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**Migration, Post-socialism, and Nationalism:
A Study of Refugeehood in a Border Town in Bulgaria**

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February 2022

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:Kristina Ilieva.....

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council for funding the research for this thesis, without which I would not have been able to conduct the project over the years. Many thanks to Professor Luke Martell for believing in the research and supporting me to begin the PhD journey and offering invaluable feedback on my PhD proposal. Dr Laura Morosanu has commented on the early ideas and the research proposal for this thesis.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Professor Gerard Delanty, Professor Jane Cowan and Dr Aneira Edmunds, for their patience, guidance, suggestions, and support for the project's development. Professor Gerard Delanty has encouraged me to develop my writing skills while offering a wealth of knowledge. Among others, he has pointed me to the work of Hutchinson on 'hot nationalism' and the usefulness of frame analysis for the thesis, for which I am grateful. Professor Jane Cowan encouraged me to be brave during my fieldwork in Harmanli, which immensely helped me expand my ethnographic 'gaze'. Her thorough suggestions on the whole thesis advanced the thesis. Dr Aneira Edmunds has offered much support, kindness, and encouragement in one of the most challenging periods of completing the thesis, which has undoubtedly improved the thesis's quality. I am grateful for her feedback in strengthening the thesis' conclusion.

I am grateful for the comments and suggestions from Dr. Ana Ivasiuc, Prof Eveline Dürr, and Catherine Whittaker on a draft part of the chapter on vigilance. Their feedback on the chapter, forthcoming as an article in *Conflict and Society's* Special Issue on Vigilance, has enhanced my thinking about my research.

My fieldwork in Harmanli would not have been as warm and pleasant without the companionship of a few trusted friends. Mrs Vasilka Geneva shared much of her wealth of knowledge and experience as a leading political and cultural figure in Harmanli during socialism and after. I enjoyed every one of our walks, the delicious meals she cooked for me, and the stories she shared. I am grateful for her putting me in contact with those last few key interlocutors, who substantially enriched my understanding of the refugee reception in Harmanli. Veska has offered companionship, warmth, and many hours of talks, which gave me an invaluable insight into everyday life in Harmanli. Her laughter and light-heartedness made the fieldwork experience a little more like home, making it possible to extend it as needed.

The women at the Library in Harmanli's cultural centre (chitalishte) have contributed to this project by pointing me to valuable books on the history of Harmanli and photographs of the town. Harmanli Municipality has generously shared their yearly budget, sources on the town's geography and invaluable interviews, for which I am grateful. I remain indebted to all the participants in this research, who remain anonymous and who contributed with their time and insights to develop this thesis. The Harmanli branch of the Union of Thracian Association in Bulgaria has offered invaluable insights into the resources and materials available at the café, together with many friendly discussions.

Susanne has helped me restore my strength and vitality at points of struggle, which allowed me to focus on my research in the project's final year. The support of Grace Jones and Joanna Dale from the Student Life Centre has made an invaluable contribution to my wellbeing throughout my research, for which I am deeply thankful! Traci has been a source of support and confidence and has helped me sustain my energy when I needed it most.

The text for this thesis has been improved with the suggestions from Tessa Boase and Alison Chisholm. I am grateful for their professional attitude.

Stratis' encouragement and care were a source of stability whenever needed, for which I will always be grateful. I have benefited from our discussions, and he was a mentor, great cook, and a resource of self-care ideas that have sustained my enthusiasm to write.

The friendship of Lucila, Brena, Pardis, and Lilly has supported me with encouragement, warmth, and kindness.

Any mistakes or omissions in the thesis remain mine.

Посветено на дядо ми Кръсто и паметта на баба ми Севда

(Dedicated to my grandfather Krysto and the memory of my grandmother Sevda)

Abstract

In the context of the humanitarian crisis at Europe's borders, distinct and polarized mobilisations emerged around immigration. This thesis studies the discourses around immigration developed to justify various action repertoires. This thesis uses Bulgaria as a case study and, more particularly, a town positioned at the external border of the EU. Harmanli, a border town in Bulgaria, has hosted a Refugee Reception Center since 2013 and is located on the Balkan route. Drawing on border ethnography in the town of Harmanli in the period 2017-2018, and also interviews and focus groups, I illustrate that alongside the prominent anti-asylum protests, care networks developed in border regions and around refugee camps. Anti-asylum protestors also mobilised frames of care to justify their political positions and repertoires of refugee hunting and border vigilance. While pro-asylum activist caring repertoires were directed towards those feeling wars and famine, anti-asylum protestors' care was projected towards the local community. The frame of care thus emerged as mobilising for distinct groups of people in the context of immigration. In addition to this, the thesis traces the responses (or lack thereof) of locals who identify as 'descendants of Thracian refugees' (second and third-generation migrants) from the interwar period of 1919-1925. Looking at these descendants of Thracian refugees (from Asia Minor and Northern Greece), I demonstrate that the local migration history in the border town, including the history of refugeehood from the disintegration of the Ottoman empire, implicates present-day attitudes and lack of responses towards the asylum. Descendants of Thracian refugees in the European border care to preserve the distinct memory of refuge of their ancestors. By caring for their refugee heritage, many denied the present experiences of asylum-seeking at their doorsteps. This thesis documenting pro-asylum, anti-asylum, and histories of asylum action repertoires and frames suggests that care frames justify distinct responses across the political spectrum and migration consciousness. The various mobilisations and hierarchies of care could be further contextualised in the post-socialist period in Bulgaria, shaped by emigration from the country and the depopulation of rural border areas.

