media makes civic engagement possible, even on an individual level, not only in terms of establishing situational awareness but also fostering crises relief management, which includes actual social, material, and pragmatic help.

In order to achieve this, my analysis focuses particularly on Train of Hope. On specific people that have been part of Train of Hope as volunteers helping refugees since the beginning. Thus, the analysis first of all draws on in-depth interviews with five young people who have been daily and actively engaged in the organization as well as engaged in providing direct help and assistance to refugees. Furthermore the analysis draws on personal observations at the place where Train of Hope has been active and interacted with refugees.

Train of Hope, as a self established and self supporting civic engagement group, is a valuable case in terms of showing us how the use of social media can actually foster social networks and uninstitutionalised organizations in times of crisis. Unlike 20 years ago social media nowadays created first of all a pathway to organize from the grassroots of highly dispersed and heterogeneous strangers, a self-supporting 'peer network' without any official or institutional 'body' while working very efficiently just as a professional organization would. According to Shirky (2008) cited in Fuchs (2014) "social media and social software are tools that increase our ability to share, to co-operate, with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutional institutions and organizations" (p. 20-21). As Shirky (2008) further notes, social tools make it "easier for groups to self-assemble and for individuals to contribute to group effort without a formal management" (p. 21). The case of Train of Hope can be interpreted as a case in which what Shirky talks about actually takes form. We see in Train of Hope precisely how a group of ordinary people use social media to formulate an unstructured, none the less efficient, organization that works towards a goal through the use of social media.

As mentioned above, a second process in which we can talk about the use of social media in times of crises, is crowdfunding and peer networking. In these processes, we see through Train of Hope that social media actually turns the social network into a living organism by providing the needed interactivity. In this sense, social media provided the basis for the functioning of such a 'peer network' based on solely crowdfunding and peer to peer solutions to provide concrete help to refugees. And all of these processes that have appeared due to social media became faster and bigger. In the analysis this will be presented through the examples in which Train of Hope

has been utilizing social media, namely Facebook and Twitter in their daily attempts to mobilize people for helping, getting resources and donations.

Finally, by looking at the multiscoped utilization of social media by an individual volunteer we can further draw on the implications of the role of social media in off-line participation during specific times of crisis. So, all these three processes can provide a picture of how people from the grassroots with the use of ICTs and social media in particular can play a significant role in humanitarian relief during a humanitarian crisis, thus crisis management, besides the already established big humanitarian NGOs and governments.

Furthermore, what has been observed overall as one of the main features why such engagement of ordinary people in the age of the Internet actually worked and stood out in comparison with traditional big humanitarian NGOs or the state, is that social media was not only used. The very logic of what is called the logic of networking has been transcended in Train of Hope, the mentality of a 'rhizomatic' functioning as mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

Up until this point, I have emphasized the importance of social media in the refugee crisis in general and in the case of Train of Hope in particular. I have argued that social media has been a valuable tool in formulation of social networks, peer to peer networking, crowdfunding, and other various processes used in helping refugees. Important to note at this stage however, is that even though the use of social media in Train of Hope has been pervasive, social media was not taking away the conventional off-line activism, as off-line participation was actually crucial beside online mobilization, but also because many of the volunteers were eager to help directly on the spot. Social media and online tools were something that came beside the off-line participation, something that magnified the already existing devotion of people. And in this case study, social media aided the importance also of off-line participation, what was reflected here was as noted by Gerbaudo (2012) about social movements is that social media is not replacing physical public space with a virtual one (p. 159). Gerbaudo in his work mainly focuses on the notion of space, the physical space where people are assembling and gathering, but at the same time he mentions social media. That social media can be used in order to re-appropriate the public space and that social media support the use of physical space. Thus, how social media intersects

between the online sphere and the actual place of gathering. Moreover, social media in case of ToH worked on the side of the people that gathered as volunteers as a form of extension of their capabilities.

4.1. Train of Hope – the voice of civil society

Train of Hope is a self-organized group of ordinary people that decided to help incoming refugees to Vienna, directly at the train station, behind the context of the refugee crisis in Europe for five months between the August 2015 and the end of the year 2015. On the one hand they represent what Palen and Liu (2007) call emergent and ephemeral organizations that arise following disasters, it "supports the need for communities to be able to improvise response under uncertain and dynamic conditions" (p. 733). But because the refugee crisis was not a natural disaster situation, the group of self-organized citizens acting as volunteers share commonalities with social movements as well. As a part of civil society they were primarily engaging in volunteering with a emphasis on apolitical neutrality, but still there is as noted by one of the interviewees Günther, a politics of taking things into their own hands because the state is failing and also not waiting until the state does something, because organized people are like the state and now they have the opportunity. For this reason, they grew to become not just a volunteer group, but a social movement utilizing collective action to help human beings caught in a humanitarian catastrophe regardless of their religion or culture is, and their reasons for fleeing.

From this point of view people involved in Train of Hope understood the meaning of the Geneva Convention far more better than policy makers. Since WWII up until now in Europe regarding refugees as explained in the chapter II the Geneva Convention is one of the main pillars of policies regarding refugees and asylum seekers. While the people from Train of Hope, as non-policy makers, are not entitled to decide on the process and rules of the asylum seeking and protection, they have been treating everyone as a refugee, handing them a helping hand at the train station and helping them to get their way to a secure and safe place where they wished to go. They have in their everyday involvement with refugee showed that Geneva Convention is not just a legal document, but an universal moral guide. Something

which policy makers are trying to often replace by different forms of subsidiary or short-term protection mechanisms. As noted by Zafar: *"We had to just show refugees, you know what, the difficult part is behind you from this point on it will get better for you, in the sense that being treated as a human being. Not necessarily in paper work, but to just be treated with dignity, with respect and that what we aimed to do."* As further noted by Zafar: *"Those are people who are running for a reason, so they are people, people who are afraid and it is my duty and duty of other people human beings to comfort them. And then we will take it from there, see where they belong, if their case is valid enough, if there is a treat to them, but the most important thing is when a human being is afraid you put everything on the side, comfort them and then you deal with it. You don't look on an afraid human being, 'nope sorry', that is not who we are in our core that is what makes us different from other creatures."*

The group of volunteers in their everyday help to those in need, can be in the bigger picture defined as noted by de Certeau (1984) when "everyday practices can be defined as internal manipulations of a system-that of an established order" (p. 24). According to my interviewee Günther: *"Train of Hope, was established as a result of the failure of established institutions (public and private) to coordinate a united humanitarian response to the influx of refugees into Vienna and Austria."* They became a microcosm within a macrocosm of society in their everyday acting in opposition to what the official government was representing. They were as expressed by de Certeau (1984) in their way of using imposed systems constituting "the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations" (p.18). As noted by my interviewee, Günther, what self-organized groups and initiatives helping refugees achieved was a *"renaissance of civil society in their motivation, thinking and confidence. Assisted by smart phones and social media, individuals are empowered to organize grass roots initiatives that deliver low cost crisis management services that are almost on par with established institutions."* As noted by another of my interviewee: *"We changed the perspective, we changed the expectations and we changed those thousand of people's lives"* (Zafar).

And while today the organization is not active, because no more refugees are at the moment coming to the train station what stays in the interviewees is the 'spirit' of

that moment when the refugee crisis in Europe started. It encapsulated a 'movement' of civic engagement, the awakening of civil society from political apathy to activism. Consequently, they restored humanity with a collective achievement that tried to change a piece of the world by working together and made the official politics of constraints irrelevant. As noted by one of my interviewees: *"This has been a Woodstock for our generation"* (Robert). In keeping alive the drive and legacy of the zeitgeist that at the end of last summer brought people together in the spirit of carrying and sharing with refugees the self-organized group of people even today is at least active on social media, as noted by one of the interviewees right now it is the only active part of the organization: *"The social media team are the ones who are keeping the heartbeat going up until today"* (Zafar).

As I spoke with my interviewees about their future plans of Train of Hope after their officially ended their presence on the train station since no more refugees are arriving at the train station they were all perceiving it that people that were part of Train of Hope are at least the majority of them motivated to keep on helping refugees, but as such Train of Hope is fragmenting itself and lot of people started to work on various other projects related to refugees. For instance as noted by Günther: *"So we had the biggest team translators, helpers, and coordinators and they all went to different camps. We are working right now on a project called 'House of Hope'¹⁸, as we are setting it up we have the same people from ToH."*

4.2. Creating networks, off-line and on-line: The power of social media

Train of Hope has been from the beginning embedded in the dynamics of social media. As noted by one interviewee: *"Social media was the voice to the outside"* (Amanda), while another one adds *"interesting thing is that social media is pretty much the most important part we have, it is that part which gives us the power that we have"* (Günther). As noted by Palen and Liu (2007) studying civic engagement during crisis situations, ICT supported communication, can be a powerful means by

¹⁸ Some of the people from Train of Hope are in the future planning on creating an integration and primary care house for refugees

which certain kinds of organizations that are temporarily popping up during crisis or emergency situations can occur (p. 733).

The name itself of the organization had initially been a hashtag with which the small group of volunteers at the train station started to tweet about their presence at the train station where they helped refugees. And this was the first step for a systematic building up of a network of like-minded but heterogeneous people with a shared commonality to help people in need. As noted by Castells (2010) the logic of networks can be implemented into any system or set of relationships using new information technologies (p. 70). In Train of Hope, what I have observed during the interviews was that all the interviewees shared a commonality in the perception of how they as Train of Hope at the beginning, as only a handful of self-organized volunteers grew within such a short time to become one of the biggest grassroots organizations in humanitarian aid in Austria. As noted in the interview with Günther: *"We became a spearhead of civil society."* The interviewee Dominik perceived social media as a decisive tool that made their network of people become professional: *"Through social media it is easier to get help from other people, if they see you as a professional group, it's also easier to get money for buying tickets and other stuff, it's also easier to get recognized from the government, so social media was quite important in this matter too. Without social media I think we would not have been recognized as like this professionals."* [sic]

Train of Hope internalized the logic of networks also by featuring the flexibility that is according to Manuel Castells theory one of the paradigms of networks. As he notes, "organizations and institutions can be modified and even fundamentally altered, by rearranging their components" (2010, p. 71). New technologies can, as stated by Castells (2010), turn the rules upside down, because the material basis of an organization can be reprogrammed and retooled (p. 71). As noted by one of my interviewees Amanda in comparison with big humanitarian NGOs in Vienna, Train of Hope has been considered a speedboat in the sense of adopting faster to any situation: *"I think this was our main selling point in the business language, so we were super quick whenever something happened"* (Amanda), as she further notes *"we would stay at the train station as long as people would need us. We didn't care about opening hours or any bureaucracy."* Another of my interviewee, Günther, notes that

even thought with the time as the organization grow bigger and as they plans on the future expand, thus as they plan on going beyond the simple help and assistance on the train station, but engage in helping refugees in integration and in order to do so to formalize the organization, they still wanna keep their flexibility: *"We were this caterpillar and grow up. We were at the train station before we met, it was cool, the ideas came, that we were all strangers at this one point, now we are a unit of 300 strong and we are super motivated to continue in the future and now we are evolving into a more structured organization. And we still wanna keep this flexibility alive, but just because we are formalized does not mean that we don't have flexibility. I don't see it that way at all. I mean look at Google they have formal structures too, but they are very very flexible."*

Another important feature of a networked logic presented by Manuel Castells is that networks unlike traditional organizational structures are considered horizontal. According to Castells (2010) who demonstrates the horizontalness on a business model of a contemporary organization: "The 'horizontal corporation' is a dynamic and strategically planned network of self-programmed, self-directed units based on decentralization, participation and coordination" (p. 178). While Train of Hope is not a corporation, the mentality of Train of Hope as noted by one of the interviewees resembles the idea of a contemporary organization based on horizontal or 'flat' relations: *"Even though I was the Head of Translators, whatever that means, at the end of the day there was no hierarchy, the only difference between me and the other volunteers I coordinated was that I got the information better and I was distributing them where I though they are needed"* (Zafar).

Similarly like Manuel Castells, scholars Lovink and Rossiter (2010) by studying organized forms of networks as a condition of post-modernity, observe that "organized networks emphasize horizontal, mobile, distributed and decentralized modes of relation. A culture of openness, sharing and project-based forms of activity are key characteristics of an organized networks" (para. 12). A culture of openness has been present also in Train of Hope as many of the people that gathered as volunteers were people from diverse communities, cultural, religious backgrounds, lifestyle, countries, genders and ages all gathered as volunteers. As noted by Amanda: *"It was beautiful to see that people of all genders, ages and religions can*

work so closely together without any bad things happening.", as she further notes: "noone cared if you are a refugee or born in Austria or wherever, people just did not care at all about this." Another interviewee Günther adds, "your background stories became irrelevant what was only relevant was that you are here and that you had your heart on the right place and you are willing to work."

It was noted by interviewees, that the wide media coverage of the refugee crisis played a role in getting the attention of people, encouraging people to be sensitive about the refugee crisis and making it an agenda of concern. However, they also mentioned that it was social media that provided the infrastructure of getting the crucial 'critical mass' of people, the helpers engaged in concrete things and getting the daily resources for providing overall for 150,000 refugees within just three months and without which the concrete help would have looked very different. Social media aided the organization because it had an enormous effect on mobilization and participation of people and obtaining material resources, both important factors without which the group of volunteers would not be able to operate or not to such an extent as it did. As noted by Castells (2015) Internet and wireless platforms are "decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating and for deciding" (p. 257).

The upcoming pages will further elaborate on the notion of social media and networks by looking at human and material resources that have been gathered both by peer to peer (P2P) and crowdfunding solutions. In contemporary society, networks as well as peer to peer are buzzwords that describe not only a template of computer systems and are to be found only on the Internet, but as noted by Bauwens (2006) P2P goes beyond its technological term, it is " a new template of human relationships" (p. 151) that emerged in a new context because of the new technologies that can go beyond time and space (Bauwens, 2005, p. 12). According to Bauwens (2005) peer to peer:

It is a specific form of relational dynamic, is based on the assumed equipotency of its participants, organized through the free cooperation of equals in view of the performance of a common task, for the creation of a common good, with forms of decision-making and autonomy that are widely distributed throughout the network. P2P processes are not structurless, but are characterized by dynamic and changing structures which adapt themselves to phase changes. Its rules are not derived from an external authority, as in hierarchical systems, but generated from within (p.11).

P2P as a new relational dynamic of networks acknowledged that nowadays networks are a constituting element, but they are more than ever networks of peer or like-minded people. Train of Hope as will be further presented, resembled the dynamic of a P2P network, where groups of volunteers were relying on each other, cooperating and collaborating by relying on peer-crowded solutions for the needs of refugees, in order to create a common good, humanity and solidarity with refugees.

One of my interviewees Zafar, when asked why Train of Hope as a self-organized system of volunteers worked says: *"It worked well for Train of Hope because of the atmosphere surrounding it, everyone was a friend and then you had random helpers coming in back because they felt so welcomed, useful and helpful. There is no hierarchy, a ladder to go on top. If there would be a boss it would have never worked or maybe it would but it would not become so big."* In this sense its thus possible to draw parallels in comparison with conventional organizational structures, Train of Hope resembled a more 'rhizomatic' dynamic.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) a rhizome is different from a tree or roots, it has no beginning or end, it has just a middle from where it grows, spills out, and it is made of lines (p. 21). Furthermore, in contrast to centered or "hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton..." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Thus, a rhizome can be understood as a natural loose system not bound to top-down relations and that is what has been traced in Train of Hope. As noted in the interview with Amanda when asked if there was a division of work and how were they able to function as an organic group, she responded: *"It just appeared like that, you know the coordinators were people who were there the most and after a while some groups formed. With every problem we had someone came and had a solution for it. So it just came to be a system for that."* Similarly another of my interviewees Dominik thinks this way: *"We had always some challenges, but then we found ways, we really thought about it and we solved it."*

As was already noted by the interviewee Zafar there was 'no boss' who would be in charge of the whole functioning, furthermore, all of the interviewees shared the

understanding of their organizational dynamic as being based on peer ties, that later became friendship ties which were driving and managing everything that was happening. And like a rhizome that is shooting its nodes from the underground, so were these networks of people from the grassroots.

4.3. Social media as a way for 'recruiting' volunteers, the mobilization and participation of people

Collective action in solidarity with refugees as noted above, has been influenced on the one hand by the urgency and proximity of the refugee crisis due to intensive media coverage as well as by the political situation in which ordinary people realized that politics is failing and it's time for them to help. Thus, while there were already concerns forming among people, the availability and knowledge via social media that there is an apolitical group consisting of ordinary people and that they made appeals to help, leading people from knowing to acting and finally mobilizing. As noted by Lievrouw (2011) mobilization is a process in which collective concerns become transformed into collective action (p. 154). As Lievrouw (2011) further notes "individuals with similar interests must somehow find one another and discover that they share a common interest" (p. 154).

Social media, namely Twitter and Facebook that was utilized by the group of volunteers was a feeding element which made the common interest shine and became an instrument for collective action off-line.

It is important to note this also in relation to the in chapter II mentioned Common European Asylum System and its concrete legal document such as the Dublin Regulation for instance, because this mechanisms overall apart of creating a common and unified approach towards refugees and asylum seekers refers to the ability of all members states to show solidarity and quick mobilization especially in times of influx of refugees. But the reverse was true in the current refugee crisis. The bureaucracy of such legal document, the deficiencies and inability to act upon it by policy makers created a situation in which policy makers were delaying or dismissing the opportunity to promptly mobilize and help. And that gap was filled by people such as in Train of Hope. They were able to quickly and efficiently mobilize

and organize themselves and resources needed to help refugees. The idea of a solidarity and mobilization filled mechanism under the Common European Asylum System was thus partly, only in relation to helping and providing assistance and protection, not the processing asylum claims, fulfilled not by policy makers, but by the civil society.