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List of Abbreviations

AIDA - Asylum Information Database

BCP - Border-crossing point

BHC - Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

CEAS - Common European Asylum System

EPIM - European Programme for Integration and Migration

Eurodac - European fingerprint database

Frontex - European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GDBP - General Directorate Border Police

ECRE - European Council on Refugees and Exiles

IOM - International Organisation for Migration

MoI - The Ministry of Interior

RDBP - Regional Directorates of the Border Police

RRC - Refugee reception centre

SANS - State Agency for National Security

SAR - The State Agency for Refugees to the Council of Ministers

UAM(s)- Unaccompanied minor(s)

UNICEF -United Nations Children's Fund

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The politics of immigration in Europe became everyday politics of survival. The recent migration crisis illustrated the importance of the relationships between people. The initiatives of ordinary people offered vital support to people feeling war and famine from the Global South in the context of restrictive immigration policies in the European Union (EU). The fortressing of Europe's southern borders and the pushbacks of people trying to cross risking their lives (Brian and Laczko 2014) has meant that initiatives on the ground provided the emergency response to people seeking refuge, often in makeshift camps in border regions. Beyond EU or restrictive national policies, local border communities engage with immigration. Their position had detrimental impacts on the lives of people seeking refuge and the reconceptualisation of migration in Europe.

Since 2013 the European community has been faced with debates about addressing the ongoing 'wave of refugees' and the 'refugee crisis' (Buonanno 2017), so much so that political commentators speculated the disintegration of the EU over immigration politics (Krastev 2020). Whilst a common EU migration policy has been debated (Battjes 2018; Baumgartner & Chemnitz 2018; Wagner *et al.* 2019), countries have been taking independent measures, according to the subsidiarity principle¹, and people on the ground have been organising independent initiatives. Indecisiveness, lack of commitment, and even insincerity characterise state responses. Ordinary people, on the other hand, have related in various ways. The question of refuge has shaped new ways of organising, mobilising, and talking about migration in Europe. While the Bulgarian state has been fortressing the border of Europe by fencing its borders, deploying extra military guards and technology, stationing gendarmery patrols in border towns, 'locals' have developed various action repertoires and discourses about how to handle the crisis, how to care, and who to care for.

¹ The principle of subsidiarity regulates the exercise of powers by the European Union. The principle of subsidiarity is laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty on the European Union. It stipulates that, in areas that do not fall within its exclusive competence, the EU can act only if, and insofar as, the objectives of the proposed action cannot be achieved by the member states. Instead, the scale or effects of the proposed action should be better performed at the EU level (Thomson Reuters Practical Law, 2021).

Anti-asylum protests in Bulgarian villages, towns, and cities have placed local politics at the forefront of the debate on integration. Local people protested after refugees were settled, often in donated housing or empty socialist buildings. Protests have been documented in the capital Sofia, some of the bigger towns, Sliven, Kazanlyk, Telish, Harmanli, and smaller towns such as Rosovo (International Organisation for Migration, 2015). The protesters agitate for, among other things, 'their clean' towns for the 'removal of the refugees'. I have followed the anti-asylum protests in Europe since 2013 online. Their frames of the 'refugee crisis' in Europe and Bulgaria, in particular, invoke nationalist ideas and a resurgence of anti-immigration violence as a response to the perceived 'wave' of irregular migration. Power relations of 'us' versus 'them' (Said 2003; Buchowski 2006) appeared to emerge, with new constellations of these two constructs. While the anti-asylum protest repertoires, and their variations, are embarked by a few, the discourses to justify such repertoires have entered the mainstream of Bulgarian and European migration and identity politics. Such protests and their mainstream resonance raise questions about collective European identity and the European ideal based on unity, human rights, and dignity (Goals and values of the EU, 2021). Yet, the unwelcoming reception of forced migration and 'third-country nationals' proved these values did not pertain to all.

The Central European Asylum System (CEAS) guides asylum seekers' reception in the EU, with national laws shaping this process. Legal mechanisms such as the Dublin III Regulation are the cornerstone of the EU migration crisis. The Dublin III Regulation is part of the Dublin regime². The reception can be characterised by a limited number of accepted applications in Europe, compared to outside of Europe, especially Lebanon and Turkey (which regulates the EU's border regime vis-à-vis asylum, ECRE, 2020). The current regulation fails to provide adequate protection, stranding people in border regions like Greece, Italy, Malta, Bulgaria, and Cyprus. However, nationalist protests against immigration occurred before the EU immigration crisis. Therefore, the context of 'crisis' alone cannot explain the protesting public. We need to direct our attention to how the EU migration crisis is conceptualised within national territories, perceptions of national

² The Dublin system deals with the obligation to process an asylum application in the EU. It assigns this responsibility according to different criteria, while the country of first entry is the most prominent. Member States situated on the EU's external border were obliged to process most applications. The implementation of the Dublin system is facilitated by the Eurodac database (Hess and Kasperek, 2017:62).

borders, and national identity. The epitome of Europe's migration crisis has been the anti-asylum protests and the policies designed to fortress its borders.

To understand mobilisations responding to immigration, we need to understand the EU migration crisis's historical background. The southern Bulgarian border was drawn and re-drawn by treaties in the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries³. This process marking the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the modern-day states in the Balkans has left national and regional identity and claims for recognition unresolved. The southern Bulgarian border is in the historical and geographical region of Thrace, bringing together three countries (Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey) and two continents, making it of strategic importance and perhaps a reason for contestations. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the division of the territories among the nation-states and the associated movements of people left claims on property and compensation unresolved. Ultimately, such claims are about recognising the suffering in the expulsion of people. The process that created the 20th-century refugees in the Balkans has been referred to by genocide in different countries (see Greece – Greek Genocide Resource Centre, and Bulgaria – Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria STDB). The Thracian region's partition, which began with the Berlin Congress⁴ in 1878, is deeply entangled with the national histories of the three nation-states, all three claiming that their national territories extend beyond their present-day national borders to encompass Thrace. National and personal accounts shape the border region inhabitants with strong national and transnational identities. The present-day southern border is historically a border-making region in the Balkans. Acknowledging the history of border conflicts that affected this region in the 19th and early 20th centuries helps us understand the influence of borders

³ The Treaty of London of May 1913 put an end to the First Balkan War and conferred to the allies all of Thrace, most of which went to Bulgaria. After the Second Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire regained all of Eastern Thrace in the Treaty of Constantinople, while Bulgaria kept Western Thrace. With the Neuilly Treaty after World War I, Western Thrace was proclaimed a mandate territory of the Entente and was occupied by French forces. This last episode was followed by the conference in San Remo in April 1920 (which ceded Western Thrace to Greece), the Sèvres Treaty of that same year (by which Greece gained a large portion of Eastern Thrace as well) and the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 (which transferred this portion back to Turkey). Later, after the crushing of Yugoslavia and Greece by Nazi Germany in April 1941, most of Western Thrace was occupied by Germany's ally Bulgaria to 'regain lost territories'. This continued until 1944 when the Bulgarian troops withdrew from Western Thrace. With the armistice signed by Bulgaria on 28 October 1944, the boundaries that were once settled at Lausanne were reaffirmed. (Vukov, 2015:66).

⁴ The Berlin Congress took place between 13 June – 13 July 1878 in Berlin and was led by Otto von Bismarck. Representatives of Russia, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, Italy and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty for the Settlement of the Affairs in the East, which accepted the independence of the Balkan states (Fabry, 2002). The Berlin Treaty replaced the San Stefano Treaty, signed three months earlier on 3 March but only between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

and national identity on public protests in Bulgaria. In this way, the present European migration crisis intertwines with national identity claims based on the southern border. On the background of this, questions about the particularities of the new social mobilisations at the local level emerge.

1.1. Research Question and Methodology

The main research question for this thesis is: What frames local narratives and mobilisations towards immigration in EU external border areas? Sub-questions to the main question are: How do different groups of people frame immigration and the reception of refugees in everyday debates in this context? What is being constructed, negotiated, and contested through the emerging discourses about and actions towards immigration?

The main research question concerns tolerance and inclusion issues in the right to seek asylum and the impact of local communities in this process. The geographical context of the case study is a border town in Bulgaria, which highlights the distinct responses within a contained unit of analysis, such as the town. The town this study is based on is no ordinary town. It is positioned at the external border of the EU, upon Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007. The town of Harmanli also hosts a Refugee Reception Center, established there in 2013, and it is also located on the Balkan route travelled by those fleeing conflict and famine in the Global South. In this thesis, refugeehood is studied within the discursive context of the 'European migration crisis'. By looking at the context of post-socialism, the thesis aims to address a gap in the current literature about refugees that often focuses on refugees as the subject of study. Furthermore, it seeks to address a gap in research on the recent crisis, described as the 'European migration crisis'. The research, therefore, implies problems on European collective identity, including refugeehood.

To answer the main research question, (What frames local narratives and mobilisations towards immigration in EU external border areas?) I draw on constructivist epistemology. Constructivism allows us to understand how various people construct meaning around national identity and the refugee-Other. It helps us understand both the patterns and the differences in how meaning is formed within public discourses (Ballinger, 2017; Bates, 1994; Cap, 2018; Meinhof, 2018; Velody et al., 2014; Wodak, 2015). I

answer the research questions through qualitative fieldwork research in the border town of Harmanli. Between May 2017 and April 2018, I conducted ethnography, 30 one-to-one interviews, and five group interviews in Harmanli.

Ethnography is a method that allows us to see the extent to which debates about the border and migration are a part of everyday life (Alvarez, 1995; Erolova, 2017; Thorleifsson, 2017). I conducted one-to-one interviews, focus groups and ethnography simultaneously between May 2017-April 2018 in the border town of Harmanli. I was able to discuss the perspectives on local reception practices. By participating, I observed how such practices were a part of the broader daily life in the rural town in southern Bulgaria. Often issues discussed in in-depth interviews would help identify discourses and discussions in everyday life that I had not observed before. I took note of debates on refugees during participant observation and then added questions in the interviews. Early on during the research, I understood that these two methods, when conducted simultaneously, were complementary in terms of how interviews and ethnography developed.

The research includes repeated in-depth interviews with the protestors in Harmanli, including the two female organisers of the protests in Harmanli. Because people's reception in Harmanli extends beyond the political protests against refugees, the aim was to study broader discourses about and initiatives around refugees. People involved in the local management of migration were interviewed. These included social services, refugee camp officials and volunteers, the Mayor, elected council advisers, teachers in a local multi-ethnic village who teach children living in the refugee camp and local employers. I aimed to collect a representation of diverse perspectives and standpoints. I interviewed people with Bulgarian Roma and Bulgarian Turkish identifications, descendants of Bulgarian refugees and people with family members abroad. Where possible, I sought conversations with people of different age groups and genders. Some of the interviews were focus groups, which gave the interlocutors more power to debate.

While I interviewed and 'hung around' with people from different social, cultural and political positions, for ease of analysis, my interlocutors could be grouped into three main groups: anti-asylum protesters, pro-asylum volunteers, and descendants of Thracian refugees. Each of the three main interlocutors is discussed in more detail and complexity

in the three respective empirical chapters. The theme of mobilisation or collective action is shared among the three groups. Anti-asylum protestors are people who organised or participated in protest rallies. This group includes people who initiated activities, such as border vigilance, against what they perceived as injustice. Pro-asylum volunteers are not a part of mobilisation in a traditional sense of the word. While they were not involved in political protests, people in this group coordinated, started new volunteering or donation initiatives, organised themselves into a new network responding directly to asylum. Finally, the third group of people in the border region was descendants of refugees. While they were already organised as a group, with its basis and organisational structure, the history of the descendants of refugees is rooted in nationalist social mobilisations in the 19th century, with historical leaders such as Petko the Chieftan (In Bulgarian: Petko Voyvoda). Thus, the agency of the Association of Thracian Unions in Bulgaria could be understood as preserving the memory of the political mobilisations in support of refugees from Asia Minor and Northern Greece. It offers historical insights into debates about migration and how such historical struggles of recognitions shape current discourses and action repertoires towards the asylum. The three groups of interviewees, pro-asylum, anti-asylum, and asylum history, have distinct responses to the current debates on asylum and immigration in Europe.