One of the ways in making this mobilization possible was through the group of volunteers and in their attempt to via social media search for human resources , thus other volunteer who would off-line help directly at the place of 'happening'. As noted by Joyce (2010) in social movements online tools, can among other things, help to recruit participants (p. 101). For this purpose the group was using Facebook, but in the beginning mainly Twitter.

According to one of my interviewees Amanda, the co-founder of Train of Hope, in the beginning as refugees started to arrive to Vienna between the 31st and 1st of September 2015 there were only a handful of volunteers and not so many refugees. *"Me and my best friend went there and there were like ten volunteers and like 14 refugees. So there was not much going on. And the weekend it was the 4th of September more and more refugees came, 1000 to 2000 a day. So it increased so much, we decided to set up a Facebook and Twitter page and there we asked for help and donations, clothing and food."* In this sense we can say as noted by McCaughney and Ayers (2003) that the Internet can be used by activists as a "call for an action that normally happens offline., but can be more efficiently done online,..." (p. 74).

4.3.1. Calls for action in Train of Hope

At the beginning of the mobilization of people by the self-organized group on Twitter, tweets included only the most important information where and when the volunteering was taking place. Which reflects upon, for what according to Gerbaudo (2012), social movements use Twitter "for real-time organization and news dissemination" (p. 3).

Personal Twitter account, Tweet 1: [#Westbahnhof](#) Platform 10/11, around 2100 time! (Original text: [#Westbahnhof](#) Bahnsteig 10/11, gegen 2100 Uhr!) Amanda, 1.9.2015, 11:40 a.m. Tweet

Personal Twitter account, Tweet 2: [#hbfvie](#) [#infotrain](#) [#trainofhope](#) [#Hauptbahnhof](#) we need someone speaking farsi! Please!Quick! (Original text: [#hbfvie](#) [#infotrain](#) [#trainofhope](#) [#Hauptbahnhof](#) wir brauchen jemanden der farsi spricht! Bitte! Schnell!) Amanda, 2.9.2015, 16:26 p.m. Tweet.

Personal Twitter account, Tweet 3: WE NEED IMMEDIATELY PEOPLE AT THE MAIN TRAIN STATION VIENNA!!!! [#hbfvie](#) [#infotrain](#) [#trainofhope](#) (Original text: WIR BRAUCHEN SOFORT MENSCHEN AM HAUPTBAHNHOF WIEN!!!! [#hbfvie](#) [#infotrain](#) [#trainofhope](#)) Amanda, 2.9.2015, 23:23 p.m. Tweet.

The basic call for action to mobilize people have in case of one of my interviewees Zafar helped, as he notes he learned about Train of Hope thought a tweet on social media: *"My friend retweeted something in German and I was like that looks interesting, so I translated it and it said ToH needs some Arabic translators, and I speak Arabic and English. So I pulled out my phone typed the navigation to Main station and it turned out it was two minutes walk away from my house. So I just walked in and was like 'hi I am Zafar I speak English and Arabic and I wanna volunteer."*

The 'calls' on social media as noted by one of my interviewees Günther, resulted in that more people like Zafar started to arrive to the train station and that the self-organized group was expanding in size, as noted by him from the initial 'three people with 6 bottles of water' it started to grow to around 500 active volunteers. *"You had suddenly more and more people coming because Amanda was using her Twitter account and Amanda's Facebook and Twitter presence is pretty big, so the whole things actually started through social media. So that's how the 'recruiting' was done. And I came on the third day, because my brother had a Twitter account and that's how he learned about Train of Hope."* As he further notes: *"At the beginning the 'recruiting' was literally done over just Twitter and Facebook"* (Günther).

As said by another of my interviewees, Dominik, who was one of the first people that got engaged in a systematic management of social media for Train of Hope, which later became a department within Train of Hope: *"Sometimes we posted extra for that we need people, no matter what your experience is, come by, you are always welcome, you can help. It's not important what you know or what you can do. And*

we also saw it in the comments where people wrote if they can help, and we responded. Or people wrote us via message. I think it was really important that we were that interactive, I think we answered like 95% of all messages and there were thousands of messages. So the interaction was quite important to get people."

The call on Twitter for helpers to act was a strategy to mobilize human resources and via social media the process of mobilization online and its result participation off-line was sped up according to my interviewee, Günther: *"Social media was really important in the lack time between social media team at Train of Hope putting up we need helpers, we need stuff to helpers actually standing in our doors we wanna help or here is three bags of toothbrushes was 15 minutes. That's incredible you can't even get people that fast."* (Günther)

Furthermore, the 'calls' via Twitter as a platform with easy access for everyone who has an Internet connection enabled also the gathering of people that were different from one another, the collaboration of a wide-range of people of all ages, genders, lifestyles, religious and cultural backgrounds, the creation of a heterogeneous group of helpers. As stated in the interview with Dominik, who compared the current effort to help refugees to back in the 1960s when Austria witnessed a similar refugee crisis with Hungarians: *"The main difference between that time and now was that social media gave the possibility to bring different religions, cultures and people together not like in the 1960s where it was not that multicultural. I think without social media it would have been difficult to reach people of those other groups that were lacking."*

Lastly via Twitter because of its easy accesibility the self-organized group of volunteers was able to reach like-minded prosocial people not only locally from Austria, but transnationally from different countries. *"We had a lot of people coming from all over Europe. There was this couple from Sweden they just stopped by and said we read about you on Facebook and thought we can come by. And there was also this school from I think Kansas, from USA simply they also heard about us from Facebook, they had a fundraising in their school, then got a plane to drop the money off. We also had a lot people coming from UK, from Poland and Spain as well"* (Amanda).

4.3.2. Tactics for engaging volunteers to participate

Interactivity is one of the most common features related to social media sites, as noted by van Dijck (2013) they influence "human interaction on individual and community level, as well as on a larger societal level,..." (p. 4). Social media according to García et al. (2016) as platforms "are designed to support social interactions and give rise to complex interplay between communication, social practices and technology infrastructure" (p.24).

Facebook especially offers numerous ways in which human interaction can function. As noted by one of my interviewees, Dominik about their utilization of Facebook, interaction was an element for 'getting people', but also that social media is a way to actually see that other people care about a cause or an issue. *"Social media was good for interacting, people saw other people care for it, other people shared it and liked it, and they saw that so many people want to help, so it also maybe created something like the sense that others are helping, so why am I not helping? And without Facebook you don't see or without social media you don't see the other people caring for the situation, so maybe you don't think about it or you help somewhere else."*

This visibility of caring about an issue that also facilitated the sense that others are helping, which helped to 'recruit' was the option of sharing of experience with volunteering on Facebook. According to Dominik: *"What also helped were the ratings on Facebook option, where people can star their experience and express their opinion about how they helped at ToH. People wrote how good times they had while volunteering, what an amazing group that is etc."* As Dominik further notes: *"I would say we have at least 200 or 300 ratings, and we have a perfect score and most of the ratings were positive."*

Facebook experience rating 1: I was so impressed with train of hope. You are guys so well organized and your staff is such an amazing people! I enjoyed every minute. Please keep teaching to people how to make a better world! There is hope with organizations like you! I hope I was usefull! I went there to help but I learned more! Thank you so much. (Caro, 5 stars, 2.10. 2015)

Facebook experience rating 2: Train of hope is awesome! I have volunteered this week while on holiday. The crew are so friendly and it has been an amazing experience helping the refugees who I hope will find the life that they are hoping to achieve. Bless them and all of the army of workers. You are all inspirational!!!! (Camille, 5 stars, 2.10.2015)

Facebook experience rating 3: I did my first volunteer shift at Train of Hope on Friday. Wow- so impressive! They've pulled together an organized, smoothly operating volunteer machine that takes care of all the Refugees-in-transits needs. Despite the incessant rain and almost-cold temperatures, the mood was uplifting all around. I think the refugees, although exhausted and not knowing what their futures hold, must have felt relief at being finally treated with kindness and respect...their bellies full and bodies covered with warm blankets...translators available to answer question and help them navigate the legal and logistical obstacles they face. I was amazed at how calm and patient they were, waiting in line for warm good, for legal aid, for hygiene products. The atmosphere was relatively quiet, considering that thousands of people were congregated in an acoustically-challenged area. This organization is definitely aptly named, as the main feeling one walks away with after a shift here, is that of Hope. (Beth, 5 stars, 27.9.2015)

As stated in the interview with Dominik, another way of engaging people was when they started to show stories of volunteers and refugees. *"We told also stories about refugees and about helpers to get enough reach, this was done more on Facebook."* As he further notes *"one goal was also to show that the helpers were 'ordinary' people and that everyone could help if he or she wants to."* Besides sharing stories of volunteers was a way to attract potential helpers, however it was also a simple social media strategy of creating content that would allow the organization to reach people for everything they needed. *"I think stories helped us a lot, we got a lot of attention, reach and feedback"* (Dominik).

The strategy used by founding volunteers via social media was utilizing it to get people to participate, getting the critical mass of volunteers without which the help for refugees would have not been possible and without which the group of volunteers would not grow to such volumes in the short time that it did. This strategy of mobilizing people via social media, to bring people together to be part of a collective

action is very similar to a sit-in or demonstration by activists, as noted by van Aels and van Lear (2010), to a Internet-supported action with a high threshold. According to them, Internet-supported actions with a high threshold require more risk or higher commitment (p. 1150). As noted further by van Aelst and van Lear (2010), street demonstrations require a much higher threshold of participation because in order to participate people need some spare time, or money to pay travelling expenses, but there might also be a risk of violent confrontation with police forces (p. 1151).

Thus, the tactic of 'recruiting' is similar because it was facilitated by social media, but the actual 'action', the actual participation of people has been taking place off-line, so people needed to go outside to places to help, they needed to spend their time, money in forms of donations and sometimes even face risks. These risks were especially apparent to volunteers who have been volunteering in an environment on the borders where the situation between refugees and police was not always smooth or there was risk of being 'dragged' into a far-right escalation.

"What happened a few times the people stood against the police and the situation got tense very quickly, it was 800 police and 800 men and only one would throw a stone and it escalated, the police beat them." And it got worse after a while because we found two other camps in Asothalom, and it's pretty racist there, they had even had there a commercial against refugees. And then the Jobbik (Hungarian radical nationalist party) came and they said we are going to clear the whole camp"(Robert).

On outlining the utilization of social media by the self-organized group as a tactical tool for reaching people and getting crucial human resources, it became apparent that they share similarities with how contemporary social movements utilize social media. As reflected in what Gerbaudo (2012) claimed about the social movement and social media connection, that social media is responsible for 'choreography of assembly', which is facilitating and guiding the physical assembling of highly dispersed and individualized constituency (p. 5). Furthermore, social media as outlined in this part sped up the process of finding people, volumizing the whole organization, and was able to engage diverse groups not only locally, but transnationally as well.

4.4. Social media as way of getting material resources and donations

The second most profound way in which social media has been utilized has been crowdfunding and peer to peer solutions. The volunteers have been engaged in getting most of their supplies for refugees as food, clothes, medicine and other things via posts and tweets on social media. This way the volunteers were relying on a collective peer to peer collaboration to gather material resources, which can be achieved via social media as it is a collaborative platform with one-to-many communication features. This strategy applied by the organization of volunteers has been an 'Internet-enhanced strategy', where social media would be used as a platform for an off-line activity.

Each day with updates the volunteers informed their followers on Twitter and fans on Facebook what they currently need. As noted by my interviewee Dominik: *"We tried to organize everything or most of the things through social media."* Because the needs of the refugees changed not only daily, but very quickly by the hour they created an online supply list, where everything in just one post was listed and it could have been easily updated throughout the day. *"We had our supply list what we needed that we always had on Facebook. We also shared this link on Twitter, but it was of better use of Facebook. We reached more people there"* (Dominik).

As Dominik further notes, because the supply list was everyday getting longer and longer and was in both languages German and English, they needed to find a way to make it easier to change the list as it was happening, to update the list more easily one of the volunteers of the Social Media team programmed an application that would solve the problem of how to more quickly and efficiently update the list. This reflects a P2P example in which according to Bauwens (2006) "various nodes can take up any role depending on its capabilities and needs" (p. 153).

On Twitter apart from the link to the Facebook supply list, which was the main donation getting used, Twitter was utilized by volunteers for quick urgent calls for needs, who often including creative 'catchy phrases', sentences or photos to attract the followers attention and make them donate.

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 1: Feelin' fresh and clean today? So share it with others! We urgently need toothpastes, creams and deodorants! [#trainofhope](#) (original text: Feelin' fresh and clean today? Dann teile das doch mit anderen! Wir bräuchten ganz dringend Zahnbürsten, Cremes und Deos! [#trainofhope](#)), Train of Hope, 23.11.2015, 5:28 p.m. Tweet.

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 2: In order for keeping the Kids corner clean we need 1-2 floor wipes. Thank you dear Twitterinas and Twitterinos! (Original text: Um die Kinderecke sauber zu halten, brauchen wir 1-2 Bodenwischer. Danke liebe Twitterinas und Twitterinos!), Train of Hope, 15.11.2015, 3:51 p.m. Tweet.

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 3: I would like to write here up something, but I can't find no black Edding...would someone have one and could bring it to me? [#trainofhope](#) [#hbfvie](#) (Original text: Ich würd hier gern was beschriften, finde aber keinen schwarzen Edding...hätte wer einen und könnte ihn mir bringen? [#trainofhope](#) [#hbfvie](#)), Train of Hope, 9.11.2015, 7:03 p.m. Tweet.

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 4: Winter is coming: We need today urgently menswear (jumpers, trousers, jackets, etc.) and we look forward for each donation! Thank you-am. (Original text: Winter is coming: Wir brauchen heute dringend Männerkleidung (Pullover, Hosen, Jacken, etc.) und freuen uns über jede Spende! Danke – am), Train of Hope, 12.10.2015, 23:17 p.m. Tweet

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 5: Do you know what makes everything good? Exactly: Gaffa-Tape. And painter crepe. And package ribbon. With this our little world here will be again good. –kb. (Original text: Wisst ihr, was alles wieder gut macht? Genau: Gaffa-Tape. Und Malerkrepp. Und Paketband. Damit wird unsere kleine Welt hier wieder gut. –kb), Train of Hope, 6.10.2015, 6:02 p.m. Tweet.

On the other hand Twitter has been used also for quick updates and spreading of information when some of the specific material resources were not needed anymore to quickly and efficiently coordinate the intake of donations.

Train of Hope Twitter account, Tweet 6: Sweet for my sweet- no sugar for our honeys, because we have currently enough of sweets and little juices. Thank you!

–kb (Original text: Sweets for my sweet - no sugar for our honeys, denn wir haben aktuell genug Süßigkeiten und kleine Trinkpackerl. Danke! –kb), Train of Hope, 24.9.2015, 5:46 p.m. Tweet.

From the interviewees it became apparent that by using social media it was not a problem to get enough supplies and donations from people whom they reached online, because what they observed during the weeks was that people became very eager to help. *"Whatever we needed, blankets, you would have this ocean of people running at you holding blankets, it was very beautiful to see and then at some point we had enough blankets, and we posted on Internet that we don't need anymore blankets, thank you. And this was with everything we ever needed. If ToH existed 15 years ago a complete (completely?) different story, cause there is no way to communicate with people"* (Zafar).

Using social media it became for volunteers an easy way to get supplies, but at the same time the process of getting supplies and resources became faster. *"So in the morning our team was like, ok, we need for example milk and 40 minutes later 40 to 50 people would just drop by"* (Amanda). According to Bauwens (2006) peer to peer mode makes eminent sense in terms of efficiency in comparison with how older models worked (p. 154).

In the system of getting donations and resources there was overall an informal division of work and cooperation between the online and off-line world, the social media team would be responsible only for posting the needs online, while other teams off-line were responsible for checking what is missing in their storage department. *"It just came to be a system for who was doing what, so we could be more efficient. For example, if there was no milk, first you would look in the storage department, if it is really missing and then only people in charge of the storage team would go to social media team to put it up on our page"* (Amanda).

4.4.1. 'Cyber-volunteering' for fundraising and donating

Apart from calling for donations via social media and asking people to bring those donations personally as a 'Internet-enhanced strategy', the organization was engaging in an online fundraising and online shopping delivery option in the sense of 'just one click activism', a solely 'Internet-based strategy', which can be regarded in

the case of Train of Hope as 'cyber-volunteering' behavior. According to Raja-Yusof et al. (2015) cyber-volunteering is an activity freely performed by an individual to work for an organization which is conducted remotely via the Internet (p. 388)

Train of Hope was offering its potential donors and helpers who could not bring the donations the opportunity to use online shopping for grocery with direct shipping to the spot of the organization, this option has been promoted by the organization and a lot of their fans commented that they find it a good idea for those who can't otherwise help personally. Out of 25 comments, 19 comments were saying that they find it a nice and good idea, practical and easy this way to help. The post introducing this option has been shared 305 times and liked 515 times.

Furthermore, the organization used social media channels not only for getting material things and food, but at the same time they used social media for fundraising, one of the ways was to use the latest feature of Facebook, the donate button, for their own campaign which they started at the beginning of late August and September through the platform which serves the purpose of crowdfunding. *"We had our own Kickstarter campaign on Indiegogo and therefore we used the donate button. We created a link so that the button can be used and it brought people to our campaign"* (Dominik). On the other hand the actual fundraising via social media or on the Internet as a form of helping was in comparison with forms of direct help - volunteering and donating off-line at the spot, low. From the initial goal of raising money only 8% of the goal was reached.

A previous tactic for using social media as a tool for getting people, getting material resources has made a difference in the way that it made the gathering easy with just one tweet or post and especially quickly, meaning people that saw the tweet or post would be actually bringing in the donations after seeing it online. Social media has been, furthermore, utilized to coordinate and organize the intake of donations by informing the public when there was already enough of some specific donation. Apart of the tactics which have been both online and off-line taking place, the group of volunteers engaged their audience and potential donors with the option to take part only online by donating money on the Indiegogo platform or ordering and sending donations online. Thus, there was also an option of being active without actually taking part off-line, however in comparison with the actual off-line participation, the

only online activism has been low, only a handful of people donated financially. This reflects that people apart from having the option with just 'one-click' to help choose real participation, thus apart from 'slacktivism' what was more apparent in the case of volunteers in Train of Hope was activism.