1.2. Politics of Care around Immigration

In answer to the main research question, the frame of *care* emerges as a shared mobilising frame across different groups of people. Pro-asylum volunteers, anti-asylum protestors, and descendants of Thracian refugees in Bulgaria develop a variation of the frame of care in their responses and action repertoires towards asylum in Europe. The differences in the frame of care are significant and shape what I have termed as *politics of care* – the competing narratives of care towards different care subjects. Pro-asylum volunteers frame care for asylum seekers, people living in refugee camps, unaccompanied minors, poor living conditions, access to the job market, access to interpreters, interest in different cultural traditions and others. For pro-asylum volunteers, the frame of care aligns with support, donations, hospitality, solidarity, giving, gifts. Anti-asylum protestors, on the other hand, frame care to asylum and immigration as care for the locals, care for the community, care for the image of the town (vis-à-vis tourism), for being outnumbered as a local/European community, protection of the locals and Europeans from terrorism, from

the unknown. For anti-asylum protestors, the frame of care aligns with safety security. For the third group of people I studied, descendants of Thracian refugees, the frame of care for them cares to remember refugee waves from the past. The frame of care for the descendants (second and third-generation migrants) is towards the past is remembered, known, preserved, recognised as genocide. In their discussions with me on the current 'migration crisis', they voiced concerns that the current refugees are not genuine refugees compared to their poor ancestors, were expelled, had no choice, fled war and persecution. In other words, the current asylum context was minimised to bring up the care for the struggles of their ancestors, who were 'our' refugees and have nothing in common with the current ones.

Understanding mobilisations around migration and asylum and the discourses that justify them as care offers a new light to previous discussions on the action repertoires of anti-asylum protests. While pro-asylum responses have been theorised as hospitality, the general applicability of the discourse of care to various reactions to migration and asylum has not been discussed in the literature. Most often, anti-asylum responses and mobilisations are understood on a scale from hostile to racist, which is confirmed by this thesis's findings. However, the emphasis on the frame of care highlights the scope of the hostility and its various smoke-screen strategies. Seemingly escaping the critique of racism, anti-asylum protestors have developed a sophisticated repertoire of discourses and actions. By politics of care, their discourses and actions shift the locus of racism and Islamophobia towards people seeking asylum towards a more feminised notion focused on the local community (rather than refugees per se). Under the smoke screen of care for the community, care for the young Bulgarian women, for the Bulgarian mothers, for the use of the public spaces, further *everyday bordering* (Cassidy et al., 2018a; Innes, 2021; Tervonen et al., 2018; Vaughan-Williams & Pisani, 2020; Walsh et al., 2022; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017, 2018, 2019) practices are developed. New searches are carried out in the refugee camp, Orientalising discourse of 'exotic diseases' in the centre, to care for the local community's lack of immunity towards Them. In the name of care for the locals, the refugee camp was locked down, effectively realising the Orientalist image of the refugee-Other (see Chapter 5).

While European leaders such as Angela Merkel have 'welcomed' one million refugees and taken caring initiatives, other leaders like Victor Orban in Hungary and Boyko Borisov in Bulgaria openly imagine themselves as protectors from refugees. The

role of *the border* in this process is of crucial importance. The way the national border is understood offers insights into how this national and European space is imagined. The national border is a symbol, a semiotic act that is a point of contestation. It is where dominant nationalist interpretations project national identity. Such discourses are manifested with calls to close the border, build walls, increase patrols, and develop technologies to contain immigration (Verstraete, 2003) into what has become a securitisation of immigration (van Munster, 2009; Bello, 2020; Karamanidou, 2015). As Verstraete (2003) illustrates, European identity is imagined as ‘geopolitics of mobility’ - a free movement within a European space without internal borders where subjects are shaped by their national identity and white property ownership. This vision of Europe further imagines the role of the countries on the border of Europe as protectors against immigration, which in turn is constructed as specific racial and gendered subjects.

My main finding on why people protest against refugees is twofold. Firstly, *border vigilance* (Stoynova & Dzhekova, 2019) emerged as a phenomenon that gained social acceptance. Vigilantes’ frames of taking care of the ‘migration crisis’ resonated strongly within the media, state officials, and the protesting public in Harmanli and around the country. Secondly, various responses to refugees, including care practices, often get overlooked in conceptualising European mobilisations around immigration. While anti-asylum protests form part of the responses (Castelli Gattinara, 2018; Ekman, 2018; Gardenier, 2018; Grillo, 2005; van Ooijen, 2018), caring networks to support newcomers are strongly present in the local community and constitute the pro-asylum movement (Della Porta, 2018b). Therefore, there is a plurality of ‘self’ and ‘refugee’ typologies within contestation dynamics. Some contest the immigration system by developing *action repertoires* (Tilly, 1987) of delivering emergency care. The history of Thracian refugees in Harmanli influences current refugee politics has harmed the tolerance, reception and empathy towards refugees since 2013.