4.4.2. Finding missing people and promoting other refugee initiatives

The P2P thinking in Train of Hope has been applied via social media also through other online activities in which they engaged. According to my interviewee Dominik, posting about missing people on their Facebook account became one of the ways in which they engaged in systematic help to refugees. As noted by Dominik: *"We started to look for missing people, because a lot of refugees told us, that they lost family members and if we could help them, short after that a group of us came together and formed the "missing-people-team" this team also worked with other groups together which were specialized on finding people, but we found a lot of loved ones because of our FB site, a lot of people shared our posts, so the reach was also quite strong."*

As noted further by my interviewee Dominik, they would put up the missing person on their page to share awareness and look for helpful comments and messages from anyone who might have seen the missing person. And even though as he noted, there were also comments without any information *"but just the very fact that all the people had been sharing the pictures made the impact enormous and we got several good leads from Facebook posts and messages"* (Dominik).

Train of Hope was using their social media presence and platform on social media in order to promote not only themselves and their activities, but for other similar initiatives and organizations that are helping refugees: *"We were involved in helping other organizations to grow, putting more light on them"* (Zafar). As further noted by Dominik: *"Sometimes other groups wrote us that they need something so we posted also for them. And we also worked with other groups together."*

4.5. Individual volunteers' utilization of social media and its role during the current refugee crisis

On a group level, but also individual, social media was used during the current refugee crisis by volunteers as an emergency management tool, where as noted by Lindsay (2011) it involves an approach in which there is a systematic use of social media (p. 287). This has been apparent by how individual volunteers have been using social media while at the forefront of the refugee crisis.

Robert, one volunteer active at the border was providing real-time information communicating to people how the situation at the spot is. Thus he used social media for what Gerbaudo (2012) sees as 'practical' purpose for exchanging information on the ground (p. 161). But at the same time, like the group of volunteers using it for mobilizing donations. *"I was tweeting that we need supply and also how the situation is. For example after the first night I wrote up what we need and after few days I tweeted that the situation is getting better"* (Robert). Thus similarly like Train of Hope he was relying on peer based solutions in terms of how to get the needed supplies to refugees.

His more intensive engagement with social media even before the refugee crisis was mainly to let his family and friends know where he is at the moment and how he is. *"Since people knew I was down the borders they were calling me, also my family to learn how I am, so then I just started to use social media for that purpose, so they can follow me and see that I am ok. It helped me to communicate to a lot of people that everything is fine with me"* (Robert).

Furthermore, he was seeking information from other people on social media tweeting and being at the specific location in order to get a situational awareness for himself. For instance, as he notes via social media he was able to know where the clashes between police and refugees were. *"At the beginning in Rözske I looked up all the time on Twitter where the situation was, because there were already people down there tweeting about it. It was a crazy good way to get informed"* (Robert).

One other tactic used via social media, that as he noted worked only through social media has been the coordinating and redirecting of convoys with donations. As he

explained to me one day in Slovenian borders a big truck of donations was about to come to a certain place, but as the situation very quickly changed on the spot and borders became open for refugees they needed the truck with donations at another place, where all the refugees were heading. So what he and other volunteers did was to send another tweet saying that the truck should come to the other place. *"It was really easy, so easy, just send a message, hashtag it and suddenly they would change their route."*

Furthermore, Robert outlined to me that social media helped him to get attention from media outlets. One night the situation where he was, seemed to escalate between refugees trying to board trains to Budapest and the police, he wanted to prevent that by calling on media to come there, as he noted because when there is media coverage nothing happens and police are calmer. *"I tweeted about it that we need media here immediately, because otherwise the whole thing was going down. And it took 15 minutes and I had cameras there, also the BBC. I hashtagged Rözske and suddenly people just spreaded it at hand, it was very quick when I suddenly got calls from all different media."* As he notes, for him being on the border with limited opportunities besides his phone, it was a good way to get in contact with media, it made it easier for him to get in touch with various media, but also he thinks it made it easier at the same time for media to get in touch with him or other people tweeting on the spot.

Overall Robert as a volunteer at the border, where he did not have access to as many facilities, because it was often times just provisional pop-up camps where refugees find themselves, he had to rely on social media. As he notes: *"Honestly I have no idea how would have done all these things without social media, I would not know how to get media there, I would not know how to get my donations here and I would not know how to get my number out to people that have to call when they need something. I mean right now I don't know how I would do it without social media, maybe over a website, but down there we did not have a computer, we did not have there much possibilities and over the phone the easiest way was Twitter and Facebook."*

But while Robert as a volunteer sees the big potential of social media in crisis situations such in which he found himself, he also reflects upon what has been many

times criticized about social media in crisis situations, the easiness of dissemination of not only useful information, but on the other hand also misinformation. *"Since everybody can use it, people abuse it. It's so easy on social media to spread misinformation and it's so hard to get things right afterwards."* (Robert). He saw this happening during the refugee crisis when volunteers not used to hard living conditions, in provisional camps, were complaining about the conditions and spreading panic, or when volunteering groups spread false posts of their interpretations of situations without taking into account other views of people involved.

4.6. Summary of analysis

In crisis situations and emergencies the role of social media has been studied before as noted above, however by outlining one volunteers experience with utilizing social media during a crisis situation, we can extend the scope and the numerous ways social media can aid and help people in crisis situations. Social media can be of use for people as outlined in this case study from the classical type of utilization for disseminating real-time information and engaging in situational awareness activities to such crucial things as getting and redirecting donations. In the bigger picture it outlines that social media in emergency situations are of use for individuals and groups of volunteers to manage and coordinate off-line actions. It outlines that in crisis and emergencies social media and online tools not only serve for ordinary people to create solely online relief responses such as crisis mapping or distribute information, but they can be of direct and important use for off-line practices at the spot of the crisis or emergency. As noted also by Palen and Liu (2007) ICT enabled participation as a "means for organizing, pruning, promoting and coordinating new volunteer activities emerge to make them more effective and coordinate with the formal effort" (p. 734). On the other hand, for the future of implementation of social media into volunteering and crisis response and relief management from ordinary people the risk of misinformation and misinterpretation remains parallel to good intentions as one of the major downsides of social media utilization by ordinary people during crisis situations.

Apart from showing that social media in the case of individual utilization has an enormous place in a specific crisis situation, it outlines also that on a group level, such is the case study of Train of Hope, social media and technology provide an infrastructure to develop ways and strategies to build up functioning networks that serve to help other people relying on the power of the ordinary person. This power of ordinary people to form a network and with this network to help other people has been in this thesis observed as a type of peer to peer network. It is a way of acting by relying on ordinary people, cooperating and collaborating among equal peers to find common solutions. This has all been powered by social media that enables far more efficient formation and professional P2P networks than ever before.

As noted by Johnson (2012) "The technology makes it easier for us to dream up radical new approaches- crowd-funded art, liquid democracies- and it makes it easier for us to build them" (p. 209). Nowadays, this kind of formation of peer networks powered by ICTs can cause this old social mode to shine again and in the bigger picture to stand out against older structural forms of organizations. Furthermore, we can also thank the case study of Train of Hope which finds that as noted by Shirky (2008) new online tools make the barriers of group action collapse and without the barriers people can be free to explore new ways of gathering together and getting things done (p. 22). According to Shirky (2008), changes that are happening thanks to the new technologies can transform the world when groups of people come together to accomplish something (p. 24). And in the current refugee crisis in the flashback to the summer when refugees started to arrive to countries like Austria, it has been apparent that peer based solutions from civil society empowered by social media are more successful and efficient in providing help and assistance than many times more traditional organizational forms of either big humanitarian NGOs or governments and that, in fact, 'peer' based networks of self-organized groups of ordinary people can challenge the established status quo.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed the 'awakening' of civil society during the current refugee crisis, the ways in which 'ordinary people' with the pervasive use of social media can contribute to crisis management and relief responses by forming self-organized and self-sustaining networks of people boosted by social media. The thesis attempts to unravel how these networks of people in their daily attempts to help refugees were contesting the constraints of institutionalized organizations such as governments. This inquiry has been carried out by taking a close look on the particular case study of the self-organized group of volunteers Train of Hope helping refugees at the train station in the capital of Austria, Vienna in the year 2015. The data in this thesis have been gathered via interviews with Train of Hope founding members as well as volunteers helping refugees under the umbrella of Train of Hope. Furthermore, data have been complemented by personal observations.

As a conclusion of this thesis, it can be claimed that 'ordinary people' can have the power to change things and even challenge already for years established institutions and their constraints. This power is supported by the network society we live in.

Throughout the study, a general overview of the current refugee crisis and its dimensions has been articulated. The literature review has consisted of studies related to migration with a special emphasis on asylum seekers and refugees, globalization, EU policies on migration and asylum seekers, information and communication technologies, social media and civil society.

The attempt was to portray to the reader a background context to the complexities of the current refugee crisis in the EU in order to formulate a particular case study of the engagement of ordinary people to help refugees in Europe with the pervasive utilization of social media in the era of networking. In the second chapter, historical background on the migration to Europe has been provided with a special focus on recent post-Cold war era movement of asylum seekers and refugees. The importance of this chapter was to convey to the reader the multiscoped experience of Europe with different migratory flows. The intention was through history of movement of people to Europe to show that despite the extensive experience Europe in the current refugee crisis did not develop itself as a country of immigration that can use its experience in order to better handle the current movement of people. Followingly, this chapter opened up a subsection about globalization and its effect on movement of people. An emphasis has been given to the ways in which communication and transportation systems have been changing the patterns of migration. I have discussed globalization as a phenomenon that creates newer and better means for mobile people for even more extensive and far reaching movements, but at the same as a phenomenon of increasing inequality between 'privileged' and 'non-privileged' mobile people.

In the third chapter, the complex current refugee crisis has been examined. An emphasis has been given to the possible root cause of mixed migratory flows in the current refugee crisis. Furthermore, the problematic of labeling the people on the move, the asylum-migration nexus, 'burden' sharing and border securing has been discussed as issues that particularly stood out in the current refugee crisis. Followingly, EU policies on migration and asylum seekers have been critically discussed for better illustration of the current refugee crisis. Special emphasis has been put on examining the ambivalences of the *Common European Asylum System* as the main pillar of the EU migration policies as well as the *European Agenda on Migration*, schema under which many of the new measures toward tackling the current refugee crisis are being articulated.

The fourth chapter has examined the information and communication technology developments in relation to how these new technologies contribute to the formulation of the network society as coined by Manuel Castells. Short history of the Internet as well as the development of Web 2.0 and its social media platforms Facebook and

Twitter have been provided in order to portray to the reader the main features related to the online environment such as is the interactivity and peer based logic.

Followingly, this chapter has been merged with theories on civic engagement and how civil society takes use of social media platforms and online tools in order to form political activism, social movements, volunteering efforts or emergency and crisis responses. At large this chapter as developed further in the following chapter emphasized how civic engagement of 'ordinary people' as coined by Michel de Certeau can nowadays due to the use of ICTs in general and social media in particular challenge the established order of things.

Finally, in the last chapter the case study of the self-organizing group of volunteers Train of Hope has been analyzed. It has been examined from the perspective of how people – volunteers were helping refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe with the use of social media that enables crowdfunding and peer to peer based solutions that have been observed in the self-organized group. However, it has been also observed that the pervasiveness of social media did not take away a real off-line participation of people to help, it amplified and enhanced the devotion of people to help.

First of all, the Internet has provided people with the means and ways to not only engage in 'slacktivism' activities online, but to take these online tools and use them for a real-life or off-line change as exemplified in Train of Hope, when they were using social media to obtain human and material resources to assist and help refugees directly on the spot. Social media as utilized by group and individual volunteers and networking as such happening in the organization has not been substituting off-line action with a virtual one. Many people, despite the option of pure virtual action, such as donating or expressing solidarity and support online choose to come personally and help directly on an actual physical place. Thought social media people that wanted to help could get to know about the possibility to help at the train station and also how to help. On the other hand Train of Hope as an organization via social media could have looked for human and material resources. Thus, social media have complimented the efforts of an off-line engagement and action, it enhanced the ways in which these people could help refugees and magnified the overall positive outcome that these people as a civic engagement left behind.

Secondly, the Internet has as expressed by Steven Johnson (2012) provided a model for how things in our society can work much like the Internet. Thus, more openly, freely, non-hierarchically and most of all based on peer relations. Train of Hope has been able to internalize this and serve as a case study that 'rhizomatic' Internet models can work as a form of organizational structure. And, moreover, work almost on pair with already established institutions and challenge their status quo. Thus, features of the ICTs and social media can be taken as shown by Train of Hope by people and turned to serve a collective and good altruistic cause that can bring a change. A change to the lives of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers that in the summer of 2015 have been crossing throughout Europe.

The refugee crisis in Europe is, in fact, still current. Therefore, grassroots initiatives such as Train of Hope that were helping refugees and, in fact, had a different perspective on refugees and the refugee crisis will be still relevant. Not only in Austria, but in different countries in and around Europe. The European Union as an institution with the primary focus on handling the crisis via policies will be viewing refugees through the prism of bureaucracy, that is why civil society across Europe will be needed to counterbalance a more humane perspective, and in that matter Train of Hope, as presented in this thesis, can serve as a model for a good practice and know how. As presented in this thesis a model in which people are not relying on governments to do things for them, but are taking it into their own and enhancing their efforts by utilizing efficiently social media for the purposes of helping refugees.

Important to note at this stage however is also that the examined case of Train of Hope has been a case study formed and developed during special times of crisis, during a crisis, which had already a strong altruistic behavior formed in people due to extensive media coverage and proximity. Thus, the thesis opened up further possibilities of studies in which it can be elaborated if social media in general, and crowdfunded and peer based solutions are enough to make the engagement, participation of people to help refugees and functioning of such group of devoted citizens sustainable and long-term. And thus, if 'peer networks' fostered by social media such as Train of Hope can function despite of changing political environment of increasing hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers, decreasing wide-media coverage or more hostile media coverage and decreasing proximity. Therefore, can 'ordinary people' with the use of social media and its features be able to sustain or

even pop up again if something like this happens in the future again despite of the changing political and media environment?

Furthermore, future research could also provide a more detailed analysis on the usage of particular social media, Facebook, in Train of Hope or in any other similar civic engagement group of people. It would be useful to elaborate more in depth on the multiscoped utilization of Facebook by such groups of people that decide to use Facebook as a platform for their civic engagement or activism, because Facebook offers a wide range of features that due to the limitations of the thesis have not been all considered or used in this particular civic engagement group.

Finally, it would be valuable in future studies to look on other similar initiatives, problematics and approaches to study such initiatives. Different methodologies such as questionnaires or full ethnographic studies could provide additional and new outcomes.

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APPENDIX 1 — A note on interviewees

Amanda, 27, female, founder of Train of Hope, president of the organization Train of Hope, responsible for organization and communication at Train of Hope

On 30th of August Amanda firstly engaged with refugees on the second biggest train station in Vienna, called Westbahnhof (West station) as trains from Hungary started to arrive. The day after that she decided to go with a friend to have a look also on the other train station in Vienna, the Main train station, where at that day only a handful of refugees and volunteers were present. As she says to make their help to refugees better and more effortless she was the first person to think about making the volunteering become more organized, thus to create out of it an organization, which she as the president one month after they started to help refugees founded and signed legally. Amanda was also thus the main contact person that was in touch with the Austrian railway service, called ÖBB in charge of the train station that provided to Train of Hope two rooms outside of the train station in the second biggest hall where ToH took care of all the incoming refugees. For Amanda helping refugees was not her first civic engagement experience. As she noted to me since the age of 14 she has been involved in leftist politics and organizing demonstrations. Later she helped in dogshelters, intended to go volunteer in Afghanistan and Africa. Despite her prosocial thinking and active incentive to volunteer she says she found it always very difficult to actually really go and help somewhere, since lot of volunteering organizations were in their structure complicated and complex. As she notes to me being part of Train of Hope helped her grow as a person and regain the humanity that seemed is being lost. It changed her mind on the fact that people can meet each other in today's world, even work together and found a common ground. Furthermore, for Amanda ToH was an enormous experience also, because people, volunteers as her, all became because of ToH experience good friends and even family.

Günther, 28, male, Chief-coordinator of the Transportation and Translation team at Train of Hope, responsible for the coordination and organization of transports of train with refugees

After Günther came back to Vienna from his travelling in Vietnam and actually already on the way to his next destination Berlin his brother who was already at the train station helping refugees called him to come by and help as well. As he notes to me, firstly he was just responsible for the warehouse, where all the donations were stored, however shortly after that he became coordinator for other sections and things that Train of Hope was engaging in and ended up as the Head coordinator for the transportation, meaning helping refugees to board and unboard the trains in a coordinated manner. Together with other volunteers they came up with strategies on how to best transport people in the trains and busses and making sure that everyone was calm and also that refugees got the right information and avoid misinformations. During his studies at the university he was already involved in a form of civic engagement and in contact with refugees, as part of the Red Cross Günther was working with the International Tracing and Messaging service, which was responsible for tracing and finding missing people. As he notes to me he got in a positive way stucked and sucked up by Train of Hope, it became his lifestyle and a job, being there every single day.