The vigilante figure, which emerged with the protests, is the culmination of the protesting politics against refugees (see Chapter 5). Vigilantes are men and women who practice bordering. Border patrol is how vigilantes enforce new social norms of violence. The other new practice is 'bordering refugees out' by being 'watchful' of the public sphere. The second results in attempts to collect information, police, discipline, diagnose and treat people in the refugee camp. Vigilantes gain public endorsements because they construct the ‘nation’ as a victim’s identity. ‘We’, victims of Bulgarian emigration, are ‘left behind’

to uphold the nation. A vital characteristic of the post-socialist period in Eastern Europe and Bulgaria appears to be emigration from rural areas and emigration from the country. People exercising their right to emigrate are interpreted by those choosing to stay, leading to a 'left behind' construct—discourses of victimhood shape a *left-behind* construct (Mondon & Winter, 2019). In addition to victim of emigration, the left behind is also victims of real post-socialism, the transformation of norms and everyday practices in the transition to capitalism (Verderey, 1996). Modern Bulgarian nationalism is imagined through the idea of a collective victim. Its standpoint is shaped by the identity of a country composed of people 'left behind' by a perceived disproportionate emigration after the fall of socialism. Another pivotal axis of the victim identity is the perceived unfair positioning of the southern Bulgarian border in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Moreover, the victim position becomes expressed against the EU migration crisis, where being Bulgarian means being a victim - of the perceived unjust Dublin Regulation, of uncaring power in the centre – Sofia, Brussels. Protection is practised precisely with border patrols, observing social order and social policing of refugees. The protesters' organisers are two vigilantes who collect documents and 'data' to restore public order.

The distinction between 'Self' versus 'Refugee-Other' in Harmanli is informed by another local *Us vs Them* opposition (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011; Mavratsas, 1999; Sloodmaeckers, 2019; Szytniewski & Spierings, 2014). As Chapter 7 documents, the variation of Us versus Them in Harmanli is framed as Old Refugees vs New Refugees. Definitions of a refugee and what the term constitutes that emerged from the experience of refugeehood in the 19th and early 20th centuries shape contemporary perspectives towards people who arrive at Harmanli as 'new' refugees, including in the Registration and Reception Centre (RCC) Harmanli. Existing discourses about refugees from the 19th and 20th centuries are linked with genocide and images of poverty. These images compete with the present-day imagination of refugees and deny that people crossing the Turkish-Bulgarian border since 2013 are refugees. This identity construction suggests that locals (descendants of refugees or not) claim refugeehood, which exonerates them from their current moral responsibility to rescue new refugees. 'Real refugees' are claimed to be the old refugees (from the 19th century). Descendants of some of these Bulgarian refugees (Thracian refugees) do not acknowledge 'the current situation as a problem for refugees, because they are not refugees'. Refugees who have arrived in Bulgaria since 2013, who crossed the border with Turkey, have become implicated in unresolved historical

questions about national identity and refugees and the southern Bulgarian border from the 19th century. The descendants of Thracian refugees have been an Other in the local community because of their migration identity. Post-2013 refugees have arrived into historical debates about Self and Other in Harmanli about locals and refugees.

The anti-refugee protests have very little to do with people in the Harmanli refugee camp. The demonstrations against refugees represent a wish for order, stability, and norms that are either long gone or imagined. The organisers of the protests themselves contend that 'we are not against the people in the camp. We are against the government's handling of the crisis.' Meanwhile, the protestors have not requested better living conditions in the camp, but rather, fewer refugees in the border areas. Integral to their accounts was the 'I am not a racist' claim and 'my children have Gypsy friends' or 'all my students are Gypsies', suggesting that they deny racist motivations for protests and vigilance. However, intolerance, nationalism, and racism are co-present and often intertwined, and can be mapped on a long continuum, with varying sentiments, excuses, justifications, and denials.

All local action repertoires around migration change over time (see Section 5.7) as part of a *protest cycle* (Della Porta, 2008). This finding helps us understand how the refugee-other construction is susceptible to change, becoming constructed differently within the new policies and developments of the crisis. Another key result is that care practices are associated with emergency care rather than long-term community-building. Care is not a universal value. Instead, it is conceptualised concerning temporality (now-later) and prone to politicization (Feischmidt & Zakariás, 2018). The initial stage of 'emergency' in 2013 provoked numerous hospitable responses overall. In 2013 the reception conditions were dire; several reports from NGOs indicate a lack of primary reception conditions.

We witnessed the deplorable conditions where some 1,000 asylum-seekers are held in metal containers, tents and a dilapidated building of a former military complex. They must be given immediate access to proper asylum procedures, and the Bulgarian authorities must ensure they have access to necessities such as proper food, shelter, and sanitation. This is their right under international law (Amnesty International, 2013).

However, in the sustaining emergency between 2013 and 2016, new perceptions of victimhood emerged not in response to refugees but to the locals' context. Bulgaria's social context is shaped by a strong emigration movement of Bulgarians towards other

European countries and depopulated rural areas after the fall of socialism. This post-socialist landscape marked by emigration shapes modern Bulgarian nationalism, which became entangled with the reception and hospitality towards newcomers. Nationalism, in addition to the post-communist context and emigration, is shaped by gender politics. Ratcheva (2014) contends that Bulgarian nationalism is shaped by the post-Ottoman and post-socialist periods. The post-Ottoman develops the narrative of Bulgaria being a victim in the territories it receives after the fall of the Ottoman empire, leaving parts of its territories and people outside of its borders. The cases of the lost lands of Thrace and Macedonia, which were once part of Greater Bulgaria, are a case. However, the post-socialist period has added another aspect of modern Bulgarian nationalism shaped by trauma (Creed, 2010) and the subsequent construction of Bulgaria as a victim. The 'ill nation' discourse emerged as synonymous with Bulgaria (Ratcheva, 2014), depicting the deteriorating living conditions, economic decline, and rampant corruption, to name but a few. Emigration from the country also adds to this context, further supporting the view of Bulgaria as an 'ill nation' from which its labour force emigrates. The vigilantes' pushback of refugees and public support of vigilantes⁵ represents a denial of an open border to asylum. Vigilantes' masculinity is a form of 'militarised masculinity' organised within the context of patriotism (Efthymiou, 2019; Shapira, 2019), with performances of border patrols aligning with everyday patriotic expressions of nationalism. Their masculinity is directed towards fortifying European Bulgaria through daily performativity manifested as hunting and patrolling the border and guarding public spaces, such as parks and the town centre, in border communities. In the performance of identifying asylum seekers and refugees, people construct new gender performances at border regions intertwined with everyday nationalism (Billig, 1995). While there are different discourses and images on whom the refugees are - ranging on a scale from a vulnerable woman to a terrorist man - there are also different conceptualisations of 'us', 'the citizens', 'the locals' and 'the nation'. Discussions on asylum within Harmanli are underpinned and conditioned by understandings of care for Self and care for the Other.