Robert, 27, male, volunteer at Train of Hope and later volunteer at the border of Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia

His involvement with refugees at the train station started before the Train of Hope was formed in the time where only a few volunteers were helping refugees, when one day he and his friend visited the train station. As he notes to me he knew something is happening from social media and the news. Later as Train of Hope formed he was coordinating the donations at the warehouse and took care of the logistics. As he notes to me as he saw that the refugees are being taken care of in Vienna and that things were working well, he decided that he would go to the Serbian-Hungarian border to the town of Rözske, where he was from day one taking care of all the things and needs that the refugees had. Robert is active in social work since he was 15 years old. He firstly helped disabled children and later founded and became

a chairman of an NGO focused on sustainable development in Kenya and in Colombia. Being a volunteer during the refugee crisis in Europe was for Robert as he notes a huge experience, he became part of something that he believes will go to the history books and in some way he will be part of that story too telling his children about the months he was helping people on the borders.

Zafar, 25, male, volunteer at Train of Hope, Head of Translators, responsible for coordinating all the translators at ToH, later part of Social media team at ToH

After Zafar as originally a refugee himself applied for asylum in Vienna, one day one of his friends tweeted something in German and he translated it and learned that Train of Hope is looking for translators, where he later himself became first a translator and later the coordinator for all the other translators. The team of translators was the first and most important team in Train of Hope since they have been in the frontline and interacting with refugees upon arrival, thus the first contact people. As he notes his responsibility was to get information and distribute them to everyone else, furthermore he was in charge of the decision where a particular translator is needed and also making sure that translators are proactive towards refugees since they were shy to approach or hesitant. Later as he became part of also the social media team he wanted to create content for the Train of Hope social media platform such as stories, videos or short documentaries, because he saw that there is so much untapped talent within the people in ToH. Train of Hope as Zafar notes to me opened up for him whole lot of doors from a social and professional perspective, at the same time experience in ToH gave him a purpose that he could relate too, he doesn't want to pull away from this field of work, from helping refugees. But at the same time he as a former refugee and asylum seekers feels humbled by seeing the support that the people, civilians in Austria have given to him or other refugees. For him that out of all cultural shocks that he expected to have was the most. Having to see all this love and support people show.

Dominik, 24, male, volunteer at Train of Hope, part of social media team of ToH

The first time Dominik heard about Train of Hope was from TV. On his way back from upper Austria he stopped by the West station, however it was few days later that from Twitter he learned that ToH at the main station urgently needs people, so he decided to go back again. First days as part of ToH he was bringing supplies, water and food to the trains. But as he saw that nobody at that time was responsible for social media he offered his help, to take care of the social media channels, as he already had experience in social media. For Dominik helping refugees was his very first experience, however as he notes to me, he has been part of the firefighter community, helping people in case of natural catastrophies such as floods. Dominik learned from Train of Hope to never give up and don't think that something is impossible to do. Furthermore, he appreciates to get to know that there is so much creative and helpfull energy in the society.



APPENDIX 2 — Transcription of interviews

Amanda, 27, female, founder of Train of Hope, president of the organization Train of Hope, responsible for organization and communication at Train of Hope, 23.2.2016

How did you start to be involved?

After a month we founded a thing called 'Verein' basically a non-profit organization without any taxes, basically its something that everyone can pretty much found, it takes just signing a paper. It's an legal form of an organization and I was a president of that organization.

But how did you get involved in the first place, did you hear there is something happening at the train station?

In August the 30th when the first train arrived to Vienna from Hungary and they mainly arrived at the Westbahnhof (West station). And on Wednesday 1st of September I was at the West station and after two hours I went to have a look on the Hauptbahnhof (Main station). I thought maybe there are some refugees as well. I and my best friend went there and there were approximately 10 volunteers and 14 refugees. So there was not much going on. On the next days there were a lot more volunteers and lot more refugees, and my way of thinking is really really organized and there was a total chaos. I was like, please get some tables and lets organize it better so we can help more effortlessly. And on the same day at around 11 pm some guy from the ÖBB (Austrian railway service) came to us said we need to talk to you and to the guys from Caritas (Catholic relief, development and social service organization). And we were arguing whether it is best for the volunteers to stay or an NGO should be coming there. The ÖBB said we want the volunteers and we do not want any NGOs here. Then they gave us two rooms which were outside of the station

and there were two huge halls at the station. And they told us please to keep the refugees there so the usual customer of ÖBB is not 'annoyed' by the refugees.

Why did ÖBB didn't want a NGO, why were they so keen on volunteers instead?

I am pretty sure they thought the 'thing' will be over in a week. And it is way easier to 'get rid' of some volunteers than of an NGO. So they thought. But we also thought it is going to be over in a week or so and I was still at my old job back then, so I was basically transferring between train station and other work. Full time at my job and after I went to the station I stayed there all night, slept for like 30 minutes and get back to my work and to the station. I was pretty sleep deprived for weeks. And the weekend it was the 4th of September more and more refugees came, 1000 to 2000 a day. So it increased so much, we decided to put up a Facebook and Twitter page and there we asked for help and donations, clothing and food. And we had this table with two people who would take all the donations in and there was a line of people 50 or 60 people waiting to drop off their donations. And this went on for four weeks. So people were so eager.

Was your responsibility also to coordinate all the volunteers?

Yes we had around six people who were called coordinators in the first two weeks. It was super beautiful to see a lot of people came there, they saw there is a problem and they had a solution and wanted to solve it. And in the first two to three weeks we had six coordinators with full time jobs. I quit my job because of ToH just to be able to help more and I said to myself I can work later. After four weeks it just evolved like this.

Was there any hierarchy who was doing what at ToH, some kind of division of work?

It just appeared like that, you know the coordinators were people who were there the most simply. And after a while some groups formed. We called them teams. And each team had a coordinator. We had kitchen coordinators. And when people saw there is a problem in the donations and the storage corner, so there was a storage and donation coordinator. With every problem we had someone came and had a solution for it. So it just came to be a system for that, so we could be more efficient. For

example if there was no milk, first you looked in the storage department, if it is really missing then only the people from storage team would go to social media team so they can put it up on the page.

What about the age group of the volunteers?

It was mostly young people. But we had a lot of seniors too. We had this 65 years old lady, her name is Ursula and she arrived at the first week and she is still totally ToH and she still works with us. Still totally eager to participate.

And how was the group of volunteers overall?

There were a lot of different religions, it was beautiful to see that people of all genders, ages and religions can work so closely together without any bad things happening. There was this day in October when Muslim people had a feast day. And there were a lot of religions coming to them and celebrating it with them to give the refugees the chance to celebrate that since it is very important to them. And there was this Catholic priest talking to Muslim imam and Buddhist religious leader, all talking to each other and laughing. The world is supposed to be like that you know. And no one cared if you are a refugee or born in Austria or wherever, people just did not care at all about this.

And what do you think was then the commonality that united all the volunteers there?

The idea was that we all want to help, because I think until mid-November the refugee situation was in every newspaper and on every TV show, people were so much reporting about it. And I don't know if you heard about Traiskirchen, from past March to September there was a lot of media coverage about Traiskirchen and the situation there, and people were so fed up with how the government is treating the refugees and Traiskirchen has a very difficult system so it is really hard for volunteers to just go there and help. Same for all the other NGOs if you have links, or you have to write emails or call just to be able to help, it is really difficult to help somewhere. And we were just like we need some people, so please come, you don't have to call just come by and we will find something for you to do. If you want to help feel free to come. If you wanna come just for five minutes come, if you wanna stay here the whole day you are free to do so.

I see, you were very different than let's say traditional NGOs or humanitarian organizations, how would you describe ToH then?

It was first a group of people, but then it became more and more an organization because we improved with every problem we faced. I talked to a guy from Caritas once and I asked him if he knows ToH, and he was like yes, I hate them. I asked him why and he was like all the NGOs that we have in Austria we are all these huge ships and whenever we want to turn, it takes us like four days, and then there is ToH coming down like a speedboat and it is so easy for them to adapt to any situation, because they don't have to talk to board members for example or go to meetings. I think this was our main selling point in the business language, so we were super quick whenever something happened. We got a call from Hegyeshalom (town on Austrian-Hungarian border) that they need food, so we just loaded a truck full of food, send someone and delivered the food. And we had no opening hours, we would stay as long as people would need us. We didn't care about opening hours or any bureaucracy.

So it was more like a pop-up organization?

Yes pretty much. We grow so fast, in the first two days we were three people and suddenly we were 500. And to the end of year we had 8000 refugees in our database as volunteers. We had a lot of refugees among volunteers, lot of them came to Austria from January on. And they were like the main part of our organization because they translated for us. Without them we would be just people running around aimlessly. The most part of the volunteers were refugees or past refugees. And we had also a lot of people coming from all over Europe. There was this couple from Sweden, they just stopped by and said we read about you on Facebook and thought we can come by. And there was this school from I think Kansas from USA and they heard about ToH, so they had a fundraising in their school, get on the plane to drop the money off. We had a lot of people coming from UK, from Poland and Spain as well.

How did all this people learn about you?

From Facebook. And at the last week of September we also had a lot of media coverage, it started slowly like first Austrian media and then everyone called for

having an interview. I made an interview with Japan, Israel, CNN, we had the New York Times here. It was so nice to know that a lot of people reported about us to say that these kids basically or immatures build an organization like within a week and its working better then NGOs that have been here for ages.

What kind of role did social media play in ToH?

It played a huge part. Yes I think the social media and translators were the two main parts. Because the translators were our voice to the refugees and social media was the voice to the outside. I don't think it would have worked like that 20 years ago, because how would we? Just call people, get a phonebook and call everyone, please help? Through social media we reached in the main weeks where a lot of things were happening like million people in a week with every post we put out there. So in the morning our team was like, ok we need volunteers, we need for example milk and 40 minutes later 40 to 50 people would just drop by. I wanna help, I have something here. Everything happened via social media so fast. And also there were a lot of people that said they put up Facebook account just so they can follow us. So it was so nice that people were so eager to help.

Did you engage on your social media also to the political situation, political statements or was it just about communicating the needs?

We also published political statements but only, if they kind of refered to us or affected us in any way. So after the border to Hungary was closed we posted about that of course. Each time something happened that was affecting our work we put a statement out there. There was lot of statements from the government.

On your website you state that you are apolitical there is no political affiliation. But despite that in all this is there anything still that you want to tell, is there any advocacy besides helping refugees? Now in time when the major peak went away is there still something you want to tell, are you going to evolve in something more than providing food and clothing?

Two answers. To the neutral part in mid-October there were elections in Vienna we are politically neutral because we don't belong to any political party. But we were more left side, self-explanatory. For the future we have like a lot of groups forming like small sub-organizations, so we have for example a group that is helping refugees

to learn German, another group trying to help refugees finding housing or places to stay, some are going to play for instance soccer with refugees or with kids from refugee camps, so a lot of people are doing stuff and we are still pretty much active and we are preparing for maybe another crisis in the spring.

So you are still planning on to continue with the help on train station too?

As soon as the help at the train station will be needed we will be there.

And I mean the nature of what happened and what will be even though we don't know might be different or under different conditions, do you think that this will change a little bit how or who will get engaged? Can you engage so many volunteers again?

I don't know, I really don't know we had like a lot of people and a lot of media coverage and also we had volunteer tourists we called them, people coming there take a selfie with refugees and then disappearing. I am not quit sure, in the summer and end of November less and less volunteers were showing up, because with all the coverage, stuff like this, its so accute when its happening and people just wanna help and then it comes like the white noise in the background. You know there are people in need of help and you heard about it like the hundreds time and you are just so fed up that you stop to care anymore. So I don't know what will happen in the spring. Maybe the government is ready to take responsibility, maybe there will be no refugees arriving at the main train station, we don't know, but we are prepared as soon as something is happening we are ready to build up everything like in a day.

In that experience that you and your collegaues volunteers learned is there any good practise, what did you learn the most?

On one hand it's just helping and staying open minded, there are a lot of situations when you need to scream at somebody but you can't, because you can't be mean to your volunteer, because they just turn around and leave. And we do have this structure going on where we just adapt to the situation so easily, it became an organization it was so nice to see that hand in hand people willing to work together in a team.

And for you personally what was the most challenging thing about this experience?

Besides staying up for like 50 hours I think it was like handling and coordinating so many people and being responsible or that you feel responsible for this people for volunteers and refugees, cause you are boarding a train of 1000 refugees to Germany and you don't know if the train is going to make it across the border, so you have to live with it, constantly. So pretty much I kind of had to accept that I can only help and do good at the station and whatever happens before that or after that is out of my reach and I can't do anything, and I can't worry about that. But I cried a lot.

And on the other hand what was for you most beautiful moment or where you realized that all this you and other volunteers are doing is worth it?

There were a lot actually. In like the first week, because refugees stay in contact with each other so after few weeks people knew that coming to Vienna is a good thing, that they don't have to worry about that. But in the first two weeks people didn't know. So we had a train with hundreds and hundreds of refugees coming in and when the train stopped they were like shaky and scared and we were standing there like 'hi' and they would not get off the train, they were surprised that people are nice and they were not used to that. So we were standing there and looking for 10 minutes at each other and then an old man was stepping out of the train looked at me and hugged me and said thank you. And as soon as he stepped out and gave me this hug suddenly all the people started to get off the train, it made me cry and it was so amazing. And there were lot of things like this. We had this kids corner, actually it was a kindergarten where kids were able to be kids. And whenever I felt exhausted I went there and just played with the kids, because it was so nice to see that these refugee kids who have been through hell just be able to be children again. So that was beyond beautiful.

How many refugees would arrive per day at the train station?

At peak times we had 10 000 a day. And all in all 150 000 from September to end November.

Was it manageable with the number of volunteers you had?

Of course. Our rule number one was whatever comes, comes we are going to manage everything.

Did volunteers felt scared or overwhelmed?

No, we were exhausted, but we were never afraid. I think the ÖBB was afraid a lot, one day they told me there is a special train just for the refugees from Vienna to Germany, it was a train with two floors. I think there are seats for a 1000 people and another 500 are able to stand. And the hall was filled with refugees, so there were four guys from ÖBB, they were scared they called a police and I told them I am in charge I want you to go to the end of the track, hide behind the elevator and 'shut up' because these guys (refugees) don't like guys in uniforms and you are allowed only if I scream. So he was ok, call us if you need us. So we got the translators and megaphones.

I mean in all this what you were doing all the help to refugees was of course unfolding under certain politics, did you ever think about that in what you are doing you have to stick to the rules, for example if the rule says that they have to stay in Austria or go back to other country where they entered first, but you helped them to get to Germany basically. Did you ever think that what you are doing is wrong?

Well yes and no. Because basically what we were doing, sending the people to Germany we were smuggling and I have I think like 78 charges for smuggling from Germany.

How did they know your name? Because of ToH?

Yes and I also did a lot of calls for missing people, whenever someone had a problem I would call to Germany you are going to send them and not told them my name, but after a while people knew who I was.

So was this for you ever a thing that would made you stop helping?

No. I came home one day in October after not being home for two weeks and I opened my mailbox and had over 40 letters and all from German government. I called my lawyer and told him that I am in trouble. Basically it was not a law free space but we pretty much stuck to our own rules and we worked a lot with the police

and they basically let us do whatever was designed the best. After few days they saw we were able to manage it and they were just do what you do, you are doing it good. We did not have any mass panic, no fighting, people were calm. The police said they follow your orders, so do whatever you like as long as you don't do of course some super illegal stuff like crimes etc.

Was the help of people in Austria, the citizens for you perceived as a sudden engagement? That it was something new emerged that so many people got mobilized for a cause?

I have never seen something like this before. I think because it was so easy, so urgent and I think the first time in a long time people were able to help and saw their help is needed. I think a lot of people were fed up with the political situation, I mean all the racism, all the hate against refugees, so many people were coming and I also think that a lot of people felt the need to participate in that, that they are part of it and do whatever they can. And also because it was so urgent and so widely covered in the media and for the first time people were able to do stuff to be able to help, and it was a situation that has not been there before, I mean not in our generation. And I said it once in an interview that our generation is called the generation Y and people believe we are just online, that we never go out to voice our opinion, when something is happening we just leave a comment on Facebook and that we don't raise our voices and I think it was like a movement comparing to the movement in 1968. I think it was just a human thing to do. And it was a crisis. I think we have so many differences in our lives and as people but at the end of the day if we go down to the basics of our life we can all connect by our feelings, because we experience all the same kind of feelings, because if I was scared you were scared once too, if I was once in love you were too. So we can find so many similarities between people, but you usually don't see that and this huge similarity feeling useless and not being able to do anything and suddenly that huge crisis going on and everyone can be part of that, everyone can do a little thing to make another life better. To help people and to give something to people after being like in an economy that is doing so well, because Austria is a good country to live in. And we don't know hunger or thirst or most of us had never had a day when we did not know where to go. And we are all living super good lifes compared to what refugees have been going through. So

I think for the first time people were able to stand up and share what they have received over the last years.

And do you think the public opinion and what the political stance was is it different? Do people not share the views of the government?

I think there are like two parts of the net. You have people who are super eager to help and they are pro-refugee and then there is this party that is anti. Their view is that refugees will take the jobs, put their religion on us etc. So there is these huge border between this two parties and its mostly black and white, there are not many grey zones between that.

So you feel like you as ToH as civic engagement fill that grey zone?

Yes.

And how was the whole volunteering experience for you, was ToH and volunteering something very significant for you?

Before a year ago I would not go there if it would have happened, because I would have been to afraid, but for me going there and voicing my opinion suddenly becoming an coordinator being elected president of ToH helped me grown so much. I became more confident in myself in my decisions. And I pretty much lost humanity before all this with all the news that people hate eachother, war and fighting, or people on the subway people being grumpy and so far away even if they share a subway, so people are so far even if they are so close. And ToH basically changed my mind on that, we can meet people, we all can work together and we all can found a common ground. I think this happened to all of us coordinators at ToH we just grow so much with every problem we faced. And most of us are really great friends now because it was such an enormous experience, it was so life changing that we stick to eachother, just because we need eachother after that. We became a family.

And the close interaction with refugees was that also life changing from what you experienced or knew before? Did it change your way you look on the world?

Not really because I never pressed the thought of, you know different religion or culture makes you differnet than anyone else. I never saw that border that we mostly

drew in our minds, cause for me it never mattered if you are from Africa or Asia, I never cared about stuff like that, because I think people are people and it is up to you where you design doing good with your life or you desing otherwise. Pretty much it did not change my perception of people or about refugees, because they are just people, man and woman and children, there are probably also lot of bad people among the refugees because in every group of people there are also bad people and you can always find people that don't mean well. But that's the thing that we as a whole group of humans tend to focus more on the negativity than on good things people do. And we tend to focus so much on the bad things people do that we don't see the good in them anymore. And this people are just normal people.

So you did not see them for example in the dichotomy of 'economic migrants' or genuine refugees? Did you ever label them?

No never. Because for me an economical refugee who flies from their economic situation, these people are refugees because they flee a war and nothing else and we would all do the same. If a war would happen in our country we would pack our stuff and leave and I never got the people talking that they are taking their cellphones how do they have cellphones, I mean everyone has a cellphone these days, and if you are about to flee to another country you are not going to take your books or your kitchen supplies, you are going to take your cellphone because thats the only thing that connects you to your family and friends and help you through your whole travel.

And through your experience in ToH did you get more involved in the issues of refugees?

Of course, before that I was mainly, from the age 14 to 22 I was really involved in two left politics and in 2004 I think it was, I organized a demonstration against the election of Georg W. Bush.

Did you before also volunteer or it was just about politics you were involved in?

I tried to like help in dogshelters and in 2008 friend of mine and me wanted to go to Afghanistan to help people there for 6 months, but my male friend were scared to go and I was afraid to go alone. And that is also the thing that I found it also very difficult to help. I tried to go to Africa but it is always so complex, you have to do always so much work before you are able to help, or you can pay lots of money and

then you get a diploma and get like a safari trip and stay in a luxury hotel, and you are allowed to help like for 5 minutes which means looking at some children house. I tried to help before but it was always so complicated and complex.

The volunteering we saw happening around Europe and in Vienna was different, as you said before it was suddenly so easy for people to help, to do something with low level entry, do you think this changed also because of social media, that people had the way and information?

Absolutely, it was so open, mostly these NGOs are working in a dark, you know they are helping at that home or camp and that is basically it. We were super open, we were posting pictures and videos, everyone was welcome to just drop by and see for themselves.

Are you or will you have any projects in the future focused on integration of refugees?

Yes we are actually doing it right now, there are a lot of people already working on it by giving German lessons for a few refugees. Because after no more refugees were coming to the main station some of the people just could not stop helping and I mean first it was a problem that the refugees are coming to Austria, and now we have the problem of having them here, which is not a problem, but they have nothing to do. Because the government is overwhelmed by all the things that are happening, so the camps are a mess, so lot of our volunteers spread to there to help. We have these two girls that were with us from the beginning and now they are at this one camp. So everyone from us is eager to help and participate. So we teach German, but also about the culture because it is very different. Lot of young people have seen lot of TV shows so they know how life in West is, but there are still lot of people that don't know.

Our government is talking about integration, but you are not going to integrate someone putting them in a camp, where people speak their language. You have to mix all of these cultures together and need to get a refugee and a local together, so that is the only way you can integrate. There is a language barrier between us, but we are trying to break all the barriers for them, if you meet German speaking people you

can learn our way of life here and what we do and what is important to us and the rules we live in by.

How many people are right now at ToH as a core?

80 people the core, plus 200 on and off and 500 translators.



Dominik, 24, male, volunteer at Train of Hope, part of social media team of ToH, 6.2.2016

How did you get engaged with ToH? How did you learn about ToH?

Actually the first time I heard about ToH was via TV, I was in upper Austria and then I got back to West train station to the second largest train station in Vienna. But at this point I was not really into it, because I had all my stuff with me, I was not ready, so two days later around 1st of September I said ok, I could help and I knew there were the two stations – the Main train station and the West station and I looked it up at Twitter and I found that they really need help right now, so I went to the Main train station and there I got to know ToH.

Was it the first time for you volunteering?

I already did, I was part of the firefighter community it has a special structure but it was also volunteering, so I helped when they were natural catastrophies like floods, but I never helped refugees so far, but we never had a situation like this so.

When you arrived at ToH how did you decide that you want to be part of social media team or why did you choose social media team?

At the beginning I did not do social media, the first day I was bringing stuff supplies like water and food to the trains and at the second or third day when I arrived I saw that nobody was doing social media and I already had experience in social media so I said well do you need someone I can bring my computer its not that far, so I started there.

And why did you think at that time that you need social media?

First of all it was really difficult to have enough people and to have enough resources and we also saw that way more people knew about West station than from Main station. The West station had Caritas so they had more money and supplies, so we saw also the need of getting recognized so we can do this help and also give people the opportunity to help with a low level entry like you don't have to know much, because helping in Caritas was way more difficult because of their structure.

What kind of social media did you use at that time, when you were active?

The most used was Facebook and Twitter, and we created our own homepage.

And for what purposes did you use Facebook and for what Twitter? Did it differ?

Yes it differed, sometimes we used both channels for the same stuff, and we had our supply list what we needed that we always had on Facebook, so there we wrote we need supplies, we need people, we need translators. We also shared with link this list also on Twitter, but it was of better use more on Facebook. We reached more people on Facebook. Twitter was more like, sometimes we had really good people which had lot of experience with tweeting so it was about spreading the message as a whole, but we also shared other good people's initiatives, so this was more on Twitter. It changed then a little bit we told also stories about refugees and about helpers to get enough reach, so this was also more on Facebook. I would say Facebook was more to reach enough people, with Twitter it did not work so well because it is not so widespread in Austria.

How many people have been part of social media team?

It varried, I would say at the highest peak of refugees arriving, it was like 40 to 60 people, because we had a 24 hours plan, at some point we decided to make shifts, it was not really easy to see who was really active. Now it is more like 15 people maximum.

And are all those people that came and wanted to be part of social media team are they just hobby social media users or were they professionals in managing some social media channels?

It was mixed. There were people who worked with social media professionally, worked in this field, but we also had people who used Facebook site for the first time, but we teached them. Of course it would have been better if they already knew how to use, if they knew how to tweet for example, but I would say the professionals were like 10-20% of all the people. But of course a lot of us worked with social media not professionally but as active users.

Facebook has now this newer feature Donate button did you use it in ToH?

Yes we used it because we had our own Kickstarter campaign on Indiegogo and therefore we used the donate button. So we created a link so that button can be used. The donate button brought people to our Indiegogo campaign. Because as I understand it, you need a Kickstarter campaign behind the donate button. It only delivers you the possibility that people see oh I can donate. Our first Kickstarter campaign was in August or September and there we used it already.

You said you used Facebook for spreading information to many people, so you can reach more people, do you think it was also for you a tool for 'recruiting' people? Did you see it helps also in this matter?

Yes we saw it a lot. Sometimes we posted extra for that we need people, no matter what your experience is, come by, you are always welcome, you can help. It is not important what you know or what you can do. And we also saw it in the comments where people wrote if they can help, and we responded. Or people wrote us via message. I think it was really important that we were that interactive, I think we answered like 95% of all messages and there were thousand of messages. So the interaction was quite important to get people.

And for instance did you use Facebook also internally among all the people in ToH? Did you use it for communication among the 'staff'?

Yes we had a big internal group for only members who wanted and then we had our own social media group to discuss things and to find what we really wanna post. And when we saw ok all people should know about it, we posted it into the internal group, but we could not post everything not all decision can be made by all. And then there were also other FB groups like medicine, they had their own group, lawyears had their own group. So a lot of communication run via Facebook. We also used Telegram for some time (an app its like Whatsapp), and we also had an Whatsapp group, but then Whatsapp took over Telegram and in the end Telegram 'died'.

Did you use for example internally also some other tools like for instance from Google?

Yes we had Google documents, Google drive for the core documents we had. And we had different accounts also. We also used an programme, it's like a ticketing system for the social media channels, that you don't loose messages or other stuff

and that you can search, there is a better search function than on Facebook. And also someone programmed an app for us, because the supply list was getting longer and longer and it was in German and in English too, so he programmed and it was much easier to change a list as it happened. To update the list.

And as you remember at that time what were the main activities you did on social media? What else was it used for besides the supply list posting? Did you share also other things on Facebook?

We did not share so much news about the situation in other countries or Austria, we were not a source of information of that kind for the whole situation of refugees in Europe. We did not have so good sources and our own idea was that we will not share bad information and we will not share unsafe sources, we don't want to confuse somebody. Sometimes we had information and shared it, but our main focus was on helping and trying to deal as best as possible with our situation. And sometimes other groups wrote us that they need something so we posted also for them, that they need something. And we also worked with other groups together.

Was your website also used by refugees, where there for instance any information for them?

There was some information for refugees, but not like route or something. But our Facebook site was really used much more for the refugees so far or as we saw it. But we did not have so much information in Farsi or in Arabic, we mostly had in only in German, because most of the people that were following us were German speaking and we tried the further we got also in English.

So you basically posted the stories, the supply list and some current at the spot information, right?

Yes, and sometimes but not often we posted our political stance to the situation and we complained about the government or when there was this situation, the rightist group demonstrating then we posted against them, but we did not do it so often, because it was really difficult on the inside, because we were really heterogenous group, we were from leftist to conservative, so it was not really that easy to find concepts for everybody.

What about the most asked questions on social media? What did people wanted to learn from you?

Most of the people asked if they can help or if they can bring something. Or also groups for example school groups asked if they can come with teachers and help. And then we started a FAQ on our website.

I saw on your FB site that you were also posting about missing people, how did it go? Were you successful to via social media, did you help a lot of people to find their 'loved ones'? And was this initiative coming from you or refugees asked you if you could post?

It started, because a lot of refugees told us, that they lost family members and if we could help them, short after that a group of us came together and formed the "missing-people-team" this team also worked with other groups together which were specialized on finding people, but we found a lot of loved ones because of our site, a lot of people shared our posts so the reach was also quite strong.

Our main task was to set up the files (which means refugees came to our "office" at the train station, told us about who they are looking for, when they got seperated, basic data like age, ethnicity, gender...) and we put it on our Facebook page to share awareness and look for some helpful comments/messages from anyone out there who might have seen the missing person. Then we also gave the data to the Red Cross - trace the face, another missing people-under-organisation with which we worked together quite well and, if the missing person got lost in Austria, we tried to call officials like the police or some organisation managing a refugee camp where they have been seen last and ask them, get some more infos.

And do you think that sharing awareness on your FB page did help, I mean were the comments and messages that people wrote and posted usefull?

In general yes. Of course, there were sometimes comments without any information, but just the very fact that all the people had been sharing the pictures made the impact enorm and we got several good leads from Facebook posts and messages.

And do you think that social media or how you used also other online tools did it have any effect on how you were participating at the spot, was there any

connection between that? Do you think if you would not have social media I don't know 20 years ago do you think it would be different the help you are doing right now?

I thought a lot about it. In the 1960s or 1970s there were similar, but not that big situation with refugees like today, with Hungarian refugees. So the main difference between that time and now was that social media was, that we had possibility to bring different religions and different cultures, different people together not like in the 1960s or 1970s were it was not that multicultural or mixed. I think without social media it would have been difficult to reach people of that other groups that were lacking, so it was a combining element I would say. Back in the 1960s or 1970s they also managed to help refugees, but they I think could not do it in that professional way as us now, because we also created like a picture of us, we were super profesional we had our logo, we were really like an institution for helping refugees, so we could tell the people, hey if you want to help us you can help. Through social media it is easier to get help from other people, if they see you as a professional group, its also easier to get money for buying tickets and other stuff, its also easier to get recognized from the government, so social media was quit important in this matter too. Without social media I think we would not have been recognized as like this professionals, it got crazy because also other long time organizations that existed quit long asked us if we can help them.

When we talk about social media and ToH do you think social media was important for ToH as an information channel, as a channel for organizing and managing everything or more for mobilization of people or was it a combined effect of all this attributes?

I think it was combined all of it and it depended on the situation. There were times where we had not enough supplies then it was really important to get this, and then there was a time there were not enough people helping so this was the most important part of it. It depended, everything was part of it if you have enough people but you can't give people something to eat or drink it doesn't work. So everything was a piece of it and we tried to organize everything or most of the things though social media.

Right now are you still doing something on your social media or are you also less active since the refugees are not coming at the moment? Is there still an interaction with people?

It is getting quit down at the moment. The situation is not easy for ToH at the moment, lot of people have ideas, but we did not manage to make something out of it, its really hard to get reach at the moment, because we used our creativity and energy last months and a lot of us have to work now, so its not that easy at the moment.

Did social media in case of ToH accelarate the popularity of ToH, did people get engaged more through social media or would it be the same if just people would pass by the place where you were or was it more like people first so the list and then they came?

I would say it was relevant, because it was not that easy to reach the location at Main train station, where we were, it was not like you could see it from everywhere, if did not know where it was. It was at one side of the station, where you did not see it so likely. So passing by was not possible. And I would also say social media was good for interacting, people saw other people care for it, other people shared it and liked it, and they saw that so many people want to help, so it also maybe created something like the sense that others are helping, so why am I not helping. And without Facebook you don't see or without social media you don't see the other people carying for the situation, so maybe you don't think about it or you help somewhere else. I think this was important for getting new people.

So, did it accelarate among people the sense of being active, that I have to be there not at home?

I would say it helped and what also helped was the ratings on Facebook option, where people can star their experience and express their opinion about how they helped at ToH. People wrote how good times they had while volunteering, what an amazing group that. Sometimes there were people who wanted us through this way put down by giving us only one star, put at the same time ten other people gave us four stars and wrote their own positive feeling about ToH.

So, people were using this a lot, they were writing their experience on FB after their volunteered?

I would say we have at least 200 or 300 ratings, and we have a perfect score and most of the ratings were positive, we have only some which gave us one star, if you have enough positive ratings you have a perfect score. And what was also interesting was that we didn't have many trolls on our site, or rightish people, it was interesting because other sites had way more bad negative comments. And also our site was not that much used for stating your political views, but also not the bad comments.

What was for you the most challenging thing through the whole time and what was something you will remember?

For me it was really hard when I had too much contact with refugees when they told me their stories, I was not used to that hard stuff, like when somebody is telling you from really misery and war, this was like really hard for me to hear, but everytime we could organize some things to help people in anyway like giving them something to eat or finding a trolley for a mother and her kid, this was always a good feeling. It was like what we are doing there, what I am doing there helps people, I am doing something usefull. And what was also interesting we had always some challenges, but then we found ways, we really thought about it and then we solved it. Never giving up is really something I have learned at ToH and not thinking that we can't do it, because almost everytime we found a way to solve problems. I also learned a lot about electricity. And what I also really appreciate to know that how much creative energy and helpfull energy in our society is. If I have this chance to do something, when there is no structure which holds me back.

Zafar, 25, male, volunteer at Train of Hope, Head of Translators, responsible for coordinating all the translators at ToH, later part of social media team at ToH, 3.3.2016

How did you learn about ToH, how did you start being involved in ToH?

I am a refugee myself, I arrived to Austria applied for asylum and then their send me home. They did not give me any German course and said that I am not allowed to study or work, go home and wait for us to contact you. They just 'throw me off' and said you just have to wait. So I was not allowed to do much, but at the end of a day I am a human being I can't just sit surrounded by four walls and do nothing, I have to do something. Especially me and my personality sitting and doing nothing, I am not that type of guy that can sit and do nothing, or go out and do nothing. So one day I was really bored, it was three days after I was sent home by the government, so I was at home and was on Twitter, because I was bored, but otherwise I am not really a Twitter guy and I just found out about ToH. My friend retweeted something in German and I was like that looks interesting, so I translated it and it said ToH needs some Arabic translators, and I speak Arabic and English. So I pulled out my phone typed the navigation to Main station and it turned out it was two minutes walk away from my house. So I just walked in and was like 'hi I am Zafar, I speak English and Arabic and I wanna volunteer'. I happened to go there on their third day and since then it has been a daily thing for me.

What was your position at ToH?

At the beginning I was just a translator and then as the team grow bigger they made me the head of the translators, and then after that I became also member of the social media team. And part of the transportation team.

How many people did you coordinate as the head of translators?

500, it was the biggest team of ToH.

What was your main task?

Even though I was the head of translators, whatever that means, at the end of the day there was no hierarchy, the only difference between me and them was that I got the

information better and I was spreading the information and distributing them where I thought they are needed. That was always the mentality for ToH, so my responsibilities was to distribute people, make sure that refugees, cause sometimes refugees are little shy to approach us, so we would be the ones to approach them, so the translators had to go and approach them themselves.

Did the refugees know where to go or how to reach you?

We were in the Hall 2 the food and medicals, so we would send all the people to there, we were not concentrated so much on Hall 1, but also we had some people in Hall 1, in the main Hall, just in case people did not know we are in Hall 2, cause we were not really allowed to 'advertise' that there is something going on, its just the Main station didn't want us too.

What did the refugees as the first thing need when they came?

Mostly medical attention, food and baby supplies. But they were still to hesitant to approach us, there was always the wall between you and the refugees that you needed to break. And at the end of the day me and my team we were on the frontline of the ToH, because we were the first people to interact with them, because we are the once to speak the language. So when we approached them they always felt little intimidaded because of what they experienced in Hungary. They did not trust us at first, were hesitant, and this was constant daily thing, so it was always very important that we are nice, smiling and put our walkie-talkies away and held signs that we are here to help.

Was it easier for you as you speak the language, did they trust you more?

No, not at all, actually they trusted us less because we spoke the language. Honestly, because probably they thought what are these Arabs doing in Europe tryin to help us? Why would you wanna help us? After what they have experiences with the walls and prisons, the bad treatment. So at the beginning it was a challenge to make them trust us, but as soon as they realized we do not want to trick them or take the fingerprint, we are here just to translate, help them and send them off.