In some cases, 'we' need to care for 'our nation', while for pro-asylum activists, care is an action repertoire for refugees and the struggle for their European citizenship. The pro-asylum and anti-asylum movements stand in opposition. The main aim is to

⁵ 'An opinion poll by the Bulgarian National television BNT showed yesterday [11 April 2016] that 84% of the viewers supported the idea that vigilantes should be recognised and supported by the government. 16% said they were against' (Gotev, 2016).

explore the agency of people mobilising around refugees. Action repertoires shape and are shaped by the broader context of the research participants in the border region of the EU.

The experience of crises is a unique possibility for opening the imagination for the future of European integration. Besides the dominant nationalist interpretations of collective (national) identity, there is a diversity of claims on the national identity, which challenge the understanding of a ‘community’ as a coherent unit (Anthias and Yuval-Davies, 1992). Delanty (2010:1) asks if we can envision ‘a common European heritage or tradition’ considering the issues that opened in 1989. The often theorised Other of Western Europe, namely Central and Eastern Europe (Todorova, 2009), was gradually integrated within the enlarging European project. Protestors against refugees have prevailed in popular discourse, raising questions about collective identity, also addressed by caring and volunteer networks. The perspectives that emerged in Harmanli on care, volunteering, and the creation of supportive networks on the ground address the trauma of asylum as an alternative response to protesting against asylum seekers and a claim to European citizenship.

[W]hen viewed through the lens of transnational history, Europe is unbounded and decentred within; it is not homogeneous, but plural and many of its intellectual and cultural traditions embrace alterity, the positive acceptance of difference (Delanty, 2017).

In this context, I argue that there is not simply one action repertoire of the migration crisis but many, including most notably the networks on care developed by the pro-asylum movement (See Chapter 6).

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The rest of the thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 explores the literature on the migration crisis from a social constructivist perspective. I develop key concepts to understand this study, such as action repertoires (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) around immigration, Us vs Them, everyday nationalism, everyday bordering, leading to an understanding of care repertoires. Chapter 3 offers a historical background to Bulgaria and Harmanli to contextualise the research and research participants. Chapter 4 reflects on the research methodology.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 document the data from fieldwork. Chapter 5 documents how anti-asylum protestors draw on care for the border, locals, the public spaces, Bulgarian women, Bulgarian mothers. As their notion of care is only rhetorical and not material, their care could be best conceptualised as politics of care. Chapter 6 documents care practices by volunteers and helpers in the camp, broadly conceived as pro-asylum activists. Chapter 7 explores the descendants of Thracian refugees as a particular group and how they frame new coming asylum seekers. I argue that their care work is collective memory work. They care to sustain a distinct refugee heritage. It means dismissing the experiences of forced migration of the newcomers. Instead of drawing solidarities with newcomers, descendants of Thracian refugees uphold the experiences of forced migration of their ancestors, including claims for recognition and compensation. Asylum seekers since 2013 are often perceived as economic migrants, i.e. not forced as Thracian refugees.

Chapter 8 includes a section, 8.1. The Left Behind, on the general population's position. It documents interviews with people who do not belong to a particular social or political group, people who have not been to the camp, as theorised by social movement scholars - bystanders. In the context of Bulgaria, they could be collectively conceptualised as 'the left behind'. For them, the post-communist context of emigration, lack of opportunities, and emptiness focus their care work on themselves. Their narratives are about them needing care, including better health care, employment opportunities, the lost social networks of emigrated friends and family. The left-behind frame immigration as a process that has impacted their family trees and friendship due to emigration from Bulgaria and are much less concerned with the reception of refugees. After reflecting on the general population from the perspective of 'left behind', I analyse all the data, including the preceding three chapters.

Chapter 9 concludes that hierarchies of care and competing care needs are constructed and re-constructed. Care has emerged as a political concept, which justifies various responses about immigration and asylum. In answer to the sub-question about what is being constructed, negotiated, and contested through the emerging discourses about and actions towards asylum, simply put, is care.

Chapter 2. Responding to Crises

This chapter reviews the literature on the recent 'migration crisis' from a social constructionist perspective. I explore some themes that have emerged from recent research on the conceptualisation of the event of the 'crisis'. As the study's main aim is the active responses to immigration, I then explore the social movements and migration studies literature to focus on ordinary people's initiatives and mobilisations through the concept of action repertoires (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). After mapping pro-asylum and anti-asylum action repertoires, I focus on the opposition of Us vs Them as formed in the context of Bulgaria. I focus specifically on 21st century Bulgarian national identity to understand underlying identity contestations for my research participants. As the study is located in a border region of Europe, I survey the recently developing field of study on everyday bordering. In another subsection, I also explore the literature on everyday nationalism and its link to a protesting public. Finally, I reflect on the literature on care, such as cosmopolitan care and theorisations of hospitality, welcome, and friends of refugees.

2.1. Framing the 'Migration Crisis'

While the context of this research is conceptualised as 'crisis', there are debates about the 'reality' of crisis (see Chamberlain, 2020:60-61). Research suggests that immigration has been decreasing, such as illegal immigration in the USA (Beinard, 2018). Others emphasise the small percentage of refugees in Europe, constituting less than 0.25% of Europe's population (Bhambra, 2017). All immigration groups together in Bulgaria about about 2% of the population (Krasteva, 2019: 7). Looking at the reasons for protests in the number of refugees is less productive than interpreting the meaning ascribed to the reception. Rather than the number of newcomers, Della Porta (2018:6) reminds us

a humanitarian crisis was triggered by the perception that the institutional structures and policies in places, at all territorial levels, were unfit to address what was presented as an emergency.