What was for you the most challenging thing about volunteering at ToH?

Not getting attached to the organization, to the timeframe, cause keep in mind this was a daily thing, I had nothing to do, so I go jump into this, dive and never come out. I was there everyday at some point I used to be there three days in a row and then go home and sleep. It was addictive because everyone was so nice. The most challenging part was knowing that one day this will end and not having to be so attached, it is like your first crash.

And what was the most beautiful, best part of being part of ToH?

The best part was knowing that we were we, ToH, whether it was the translators or doctors, the people sitting on the front desk. We changed the perspective, we changed the expectations and we changed those thousand of people's lives. Because at some point we had 6000 refugees in a day. We had to be on our toes the whole time and we had to win them over, we had to just show them you know what the difficult part is behind you from this point on it will get better for you, in the sense that being treated as a human being. Not necessarily in paper work, but to just be treated with dignity, with respect and that what we aimed to do. Just knowing that, me personally knowing that I have made one persons life a little bit easier. But what the ToH as a whole did its phenomenal, right now I am not speaking as a member of ToH, but as human being, it is very dear to my heart, because I am refugee as well.

Before you came, did you think people are this much welcoming in Austria?

I had a bunch of American, European friend's throughout my life. I keep hearing about racist Austrians and people that hate Arabs, Muslims, I swear to you I have been here for 8 months now, I have not experienced one, single incident of mild racism, not even mild racism. Everyone has been super sweet to me, kind and helpfull. I have been so humbled by seeing the support that the people have given us, the civilians here because they are literally the heartbeat to the organization, because without them we would not have any donations and we could not provide for the refugees. And that out of all cultural shocks I expected to have that was the most. Having to just see all this love, honestly its just like the stuff you read in a books, I swear cause I still can't grasp it, its unbelievable. I expected some racism, because it happens, but it never happened.

Do you think something like ToH can again be organized in such a mass, do you think you or other volunteers can still keep on being motivated for helping ?

After like December the ToH was going to its 'sleeping phase' and there have been couple of problems within the system of ToH, so we had the biggest team translators and helpers, and coordinators for the helpers and they all went to different camps. We are working right now on a project called 'House of Hope', as we are setting it up we have the same people from ToH. So should the ToH restart all over again I am pretty sure 90% of the people that volunteered will be back in a heartbeat, because it gives them a purpose, it gave them motivation to do something good and it was also a very very fertile ground to social network, because keep in mind a lot of the translators are refugees themselves, I would say 60-70% of them are refugees themselves and they have nothing to do and they are new to the country, so what other better way to meet people then to go and help people with people who are having the same attention. So it was the perfect thing at a perfect time and perfect people were volunteering, so I really do think they will come back.

Did you feel like you have an advantage than local Austrians, that you can relate better to refugees that you were helping since you are a refugee yourself?

I did not go the same journey that most of the refugees went, I came not by boat but by land, its a complete different story. And I have been fortunate that I had it much easier. I was fortunate that I speak English that got me from a lot of situations, so I can't really relate to that, but to me its not just about the refugees it was also for me to seeing people from different backgrounds and coming in together. So you had boys, girls, Christians, Israelis, transexuals, gays and it was very cool that we were all there and noone bet an eye on someone else, that was so cool to me. I had a friend there she is Jewish and she was wearing the David star as a necklace and she was telling me that everyday she would be having a refuge coming to her saying we noticed you are Jewish and I just want you to know that we don't hate you. And it are those stories that give us motivation to carry on. That was very cool.

Your initial idea was that you were here and you didn't have anything else to do, did your motivation during the course of your volunteering changed or evolved?

Yes, not only did it opened up a whole lot of doors for me from a social and professional perspective, but it also gave me a very important purpose, purpose I can relate to at the same time. And its something I don't see myself pulling away from, not necessarily ToH as organization, but this field of work, it is always nice to go home put your head on the pillow and think that I did put a smile on someones face.

And what do you think is the difference between ToH, why it worked so well for ToH?

Because of the athmosphere surrounding it, everyone was a friend, and then you had random helpers coming in and coming back because they felt so welcomed and usefull, helpfull. There is no hierarchy a ladder to go on the top. It was more loose. And that is exactly what it made work, if there would be a boss it would have never worked, maybe it would but it would not be as big as it was.

What is your task at Social media team? Why did you decide that you want to be there too?

I was always interested in social media, because that is how I found out about ToH, through social media, through Twitter. I mean I was always mingling, coming pulling away, so after the ToH went to sleeping phase I noticed that the only active part of ToH was the social media team. There are the ones who are keeping the heartbeat going up until today. So I approached them and I wanted to do something, basically my goal was to create content for the social media team, whether it be stories, short videos, introduction videos, short documentaries and things of this nature. I have no experience in video making, but I have a different perspective than others in social media team and I could add on their ideas.

So what did you wanna bring to social media?

We have so much untapped talent within the workers of ToH, we could mobilize and utilize it in such a way, for instance we have three volunteers of ToH, who are refugees themselves, who met at ToH who are also artists. And they have their own

little band, why can't we not film that and put in on our Facebook page. That way we can show our 'audience' these are refugees, put up a little personality more to refugees than just a 'wave of Islamic bearded'.

Did you want this way keep alive ToH?

Yes, absolutely.

Why is it important for you, why do you feel you need to do something?

I want to put a face to it, I go back to cliché conversation but it gets repeated for a reason, the refugees are not just village people who are crazy 'Islamics', you have scientists, but at the same time you have the farmers, you have the engineers and you have the teachers, and you have people from different classes, different levels of intellect. The general view of it across the world when you hear a wave of refugees I don't think anyone would imagine a teacher among those, like wave of teachers, they would imagine a 'wave of Arabs who are coming here to impose their religion and culture on us', I feel a certain responsibility that I can change that and I can also help people that want to change it by using the platform that is ToH and following up with ToH by creating content in which we can put a personality, put a face into this refugee crisis. By putting a little personality by showing 'hey its just a dude that plays a guitar'.

That's interesting, this bring me to see that you perceive the refugees in a different way then might be the perception in the media, for you when you were volunteering at ToH and also now did you ever see them as what is said 'economic migrants' ? Did you ever label?

Oh no, they are scared people. Survival is the most basic human instinct, and when your city is bombed to the ground you are going to want to survive I don't care who you are, what kind of mentality you are, what religion you follow, what culture you belong to, you are gonna run and you are gonna run like hell. And you are gonna go to a safe spot. And of course once you are at the safe you are going to prefer that, that spot has a bright future for your children. That is the most basic human instinct. Whether they are Syrians, Iraqis or Afghanis. Those are people who are running for a reason, so they are people, people who are afraid and it is my duty and duty of other people human beings to comfort them. And then we will take it from there, see

where they belong, if their case is valid enough, if there is a treat to them, but the most important thing is when a human being is afraid you put everything on the side, comfort them and then you deal with it. You don't look on an afraid human being, 'nope sorry', that is not who we are in our core that is what makes us different from other creatures. Labels are dump.

Do you think there is a difference how ordinary people see refugees and how the government does?

The government is obviously trying to overcomplicate everything. When they look at a refugee, let's say me, what would be my purpose if I would not be in ToH, 'sucking in' a room with four walls with no social life and who would I be friend with? If I go out and I am not enrolled to a German course, I am gonna meet a bunch of Arabs I would become friends with them, cause they speak the same language. And then I would be granted my asylum and I will stay here in Austria, join a German class, but it is gonna be already too late at that point, because I have already have my friends and I am not gonna go to make new friends, because I am already attached to those people, I will grow with them. And that is how a circle of people happens, also of the already settled migrant communities (like Arabs in Arab communities etc.) why are people isolated and have their own circles. That is why, because government is not doing their jobs in helping them to get integrated. They are also not giving them a purpose at the same time. I was visiting a camp and there was an Afghani guy, he could not be older than 30. He was just sitting there and he was just complaining, I have met a lot of refugees, but I have never been so touched by a story. He was just sitting and saying I am human being why am I not treated like a human being, where is my dignity, I sleep in a room where the lights don't get turned off, there is no place for him to play sports, everyone has their own little cliques, so you can't integrate with them. And he is like why am I not used, mobilized, like I need some intellectual stimulation, I do nothing I am gonna go crazy. The authorities are not doing a good job in breaking up that wall, that barrier.

Can social media according to you serve the purpose of showing the other way, breaking up that wall you talk about? Show the human aspect of refugees? Can your way of the content creating serve this purpose?

My goal is give refugees a personality, in the end power is in the hand of the people, never in the hands of the government, people unite for something that the government has to obey the people, people don't obey the government, the government obeys the people, that is how the things always should be, because government serves the people, not the other way around. So my goal for this content is to break down this wall between the people, between the refugees and the locals here, break this wall who are they, why are they in my country, what do they want, I am gonna give the refugees an opportunity to tell their stories, hey I am doctor, I am a dentist, I am teacher and show them that we are just like you, but this and this happened, because all the information people are getting is from media from that point on where they feel it justifies they opinion, they fears and I understand their fears I complete do, but they are not valid ok, they are valid to a certain extend, absolutely I am not playing the refugees are perfect, no they are not, but government isn't perfect either, ok and that is why we need to work together.

In all this do volunteer organizations or NGOs, do you think you are the medium that serves the purpose, trying to connect that structure?

No, not now, at least we weren't, that was not our purpose before, maybe it will be our purpose when we start again, but our purpose before was translate, help, feed.

But why did you decide to do it, why did not other people decide, helping, why do you think it worked in Austria, that so many people helped refugees, was it because of the media or proximity, that its already here so we have to help?

I don't really wanna compare, but I honestly think that people, and this is a perspective that not only I share. I mainly 'blame' it on the Internet , I mean 10 years ago or 20 years this would have been unimaginable, things happen so quick for people that are strangers, gay rights would have not reach where they are today if it wasn't for the internet, if it wasn't for social media. What the internet did is I am Iraqi, ok, and you are Austrian there is no way for us to break that barrier , but me reading news about Austria and you reading news about Iraq and slowly this wall is being turned down by the Internet. The Internet has done crazy good for the world. It is this whole new entity of its own, that is up until now its very fascinating aspect of our life. And without the Internet I don't think we would have such activism, I don't think we would have such human rights that are applied and human rights that are to

be applied. Black lives matter movement, the Internet, the refugees welcome movement, the Internet. So I really think the reason why everything happened is because of the Internet because it is breaking down the wall.

So in ToH social media played a big role?

Huge, crazy big. Social media team is about 14 people right now, 14 people who run the whole thing, whatever we needed, blankets, you would have this ocean of people running at you holding blankets, it was very beautiful to see and then at some point we had enough blankets, and we posted on Internet that we don't need anymore blankets, thank you. And this was with everything we ever needed. If ToH existed 15 years ago a complete different story, cause there is no way to communicate with people. And again people are the heartbeat to our organization.

So was it also the way people got engaged right, via social media?

I would say 80% of our volunteers learned about us from the Internet.

And social media do they still play a role in ToH?

Yes we are still completely active, we are coming up with content, and we are creating content, and we are also getting now involved in helping other organizations grow, giving them more light, put more lights on them and at the same time us as creating content, as who we are, what are our goals, who are the volunteers and so on and so forth. So yes we are active, we are the only active part of ToH right now, everybody else, the translators are separated they all went to different camps, we are still in touch with them, cause there is the group on FB for translators, so they are just waiting for us to say we are back, and the same time for helpers, but for now the social media is the only one that is active.

Are you still being interested in grasping the issues of refugees?

For some reason I consider myself responsible, sounds ridiculous I know it does, I consider myself responsible for the refugees in some way, I think I am more integrated then some of them are and I want to help to fill that gap for the integration. I want to change stereotypes there has to be something done about that, a figure or an organization help them fill up that gap, cause the government is obviously not doing that and they are not even trying, and it has to be someone from within. That is what

I hope for, I really wanna have a union for the refugees or for the expats, for the Arabs mainly, in which we can have once a month gathering where we aim to better ourselves or we aim to be more productive, or we aim to see ways in which we can help this country to grow and be productive member of the society. Be productive in way in which we can add on to things, we can bring the good, we can bring talents, we can bring our experience, and we can make use of it and help to change this perspective that 'they are here to still our jobs'.



Robert, 27, male, volunteer at Train of Hope and later volunteer at the border of Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia, 4.2.2016

Did you have any volunteering experience before?

I am doing social work since nine years now, I started when I was 15. I started to work with disabled kids and from then on it just build up, now I am a chairman of an NGO. We have one in Kenya and one in Colombia, I have been working in Kenya few times.

And what is the scope of that NGO you are the chairman of?

Sustainable development. We are trying to teach the kids and especially women to get women in more work positions, we organize workshop, provide resources and pay also school fees and we are actually going to build a whole medical center now, where people can come and re-socialize especially for street kids. Here in Vienna I have been doing fundraisings and charity events.

Why did you decide to be engaged in social work and volunteering? What was your initial idea to engage?

Its fun and you get so much back from the people so it is a very emotional thing. Nice part about is that you can reach your goals very quickly. For example if you build a refugee camp you build it up from scratch, you build up something and its actually working, like ToH it started from scratch and now its a big organization, that would never work in corporate business. There things take more time.

How did you learn about ToH at the first place?

I was one of the first one to be at the train station, when there was not yet even ToH. Back then there were no organizations just few volunteers running around and giving water and food. So it was very messed up at the beginning. It was funny because the weekend that it all happened there was this volunteer fair at the Rathaus, so there were hundreds of volunteers and organizations at the exhibition at the Rathaus and nobody was helping, we were there of course with my NGO, but we had so many

people, that I said you don't need me here, I will go to the station now, I need to help now. So first I went to the West station and helped a little bit there.

How did you but learn the first place about that something is happening at the train stations in Vienna?

From social media. Twitter and Facebook were full of it. And also it was in the media that the people are coming and suddenly we had this boom at the same day I was helping.

So it was you and some different people that gathered there?

I came there actually with one friend but for him the whole thing was just too much, he left so I stayed there with people that were gathering there together. So suddenly I was there and you can't get out of it. And I have had this experience before that when you work in social work you just don't stop because you see so much to do and you want to get it done.

And when was the point you decided that from train station you will go help to the borders?

After a few days, I started actually first coordinating at ToH, I worked at warehouse and little bit of logistics there and things started to working out so and people panicked when there was a train of 250 coming, I was like guys seriously guys they are not dying, its not that bad and the people were very nervous all the time, lot of the volunteers because it was the first time for them. And people were very emotional, but you should not be. It did not annoy me, but it was working and people were safe when they came there, there were sleeping maybe in tents, but it was safe, they had warm food, there were toilets. And there was at that time a call from Röske (Serbian-Hungarian border) and suddenly someone asked does someone have a passport here and wants to go down to the border? And I said I would go. And we actually just wanted to bring donations, we had a convoy with five cars and then I realized I am going to the Serbian not Austrian border, I kind of did not get that at first.

And how did the situation look like when you came to Röske?

It was horrible. One of the worst things I have seen in my life. We came there at 1:30 am in the night and the whole camp, even though it is not a camp, it was just on the field, and there was no light everything was pitch black, so there were just few light and fires burning, we came there and there was literally nothing except 2000 refugees gathered in a circle and 300 hundred police surrounding them with masks on them. It was kind of intimidating, there were two police cars that had the lights on the people and you saw like lot of kids and women freezing in the mud. So we got the donations to Szeged which is the next city donation center. And people that were there with me needed to go back to Austria, because they had jobs in the morning and I told them that I need to stay here I can't leave now it is too bad. So I went back to the camp, but I did not know anyone, there were at the beginning like me and five to six other volunteers, we had nothing basically.

And the volunteers were Hungarian?

You had basically two camps at the beginning, Rözske, where all the people were and Szeged. In Szeged there was an Hungarian NGO which was working with refugees over months now, they had like 10-15 volunteers, most of them were working so they did not have so much time. They weren't expecting this, so we had few volunteers from them in Rözske, but they were basically all the time in Szeged making sandwiches and getting the logistics done and trying to coordinate everything. So and in Rözske there was a medical tent, one of those camping tents 2x2m, and that was all there was for medicals. And we had a similar sized food tent where we had to divide bananas by three, because we did not have food for the people. It was pretty bad especially for the kids. There was a lot of freezing kids that were hypothermic. So what happened there the two three of us took the coordination over the whole camp. And then NGOs started coming in, Doctors without Borders came, they were the first ones to come actually. And we told them that the University of Vienna is going to send 20 students with 10 to 15 doctors and two big tents with medical stuff. And the lady was don't worry we got this. And the next morning we saw her she had like red eyes and cried out, she said you need to send them. Because we had three kids that were born there in the mud camp. The emergency came but they were allowed only to take the woman and in Hungary nobody speaks English and those people don't speak English either. And also busses came all the time took people and drove them somewhere we did not know to where.

Was there some kind of resistance to that?

They were forced to go, but what happened a few times the people stood against the police and the situation got tense very quickly, it was 800 police and 800 men and only one would throw a stone and it escalated the police beat them. And it got worse after a while because we found two other camps in Asotthalom, and its pretty racist there, they had even had there a commercial against refugees. And then the Jobbik (Hungarian radical nationalist party) came and they said we are going to clear the whole camp in Asotthalom, because it was not official, it was really really bad, because it wasn't in the media at all. We had 500 to 1000 people all the time and it was mostly kids and temperatures under zero degrees there. The place where the border was open was by the river and people needed to cross the river to get over the border. So with zero degrees people were freezing. There was no infrastructure, no Doctors without Borders, no UNHCR, nobody was at these camps, there were only volunteers.

And did you try to call any of the big humanitarian organizations?

Yes, but they said it is too small and it's very unstable, because suddenly you had 500 000 people there and two hours later its empty. So it was not like Rözske where it was more continuous.

And where did you get all the resources for this camp?

So many people came suddenly to donate there.

But how did you manage all of it, how did people learn about it and about what you need?

It was all around. I actually started to use Twitter in Rözske, never used it before, I tweeted like 2-3 times before, I actually started to tweet about Rözske and I tweeted my phone number as well, so people would know who was in charge.

So what did you tweet actually mostly?

That we needed supply and also how the situation is. For example after the first night I wrote up that we need this and that, and after few days I tweeted its going better. And later I was also tweeting the hashtag Asotthalom. For example one night it

started to rain, it was horrible, it rained for 15 hours straight, the whole camp was in mud, you could not even walk through it anymore. And at some point I think the police was so annoyed that they did not care anymore if people would go, and people wanted to go to the next train station to get to Budapest. So we had hundreds of refugees walking in the streets in the rain walking to the central station in Szeged. We needed to go to Szeged and build like a quick very quick camp, we needed to give them new clothes. But we were so scared if there is hundreds of refugees at the train station and the police would want to clear it out, it would get very nasty. So I tweeted about it that we need media here immediately, because otherwise the whole thing was going down. And it took 15 minutes and I had cameras there, also BBC.

You tagged the media to come?

I hashtagged Röske and suddenly people just spreaded it at hand, it was very quick I suddenly got phone calls from all different media.

And eventually they came?

Yes and the whole thing happened very quickly and it was actually very smooth, all worked out.

So you think if there would not be any media the situation would have looked worse?

I actually do not know if in that situation something would happen because there was not a lot police there at the train station. But at Röske when there was no media at the beginning it was very bad. Like in Asotthalom you had refugees and police going at each other, if there is media nothing happens, suddenly police is calmer.

And was the whole situation with refugees better in Croatia?

After Hungary closed its borders, then we had the big clashes between police and refugees in Horgos on the Serbian border. After Röske I went back to Vienna, I needed to clear my head and I needed sleep. People asked if we should go to Horgos I said no way nobody is going to Horgos because the situation there is going to escalate. And in the next 24 hours it did, it was clear it would, all refugees were send there and there borders closed and on the other side you have the Hungarian police which already is pretty aggressive and annoyed and then after this big clash

everyone went to Tovarnik (Croatia) and I had friends who called me to Torvanik. I did not want to go actually because it gets so much into your head, so I went back to the main station, but I came there and it was for me so boring that I said I need to go back to the border. So I went to Torvanik and there we had actually a different problem. There was over 30 degrees and people were dehydrating. But Croatian police was very friendly. Croatia was sending busses, but we had no clue where they are bringing the refugees, we had to follow the busses because we wanted to let know the people in Slovenia when and how many refugees are arriving, they needed this information. And we found that they were bringing people to Hungary. And we found out why, so they send people over the border to Hungary put them in busses and brought them to Austria. So it is actually good, but it didn't make sense.

Torvanik was very calm, it was nice to see.

Where there also some NGOs?

Greenpeace, Doctors without borders and Croatian NGOs, sanitary camps.

In Croatia also the volunteering experience was different, it was there more structured, volunteers had housing and also kind of a schedule to work for example only 10 hours and then someone else will switch. It was also way easier police was providing water, they had food, it was really nice. Then after few days I went to Slovenia, I wanted to go back to Vienna, then I got a call from friends in Vienna going there, so I said lets meet there. I went to Bregana, which was in between borders, the Croatia would bring them to the border to Slovenia, but they were not allowed to go to Slovenia, so they where stuck in the middle on the highway like 3000 or 4000 people. It was weird because you were sitting like on the highway basically, situation was there weird, you have these huge borders. In between no mans land. They did not allow them going back to Croatia and neither Slovenia wanted to let them, Slovenia needed first to organize busses. I was there two to three days.

So on the journeys of the refugee on the Balkan route there were this kind of pop-up camps?

Yes and it was you never knew where the camp would emerge, and it was also like this because some camps got closed so new ones emerged. But after two to three

weeks there was one route that was used all the time. And there the camps more or less worked.

And from all these places where you have been as volunteer what was for you the most challenging or shocking moment and one of the best moments?

I think the most shocking when it was one day raining and lot of people went to train station we said we weren't going to take anybody in our car because first of all if they get us we are going to jail, that is law in Hungary, so we said we weren't taking anybody but then suddenly there was this crippled man he could barely walk, so we said we are going to take him because this is too bad. So we brought him there and since he did not have money we bough him a ticket, and suddenly he starts crying and flips out, we asked what is happening and he said his son is still at the camp. We also said we would not take anybody so this kind of things don't happen, because one thing is that its illegal, but the other one is that you just rip families apart and thats what we did. He was sitting at this train station for three days not sleeping just crying his eyes out because of his son and this was the worst moment for me. I would see him everyday and we felt like we can't do anything. That was the worst moment. We were not able to tell him anything, we did not know where his son was, if he was in the registration camp, he said he doesn't want to leave without him. The day we wanted to leave we got a Whatsapp message from him and his son in the train to Budapest and we just started crying at that moment. This was on the other hand one of the most beautiful moments.

I talked with one of your colleagues from ToH that nowadays the perception of refugees is different than in comparison with refugees after the WW2 nowadays of course refugees have mobile phones, he said that they dont have the image of the 'classic' victim, for you how did you perceive the people?

I think a lot of the people are fleeing warzones, but its hard to have an objective perception from my position, I would want them all being refugees but I know there are also just people who want to have a better life, who could have actually a better life down there too, but they maybe want to have an easier way here. We also know there are probably some terrorists, we are aware of this. But we can't blaim 99% of the people for the 1%. I usually when I work in this area I never look at the grownups I always look at the kids, I always thing how lucky we were growing up here, and

how unlucky they are growing up down there. And if I imagine that since four years they can't go to school, they are not allowed I don't care who is coming with them, if they parents want to have a better life I just want to create a better environment for the kids. So I see them as victims especially the kids.

How did you perceive the mobilization of people, why do you think so many people engaged and decided now it is the time that we need to help the people?

First of all, of course social media made a big deal out of it. You can't watch the news anymore without having at least five or six things about the refugee crisis, just doesn't work anymore, you are basically confronted with it 24/7, thought communication people get sensitive about it, its all because of the media. Its not just about poor people are coming or that camps are in such a bad shape, its also the right wing, you see them growing in the union, which is dangerous and people want to step aside, step aside against that and how else to do it if not by help the people that the right wing doesn't like. So that is why I think so many people got mobilized and of course also for a lot of people its a once in a lifetime opportunity, now they can help because until now the crisis was down there, but now its here. And I also thing a lot of people wanted to come to just see what is happening and did not expect what they were seeing. There are lot of people I know that went there to give donations, I mean why not you have lot of clothes, it is not a big deal as soon as they were there, they wanted to help for 30 minutes and suddenly do it every two months. It just has its own dynamic. You start and you can't stop anymore, because as I said you see the results immediately, you give someone food, he is thankfull and happy. The further you are from the actual situation the harder it is to keep yourself motivated about it. This was one of the things when I came back from the camp I took over the coordination in Vienna over the private initiatives, I set up meetings, with 40 to 50 organizations in Austria, I was working 24/7. And suddenly it hit me that I have not seen a refugee in two weeks, because I was working 24/7 all the time on phone to coordinate stuff without actually working with the people. That is actually the thing that drives you all the time. And I was getting annoyed by the whole thing so I just started to hand like food to refugees just to keep reminding me why I was doing it.

How did you in all the civic engagement see the social media? In which way did social media help you as a volunteer at ToH and at the borders?

Before I was not actually a big fan of social media, I never post things on Facebook I am not using it a lot. But since people new I was down the borders people call me also family how I was, so then I just started to use social media for that purpose, so they can follow me and see I am ok. I said to my mom follow me on Twitter so you can know I am ok. She was on what? Whatever. It helped me communicating to a lot of people that everything is fine. But also showing the situation as it is. And it was like a good way to get in contact with media, suddenly I got calls from different media, I was in a newspaper in Mexico, I did not know that and newspaper in France. When I was in Röske I gave a lot of interviews. It was an easy way to get in touch with them and they got in touch with you.

Do you think you were for the big media an informant? You had the overview about the situation?

Yes that was the thing, honestly I have no idea how would I done all this things without social media. I would not know how to get media there, I would not know how to get my donations here, and I would not know how to get my number out to people that have to call when they need something. I mean right now I dont know how I would do it without social media, maybe over a website, but down there (at the border) we did not have a computer, we did not have there much possibilities, and over the phone the easiest way is the Twitter or Facebook. It is actually crazy easy I mean you ask for things, I mean through Twitter and social media we had donations from Glasgow. That was all through social media, and that was like, ok it works. And you also knew where and when the clashes were between police and the refugees.

So you were also following other Twitter accounts where you saw the situation unfolding?

Yes definetely. Especially at the beginning in Röske I looked up all the time where the situation was because there were already people down there tweeting about it. It was a crazy good way to get informed. I mean also ToH they did the best social media work. But also for other purposes we coordinated convoys over Twitter.

How exactly did you do it?

It was at the border with Slovenia, tweets were hashtagged Torvanik with a message that donations are coming 12 hours big truck. And suddenly it became open in Bregana so we said we don't necessarily need the truck with stuff here in Tovarnik, bring it to Bregana and they actually did that. So we redirected convoys which only worked over Twitter. And it was really easy, so easy, just send an message and go there if they need anything just hashtag Bregana and suddenly they change their routes.

And you started to be involved in Twitter due to the refugee crisis and due to your volunteering, do you think also other people used that for that purpose of due to the situation more?

Definetely, I think it was a huge boom for Twitter the whole refugee crisis, especially in Europe. Since the whole crisis came actually I had that feeling everybody was suddenly on Twitter. In one day I got 100 followers. Newspapers are too slow, it is of course it is, but also online newspaper it is just not as fast as people tweeting from the spot and know what is needed. But of course on the other hand it has its downsides as well since everybody can use it, people abuse it. For example people coming to refugee camp and see that there is not hot meals of blankets, but of course I mean this is not a luxury hotel and then they make panic how crazy bad conditions there are etc. And we had such situations in one of the borders with one organization from Vienna in a military camp in Slovenia where no NGOs were allowed, only the big ones not private initiatives. So they decided to go there without respecting that and they started to tweet that we put down the police barrier we are the first here and they set up their camp in front of the military. The military said they need to leave they did not want, there was a huge fight between them and military said everybody out. And then they had this huge post about that the whole situation escalated military throw us out and I think they also told that one refugee put himself on fire, simple misinformations just to make panic. And what happened due to it that two doctors from a big established humanitarian organization lost licence, because of the post that was not true. And it was shared I think 2000 times in one hour, it is so easy on social media to spread misinformation and it is so hard to get things right afterwards. On the other hand social media has this huge impact on right wing it is so easy for them to spread misinformations about refugees. There was this misinformation here in Vienna that many refugees get a free voucher to

a warehouse, and it got shared many times and its like stupid people believe it that when something is shared thousand times it must be the truth.

How did you relive or what is the lesson you learned from the volunteering during refugee crisis, what was for you the good practise you learned?

It was a huge experience and still is with few challenges. This has been a Woodstock for our generation. And it is something which I will probably tell my grandkids 50-60 years ago, because its something that will go to the history books, you already have it on wikipedia refugee crisis 2015 in Europe. And maybe children are going to ask where gradpa was at that time and someone can say well the grandpa was on the borders. I mean this is our World War II what is happening right now, not as bad of course; it is not an actual war in Europe.

And it was a huge experience where so many people, I have met so many friends who have so huge block of plans suddenl. And most of the people that are helping are lets say good people, nice and friendly people and it also shows that people are way more stress resistant than they think they are, they can really reach more if they really work for something, if people would stood against climate change as they did for refugees over the last six months we would solve the problems in two years. As soon as you have something in common that drives people you can have a huge movement out of it. And worst thing that could happen right now is that the drive would be going down, because as long as civil society is standing up as it does right now nothing bad can happen, no right wing party can take away this and no terrorism can blow out this. This is something we have to always keep in mind that it always has to be there, this spirit.

Günther, 28, male, Chief-coordinator of the Transportation and Translation team at Train of Hope, responsible for the coordination and organization of transports of train with refugees, 3.2.2016

How did ToH started to form?

For me ToH has lot more to do with whats going on, I mean there is a whole pre story to that which I think has to be taken into account, which is if you look on Austrian politics and media coverage of the refugee crisis since January 2015 its very negative or it was just building up, this is also coupled with the idea of political apathy, this generation has been for years taken as political apathetic generation, in sense that they are not very involved. So there is this idea that there is a lot of political apathy going on in the society, what do they call it 'politische Verdrossenheit', so this is going on at the same time, but it is been going on for years. And then at the same time if you look at the start-up and pop-up culture which is going on more in business, more in the younger generation, this whole idea of pop up business, quit your job and start a startup or this whole idea of you don't have to wait for someone to employ you, you don't have to have to wait for the idea now, we can act and do whatever we want. I think its important when you think of ToH I always say we are a start up, pop up NGO, because we were literally in the garage at train station making sure that 150 000 were getting moved from A to B. So I think that is an important thing for you to remember so when you think of ToH you gotta think of it like that. If you look on the organization, on the structure how everything was build up, the speed in which it happened has a lot to do with this. On the other hand I also say that point number two is this political apathy, if it would have been a natural catastrophe for instance floods, I think you would see the same kind of reaction, same kind of willingness to help, same kind of idea to set up new ideas and set up an initiative, simply because you are sick and tired of politicians at the moment, so when you think of ToH you have to remember all of this in the background.

So you think that the idea is basically that people are tired of the old politics or how it works, and that it was not done enough in that matter so you felt like you need to take this role as citizens?

Precisely.

If I look on your website how should I understand is it are you a NGO, is it an initiative, is a project how could you define ToH?

I would define it as a citizen engagement for sure, I mean if you would be looking for a definition we are a grassroots organization that is the best way to actually describe it. I was at a conference the other day and you know the whole idea is like ok everyone was like relying on the state to solve this problem of the refugee crisis, but we are the state. We are the citizens, we are the state. We decide to take things into our own hands, I mean I was not the founder, so don't take me the wrong way, I was there on the third day, it was founded on 31st of August and I was there since 2nd September and been active ever since then.

And how did you get involved, how did you learn about ToH?

I was actually on my way to Berlin, cause I came back from travelling in Vietnam, and my brother called me up and was hey listen I need your help at the train station with some refugees come on by, my brother is at the military, but he was there as an civilian. So I came there and started at the warehouse at the back of the office. And from there I pretty much I ended up becoming the chief coordinator for pretty much everything within two weeks. Things were moving very very quickly, the organizational structure was, you know what I think we should structure this things a little more. I will tell you what was happening why ToH was set up and then I go to more how the organization worked and then I tell you what my role is.

We have to remember that in Austria at that time, when refugees started to arrive to Vienna you had the city of Vienna elections and here its really important to remember that it was the head on head race between the socialist and the far right. And when actually refugee crisis has broken to Vienna, a lot of the people were at the Main station first of all because of the empathy with the refugees, cause the image at the media at that time was about poor refugees are coming over and you had the 72 dead people in the truck on the Austrian-Hungarian highway, then you had the kid Aylan that was found dead on the beach, so everybody got so involved in this with the empathy, at the same time there were saying like look how can this far right people be against refugees, its our humanitarian duty to uphold this cause. And at the

same time you had a lot of people, and this is interesting in ToH you had a lot of people from diasporas who would come in and literally helping simply because they wanted to show everybody else that immigrants were not bad. That they should be working against FPÖ (the far right wing party of Vienna), so there was this whole political part going on at the same time. Then it shifted towards and that is why we did not allow any politicians onto the trainstation, cause we did not want it to become a political campaign ground, that was really important for us. Then it shifted a little bit cause then we realized ok, its 11th of October the SPÖ (socialist) won, they did not really, they lost massively, but they won election by a hair. And then we were like ok this is not going to go away, and then we became lot more involved with the police, more involved with the different security services, rescue services in order to support them , cause we realized that what we build up within the last six weeks was so big, such a big initiative of civil society, that we became the 'spearhead' of it. We became one of the biggest, the biggest grassroots organization.

There are hundreds of organizations similar ones. One of the first organizations was SOSkonvoi, but they split up, their job was to organize all the convoys to Rözske and the Hungarian border. But they split up really quickly. Its also really important in an organization with whom you work with because you had a lot of people from the Antifa (Antifaschist movement) who were involved in SOSkonvoi, and these guys are really really radically left, so at the beginning you have to remember that the whole election which was going on at the same time, so you had really the hardcore left fraction, which was trying to get involved and show the far right how wrong and demonic they are when they dont value human life. So and you had there (in SOSkonvoi) a lot more moderate people who were saying we don't really believe in this whole antifa rhetoric, but we believe what we are doing is correct, so they split. But when they split it had a big repercussion for people in government, and people in municipality, because until then they were like this is a new breed of grassroots organization which we can trust and thats split up now, so who can we trust. That had big repercussions for ToH when they were splitting up, because there were these radicals so how can we make sure that we can rely on you. Because no municipality no government wants to work with left or even far wing radicals, noone really wants to work with them because they are unpredictable, they have very strong stance on the world and they are not willing to compromise. So what we did after that (after the

SOSkonvoi split) we took on the people from SOSkonvoi the moderate, we managed to get rid of the antifa guys, cause we had lot of antifa guys in our ranks. So after they left ToH was very moderate neutral ground and we always tried to keep it that way, so when we had, from the volunteers were a blank piece of paper, cause you had gays and transgenders working together with conservative Muslims and conservative Catholics, then you had anarchists or former anarchists working together with the police, then you had 16 years olds working together with grandmothers. The identity really was there because we were there to work , there was always so much going on, that nobody had time to ask questions, so everyone was anonymous and everyone was there with the same reason, so your background stories suddenly became irrelevant and what was only relevant was that you are here and that you had your heart on the right place and you are willing to work.

So you would say there is some commonality even though the group of volunteers was so heterogenous?