Perceptions about the crisis, often influenced by media, are key to understanding mobilisations around the 'refugee crisis'. Mainstream media reporting has shaped the

perceptions of the unfolding events, the people, and the responses in Europe. 'The movement of refugees is constructed as an elemental force which is difficult to predict and has no sense of control' (Baker and McEnery 2005, p.10 cited in Consterdine, 2018, p. 10). As Nickels (2007:43) argues:

Asylum news usually refers to refugees in terms of their numbers; locations (where they are from, where they are now, and where they are going); circumstances (political, economic, war); movements (collective group, and flow of water); tragic plight; official attempts to help; and, less commonly, in terms of crime and nuisance.

The language with which the so-called 'migration crisis' is reported develops 'politics of fear' and 'politics of exclusion' (Wodak, 2015). The rhetoric of 'crisis' with its selective reporting in traditional and social media platforms (Dessewffy & Nagy, 2016; Öztürk & Ayvaz, 2018) has geared moral panics (Cohen, 1972; Pasamonik, 2017), placing borders at the core of the public debate (Gattinara, 2017, pp. 322-327). Media representations of immigration and asylum create a moral panic, with the rhetoric of Islamophobia and metaphors of war (Pasamonik, 2017). Right-wing media outlets describe 'invaders', 'terrorists', 'conquerors', 'colonisers', 'civil army', who 'conquered', 'penetrated', 'terrorised' national and European spaces (Cap, 2018; Walker Rettberg & Gajjala, 2015; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). Orientalism (Said, 2003) is also constructed with metaphors of 'barbarians', 'savages', 'lazy' and 'repulsive' to describe the crisis, as evident in the right-wing media in Poland (Pasamonik, 2017:92). Such rhetoric of the 'crisis' legitimises containment, encampment and bordering, characterising European responses.

The role of labels is significant in shaping perceptions, empathy, or hostility towards refugees (Zetter, 2007b). Labels affect the life opportunities of those represented in the media. Framing theory illuminates the social construction of meaning via frames. The anthropologist Gregory Bateson first used frame in *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1954). He introduced that frames establish 'constellations' or 'systems of relationships' between messages. Building on this, the sociologist Erving Goffman wrote the book *Framing Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience* (1974), showing how an event may produce different frames when different individuals apprehend the same situation. For Goffman, frames organise experience. Frameworks or schemata of interpretation are employed when an individual recognises a new event. Goffman calls it

a 'primary framework', which 'provides a way for describing the event to which it is applied' (1974:24).

The notion of a frame is fascinating as what gets 'framed' shapes the reality construction (Benford and Snow, 2000). The frames through which people comprehend reality impact the life opportunities of those deemed worthy of belonging (to the frame). This idea is taken further by Judith Butler in her book *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009). Butler (2009:8) discusses frames as follows:

As we know, 'to be framed' is a complex phrase in English: a picture is framed, but so too is a criminal (by the police), or an innocent person (by someone nefarious, often the police), so that to be framed is to be set up, or to have evidence planted against one that ultimately 'proves' one's guilt. When a picture is framed, any number of ways of commenting on or extending the picture may be at stake.

Studying contemporary war, Butler (2009) develops frame analysis to understand what makes a life or period more worthy than another. Moreover, for a life to be deemed worthy, she contends that it needs to be identified as *grievable* – a life which we would grieve for if lost and which we will actively prevent harm done to. She argues that

specific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living. If individual lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense (Butler, 2009:1).

The relationship between frames, and the grievability of those seeking refuge, becomes apparent. The frames created about refugees can indicate grievability. The epistemological formations of the EU migration crisis shape the acknowledgement of crisis and little value of life.

Social movement scholars have also actively engaged with the concept of the frame. Snow and Benford (1992: 137) see a frame as an 'interpretive schemata that simplify and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment'. Frames facilitate the study of dynamic events and the multitude of people 'inspired' by social action and campaigns while 'legitimizing' it (Gamson, 1992:7). Collective action frames facilitate understanding what unifies or frames a protesting public. As the literature on attitudes and the construction of the European migration crisis

has indicated, there is a need to grapple with the concept of nationalism as shaping protesting public attitudes. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will be drawing on frame analysis for the perspectives of the anti-refugee movement and the pro-refugee movement, respectively.

In addition to supporting the spread of anti-immigrant sentiments, social media has also fostered caring initiatives. Recent research has identified that social media platforms, such as Facebook, serve as an outlet for newborn migrant solidarity groups in various Hungarian cities in the context of poor state or humanitarian action (Bernát, 2019). While social media platforms have opened the possibility of developing a 'counter-power' to the Hungarian government's anti-asylum rhetoric, they have not been able to dominate the field (Bernát, 2019:7). The comments sections of YouTube videos have also been a space for conversations on crisis and shaped public attitudes. The 'European refugee crisis' or the 'European migrant crisis' and the labels such as migrant/ refugee appear to be used interchangeably by social platform users (Lee & Nerghes, 2018). What differs, however, is the content of the video on YouTube. The videos shape the sentiments and the tone discussion as sympathetic or antipathetic; the sympathetic tone highlighted peace, acceptance, and an open world, while the opposed style highlighted racism, crime, fear, religion and terrorist activity (Lee & Nerghes, 2018:12).

In summary, research has indicated the role of the media, journalists, and representations of immigration in shaping public attitudes. While pro-refugee movements have developed, which organised with the help of online social platforms, anti-refugee perspectives perhaps took more excellent hold into constructing the 'crisis' discourse. The anti-refugee sentiments have dominated the public debate, mainly through visibility created by a moral panic and the political leadership endorsement of discriminative perspectives and policies of containment and encampment (See Section 3.1). While immigration in Europe is minimal, even after 2013, in comparison to other parts of the world, collective identity has played an essential role in constructing the 'crisis'. Is it possible that the resonance of the moral panic (Cohen, 2002) of the 'refugee crisis' with European societies (Pasamonik, 2017; Sedláková, 2017) have deeper roots than the present-day politics and policies of containment? What binds people together, be it in an anti-refugee protest or anti-refugee sentiments could be further analysed.