Again the commonality was that we were all here we came together, came here at the same time because we saw that the state is failing, that there was human suffering and that there is a human catastrophe at our door, it was no longer TV images poor babies in Lesbos or people dying in Africa, it is here. And if you walk thought ToH where we were at the Hauptbahnhof sometimes it really resembled a kind of situation in Lebanon, so it was right here, so that was what brough everyone together.

So you saw it that the proximity makes it your moral responsibility to do something?

See this is exactly this, so at the beginning most of the people came the first two to three days and they were like this is my moral responsibility to do this, and then what you saw was as they saw that the organization was growing, that the organization is becoming more structured, more serious that they were being part of something new which is growing up and you know they were making friends, it became much more of a social engagement, much more like I believe in whats going on and I believe that this is the kind of organization which can change the way we look at the world. So that is what was going on at the same time. After the second or third day most of the people who were there were literally coming back cause they had just such a good time with us and they felt they were doing something useful, lot of people were

working 40 hours a week in their normal jobs and then they were coming for another 30 hours to work with us. So you had people who would come three hours before they started to work in their jobs, in like 4 in the morning, because they were like what I am doing here is so much more valuable. I like the people I am working with, I know my requests are being taken seriously, there were a lot of people who were suddenly part of something new, and that is the most important thing. So yes it was your moral, it was a moral direction on the second hand it was that you are part of something new. And then I mean on the third hand now it is just like for a lot of people it became their life. This is not for the employed ones, this is more for refugees, cause we had a lot of refugees working with us, you had lots of kids at school, who were getting bad rates at school or did not really get along with their parents, or just people who were working at McDonald's and hated it, but felt like they were suddenly part of something bigger, better and greater at ToH. So that is why you have base of 500 helpers there, now they are diversified, but I am sure if it would build up again you would have them in a second.

So even though at your website that you are apolitical, in this non-political is there still something which drives you, is there some advocacy in what you are doing? I know primary you are helping refugees but is this going right now since you are not active beyond something more, is there any initiative to make it like advocating for better grasping of refugee problem in Austria or for their rights? Or is this right now not in your focus?

I mean we are apolitical, we are apolitical in the sense that, for example most things in Austria are either, ok you have to remember you have something like Caritas which is traditionally conservative black and then you have Arbeiter Samariterbund which is like the workers Red Cross, which is traditionally red, socialist. And that is why its so important that we say that we are apolitical so that we are not defining ourselves by party colours. So this doesn't mean, I mean we still stand for human rights, we stand for open minded society, we stand for enlightenment thinking that everyone has a space and everyone has the right to be treated humanly, the idea that if you arrive in Austria human dignity has to be preserved at every level. I think for a political reason, I mean I don't think it is a political reason, its just the general idea that enlightened societies today have. So I don't think there is a lot of people in Austria who would deny that to anybody. That said though. We were always trying

to shy away of political parties much as we could, simply because that would, you have to remember as I was saying about different nationalities and backgrounds that we had at ToH we had a lot of conservatives, we had a lot of people from the black party. So that is why we were saying we don't want to be political cause as soon as we are political or we make a statement which is criticizing the government or the capitalist system we would immediately alienate a huge group who was working for us. Cause we had a lot of people from the Sikh community or from the Muslim Youth. Our idea was never to convert people from one to another in political stance, what we were doing is saying hey you wanna help come it does not matter how you are gonna help you can just help. If you know how to build an app but dont want to be folding clothes in the back build us an app.

How did in time the structure of the organization evolve? How did you manage and organize all the people that were coming?

So at the beginning you had three people gathered at the train station on 31st of August with a table and 6 bottles of water. Three strangers that did not know eachother and that is how it all started. So this was not planned. And then they kept on going back until the ÖBB said you guys are doing an ok job why don't you take the store room, which ended up being our office and from there it really started. And then you had suddenly more and more people coming, because Ashley was using her Twitter account and Ashleys Facebook and Twitter presence is pretty big, so the whole thing actually started though social media. So that is how the 'recruiting' was done. And I came on the third day because my brother had a Twitter account and that is how he learned about ToH. Interesting thing here is social media is pretty much the most important part we have, it is that part which gives us the power that we have. The power in the sense that the people still wanna work together with us, people still see the presence that we still have, we are still very active, we have over 50000 likes, we have over 20 000 active followers, we are a big source of information not only to the Austrian growd now, but we came a big source of information to the refugees actually here. Social media is really really important. Twitter less so its more Facebook and thats how we would 'recruit' people, at the beginning the 'recruiting' was literally done over just Twitter and Facebook. And that was people who went to the West station and saw that Caritas was not accepting

any people, cause Caritas have more structured approach to letting people work, whereas we were like when you have time just come over.

So after the 'recruiting' as more and more people were coming how did you manage and organize everything?

So one thing you have to remember about social media, social media was also really important in the lack time between the social media team putting up we need helpers or we need stuff to helpers actually standing up at the door, standing in our doors we want to help or here is three bags of toothbrushes was 15 minutes. That is incredible, you can't even get people that fast. The best time was 15 minutes but within 6 weeks you would put up a list on Facebook and people would bring it.

So how ToH was structured, so you had 5 departments, it took a while for us to structure this, at the beginning it was very chaotic, so you would build a structure and someone else would come and new better and recreate that structure, then you come the next day and see like we spent the whole day putting it up, why is it like this now, so it was really chaotic, because it was not planned. It took us three weeks to set this up. And we had five departments at the end. You had Orga, the organization where Amanda was, there you had PRs, sponsorship, accounting or small stuff like admin, front desk as well the secretary stuff. These were all volunteers so the cool thing was you could choose where you wanna work, where you enjoyed to work. Some people wanted to pack boxes, some being secretaries at the front desk. Then you had Social media, then you had Infrastructure, they were dealing with the power supply, how to organize warehouse, then you had Lazaret, which was the medical department, there was a rotation of 1300 doctors over eight weeks and they were providing 24/7 service, they were the only ones at that time doing it for the refugees in Vienna, we were lucky because we had there a girl, she works for Doctors without borders, she was just on the leave from there and was able to help us up. And we had a lot of help on this from Doctors without borders as well. And then you had the final, the biggest department the Transport and Translation unit. We had 250 translators, and that was really tough, because that was the one department which had the constant contact with refugees, so we were the guys that when you read in the newspaper 150 000 people were transported from the train station to Germany or elsewhere that was the department. We were the ones who came up with the strategies on how to transport

best the people into the busses, creating lines. We also had to make sure that everyone was calm, that the refugees got the right information at the right time and that the wrong information is not getting out. I had a good team this took like to week to build up, I had like eight people to trust at all time.

And in ToH how many people are actually in the core?

A lot of people dropped out, because its stressfull, a lot of people got burn-out, so key person at ToH now , I mean there is still a helping core of about 200 and decision makers there is maybe 10. But its varrying because we do not have much going on at the moment, I mean we plan on 'House of Hope' an integration house and primary care camp.

So what are you doing at the moment?

I am heading the House of Hope group so we can have a primary care house, which is a camp in Vienna. We are planning on it right now.

What is for you the know-how or best practise (good practises that you would transfer to the future too) that you learned, that you would also apply in the future that you learned though your experience, though ToH? What was the good points and where do you see lacking that needs to be improved fixed in the future if you continue? In which way do you see a space for improvement? Or what could be done better for the organization?

What I learned was how important communication is, intercultural communication, here the key things were how, for example when you talk with Arabs of Afghanis you can't assume that they have the same system of norms that you have. There was for instance a lot of rivalry between these two groups, sometimes fight, so you really had to sort it out. So what I learned is how to balance it the best, I learned how to lead a team of 150 and making sure that they were still doing their job. I learned how to be fair I guess and also how to communicate with police in the right way. So it was or for me this job was purely a lot about communication, but also trouble-shooting. And also managing to keep a clear level head.

From an organizational point of view I learned how important that is that there is structure, that people always, see this is interesting thing, cause you learn that people

are yearning for structure, people look for organization and want to be organized and this is where leadership comes. Because leadership is not precisely that someone comes in and tells you ok you are the boss, it is more what information you have and how do you delegate that information correctly and properly and how do you make sure that people are happy in the organization and now what they are doing.

How many people usually arrived how many refugees arrived at a day?

Overall 150 000, so in this four month period we were there, at our peak we had 7000 per day, we had 15 000 medical interventions, you had 4 000 meals a day, here we were working very closely with the Sikh community

For the future, if something like this happens again, maybe after winter if again the refugees will start to arrive are you going to organize ToH again? Are you going to be at the train station again if there is a need for it? Are you going to shift to something or do both?

I don't really think Vienna is gonna see as much action as we did, simply because the police and politicians are looking as far as they can at the moment to move it away from the cities, to make sure that you are not going to notice it as much. Citizens don't notice so much, politicians don't want this too, they know they are losing a lot of votes to far right, they don't want this topic to impede anymore. It will be more people, they are expecting over three million in 2016, but they are very organized in Spielfeld at the moment so that's gonna be keeping people away from Vienna. The other question is whether the ÖBB and the city of Vienna will allow us to stay at the train station.

Or are you thinking of going where you will be needed?

I don't think this is going to be our job, because our strength is that we are in Vienna and that we can mobilize as much people as we can in Vienna. We did couple of missions to Slovenia and Spielfeld, but we just realized we don't have the, there was just not the moment in there and we can organize people to go to Spielfeld all the time very quickly, but its three hours from Vienna and our base is actually here. And really our strength is in our base being here, so the integration works because something has to going to happen to those 90 000 that just came across and I mean I saw our job as providing the Austrian state with enough time to organize itself and

they should now hopefully really know what to do. You really hope they have it under the control now. There is no point for us to go to other cities or countries because other organizations do it very well and there is no need in building parallels, what we can do we can help people set up on the main train station, train stations. We know how to do this. In Spielfeld we were working really close with the military, especially in the first couple of days we were helping them to organize people to get into the buses. I mean that's our real strength, the strength is we know how to do crowd control.

When we look on ToH, on volunteers, on the people how can you engage or keep on motivating/mobilizing people that they are going to come and keep the spirit of volunteering is there any way to motivate them to be part of? What is the key to that? For example the immediacy that was there when you started is not there anymore, there it was maybe more natural that people got engaged but after this 'media bubble' is over do you think that there is still a chance that people can get mobilized in the same volume or that they can at least be engaged?

As I said we started as a pretty big core of around 300 to 400 helpers, so I don't think we are gonna have the 5000 strong again, simply because the views have changed, the views became a lot more hostile, so I don't think we will have that great number, but we don't need that great number because we became a lot more efficient, especially in how many people we needed. Do we need 5000? no, do we have 500 people which we can call on actively? yes. Are they willing to help? Yes. How we gonna engage I think this is for the House of Hope project, what is interesting is there we are looking for working again with volunteers on a very big level, while at the same time employing people so that's how we see the evolution. So how do you motivate them.

Or do they have to be self-motivated or are there any external factors to that to make them even more motivated? Is it about showing more solidarity, being more human what is the driver in this context?

I think the driver, the key motivator for volunteers is yes showing solidarity with those in need, I think the other drive is that you can be part of something new, you can be part of building something, you can't underestimate that, because in other

organizations you don't have that influence on the creative process, I think that's what really drives people.

So from your point of view is it sustainable that you got organized during a special situation, a crisis?

That is exactly why we are planning on doing the House of Hope. We want it to be sustainable, because this is a project which is about three to five years, so we are trying to make it sustainable. That's why we also have to employ people. So you have to make sure that people feel they own the 'product', product because at the end of the day its like why are some people so crazy about starting a start up, why can entrepreneurs build a team and motivate a team to work on something for 18 hours a day? Because people believe in it, they see they are creating something new, they see their input is being taken seriously and as soon as you combine all of that into an NGO ...I think a lot of NGOs are in a certain political dimension or direction and as soon as as we see we can do something apolitical something which is actually directly for better integration of people to the economy and to the culture, the language and we need you to help out we wanna hear your ideas, we wanna hear your creativity, if you know there is process that can go faster by all means tell us what it is and we will try to implement it, they can implement their strenght and weaknesses without a binding contract and without binding time and this is the interesting thing , because people could come and go when they wanted and could do and not do what they wanted all the time so people were not bound by anything. Some NGOs require a lot more structure. What I am trying to say that the structure is important, but the volunteers are lot more free to come and go as they please, what you are doing is you are tracking a different group of people.

Are you planning on trying to grasp ToH to some kind of an NGO? You started as a grassroots organization or civic engagement but now that you extend your scope of work with also the project House of Hope are you planning on making your organization official?

Yes that's the plan, we are planning on formalizing it. Because if you do a project like House of Hope and you want to work with long term strategic partners, private sector or even with other bigger NGOs or with the government they need formal structures, which I completely understand because what they say is look we want to

work together with you but you represent too much risk at the moment because you are not formalized. Because you don't have anyone who is clearly responsible for what's happening to the funding. Because you know you would not give money to anyone just like that and there is nobody who is reliable for if something happens. We have to formalize also to be taken seriously as well. I think it is part of the story isn't it? We were this caterpillar and grow up. We were at the train station before we met, it was cool, the ideas came, that we were all strangers at this one point, now we are a unit of 300 strong and we are super motivated to continue in the future and now we are evolving into a more structured organization. And we still want to keep this flexibility alive, but just because we are formalized does not mean that we don't have flexibility. I don't see it that way at all. I mean look at Google they have formal structures too, but they are very very flexible.

So it is more like a startup idea in your case that lies behind all this?

Yes see that is when you speak to me. That is the way I see it.

It is kind of interesting that you apply kind of business model to a volunteering organization dealing with refugees, I think it could be also a good practise as well?

The thing is it is gonna have to happen sooner or later. The way I see it at the moment is you have 90 000 refugees, 100 000 which we have to integrate from years before and the government is clearly overwhelmed, the NGO sector is not flexible enough due to its own political motives and its own political structures. Here is a good example I have a very diverse background. When I see refugees I don't see them as victims of oppression, I mean as victims in general, I mean every social work you see they see the world as victims and divide the world on trauma patient and victim patients and so on, it's a very sad worldview. And my view is that I see them as guests who have products and services in order to have a much better experience. So I look on which services and products can we provide as a group, and which products and services can we provide to our employees and how can we make the volunteer experience best one possible, how can we make the refugee experience the best and most productive possible. So that's the way I view the world, how I view ToH. It is a very different way of looking at it. Cause I don't see them as victims, especially in the integrating process. I am sure if you speak to someone else

he would have another view. But it just leaves this whole new world and aspects of how you can create new jobs, how can you create more innovation with products that are so out of the world. For example I spoke to one of the much much bigger NGOs, huge NGO the other day and they were talking about how can we create refugee camps where we are gonna get the capital markets involved where investors can buy shares in refugee camps and get like a relatively high interest in return on their investment like pension or senior housing in USA for example. Cause we know we need this refugee camps for the next ten years, we know they have to be build, we know they have to have a certain quality, we know we don't wanna have ghettos, and products and services have to be offered, so why don't we open it up to the capital investment market as an idea. So rather than relying on the state to fund this, which is annoying already to a lot of people.

So you are going to look more to the direction of private sector funding?

It is gonna have to happen sooner or later, but that's just me.

Did you have before any volunteering experience and how maybe this experience you have now made you think about volunteering?

I volunteered before when I was at the university I was part of Red Cross, I was volunteering with the International Tracing and Messaging (ITM) Service at Red Cross. This was entirely before iPhones and before Facebook I am saying it because now it is so much more easier to find a lost relative and we also had a missing people service at ToH. Because if two people would get lost in the Aegean one would end up in Greece one in Vienna lets say, before the Internet how would we get in contact with each other, so what the ITM was if I am for example in Greece and you in Vienna, I could go to Vienna Red Cross and say hey look I lost someone and vice versa and what the Red Cross would do is to send out volunteers to go and look for the missing person. We were more like private detectives looking for people, it was pretty cool, because you really had to go to refugee camps and find those people. And they still do it now.

So but now since people have smartphones and Internet it kind of gets a little bit irrelevant?

They adopted it, because there is obviously a lot of people who don't have smartphones or lost it, but now its better, rather than taking weeks it takes couple of days. I mean the process is the same it is just a lot more faster.

After this I did not have much volunteering experience because I was always working and to be honest ToH is really interesting because I was travelling for four months, I quit my job in April, I was travelling in Vietnam and I came back in the middle of August to Austria. And then suddenly ToH happened and I got so stuck and suck by the organization that it ended up becoming like my lifestyle. I was there everyday. It became my job. But it is related to how I view work that its rather a choice than a job.

And what was for you the most memorable and beautiful moment during the volunteering at ToH?

I think the most memorable, I think the greatest experience was actually having my team, that team of eight, knowing that the team is with you 100%, you could really rely on them in every situation, even if you were in trouble. That we would always help eachother out. There was a real comrade in there. Then most memorable experience, there were a lot of funny experiences, sometimes very funny things happened. In this whole crisis also funny situations happened. We had 'Fries of Hopes', stop crying start frying was their motto, they had this huge frying machine set up at the corner of the main station and fry potatoes. And everyone from refugees when they saw this machine they were happy. Stuff like this. On the other hand you had this experience, I was walking through the main hall and suddenly this really young refugees 20-22 years old with couple of tattoos, they looked pretty cool and they were like hey listen man where can I get a beer. Then I invited them for couple of beers and we were talking about music, where they were from, what they dreams were, where they wanted to go, that was pretty cool. And then now like I got four of five of them jobs in different restaurants. One of them is a cook and he organized this Syrian restaurant night in a really cool bar, so I became more involved in understanding what their needs are. One of the most important things you gotta remember is when we speak about this refugee crisis is that people aren't running away and looking for safety, people are running away and looking for a new life.

As I said the whole thing did you read ever the Animal Farm from George Orwell?
Read it, trust me, and it kind of describes ToH in a really good way, very critical lets
put it that way. It kind of shows why, there is a nice element in it to ToH.