2.2. Action Repertoires around Immigration

The question on the mobilisations around immigration and the discourses to justify them has been explored from the literature in migration studies (Bastia & Skeldon, 2020; López-Sanders & Brown, 2020; Sandri, 2018; Statham, 1998) and social movement studies (Bernát, 2019; Castelli Gattinara, 2018; Della Porta, 2018b; Froio & Gattinara, 2016; Koopmans, 2004; Tazreiter, 2010; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Recent research in migration studies identified various solidarity initiatives in response to the refugee crisis (Baker, 2011; Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Gill, 2018; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Nyers, 1998; Sandri, 2018a). Such studies focus on hospitality and a new 'welcome culture', characterised by the support of volunteers in everyday practices. Multiple new initiatives, such as organising soup kitchens, language classes, cultural exchange programmes, to name a few, are united by discourses of welcoming, solidarity, and hospitality. Studies emphasise these welcoming practices and the motivations of ordinary people to help, care, volunteer and do charity (Feischmidt & Zakariás, 2018). Some studies explore the normative foundations underpinning this care as doing something that is 'fair' for refugees (Moreno-Lax, 2017), while hospitality has been theorised as duties and rights (Derrida, 2005; Pascucci, 2021). In Europe, various networks work to support people from war-torn Syria, Afghanistan, and Northern Africa. Whether organised in coffee shops or on social media, groups of people coordinate the delivery of food and supplies to people trapped in border zones. Typical for Germany

[w]elcome [...] involves conveying to the newcomer the positive reception of their presence. Welcome relies upon human warmth and, to a degree, the vulnerability of the welcomer (Gill, 2018:91).

Outside of Europe, the state of Lebanon has been a pioneer in fostering new social relations, with currently more than 50 per cent of its population being refugees. These are active agencies of volunteers and self-organised people. They shape contemporary discourses of 'support' and 'care' on the backdrop of the current uncertainties (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992). Research has encouraged the need to move beyond being hospitable to building solidarity with refugees (Chamberlain, 2020). This suggests that there is variation in the practices and motivations of hospitality, welcome, and solidarity, and there is a relationship between migration studies and social movement studies.

The refugee camp has emerged as a key geographical sphere for humanitarianism. Refugee camps or 'hotspots' were constructed along border lines, making them the

architectures of humanitarianism (Ardelean, 2021; Mitchell & Sparke, 2020; Pallister-Wilkins, 2020; Papataxiarchis, 2016; Rygiel, 2011; Sandri, 2018). The scholarship of Giorgio Agamben (1995) has drawn much interest in theorising the refugee camp. For Agamben, the refugee camp is a space of exception and *bare life*. Refugees are subjected to bare life as they are left destitute, kept in detention centres, with limited resources, support and health care. Detained in camps across Europe, they are stripped of housing, social care, financial support. They are at bare life. While politically, this is presented as the exception, camps have become permanent features of border regions. For Agamben, the state of exception is explained through the notion of the camp as a space that is

‘opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, the state of exception ... is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order’ (Agamben, 1998:168-169, original emphasis, cited in Darling, 2009:532).

The humanitarian responses they receive are entangled with inequality and a powerless position due to EU states’ encampment policies (Darling, 2009). Various protests and social movements, in the broad sense, emerged around detention centers, such as the one in Harmanli, which is why social movements literature is helpful to conceptualise the agency around migration. Della Porta’s (2018b) edited book brings together migration studies and social movements to understand the dynamics of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe. The contribution of social movements to the study of protests about immigration and refugees has been the shift from a humanitarian understanding of the agency. While traditionally volunteer humanitarianism (Sandri, 2018) has been conceptualised within humanitarian studies as ‘aid’, Della Porta (2018b) and colleagues of the edition argue that volunteer work across Europe needs to be conceptualised as a social movement. ‘Social movements studies have pointed at the role of the mobilising structures, including social movement organisations, pointing to the *networked* nature of social movements as nets of individuals and organisations’ (ibid., 4, emphasis in the original).

Some emphasise that solidarity coexists with securitisation at the European borders (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017). Various responses to political protests constitute the EU migration crisis. The IMESCO series book, *Protest Movements in Asylum and Deportation* (Rosenberger, Stern, and Merhaut 2018), brings forward research on protest movements as part of the European migration crisis. The editors divide the book into three

types of protests – 'Solidarity protests against deportations', 'Refugee activism for inclusion' and 'Restrictive protest against asylum seekers. The three groups shaping protest movements are supporters of refugees, refugees themselves and protestors against refugees. The scope of this thesis is not migrant activism, and this type of movement has not been explored. The chapters in this book address the question 'how and why protest occurs' in the 'areas like migration, asylum, and deportation' (Rosenberger, 2018:3-4). Various political protests constitute the EU migration crisis. Anti-asylum or anti-asylum protests target the nation-state as the 'nation state still has the legal competence to regulate and implement asylum procedures and make decisions on reception, accommodation, and deportation' (Rosenberger, 2018:5). Therefore, contrary to mainstream views that the European migration crisis appears to polarise opinions because of immigration, the authors contend that the target of protests and polarisation is the nation-state. In the context of the three protests about immigration, asylum seekers and refugees are affected by the decisions protesters aim to influence.

The definition of protest is essential. The common understanding of political protest is a 'joint (i.e. collective) action of individuals aimed at achieving their goal or goals by influencing decisions of a target' (Opp 2009: 44). There can be a number of protest rallies that take place, which is sustained by broader and long-term beliefs and activities. This continuation of the protest actions and ideas beyond the rally are what characterise a social movement. Importantly, some social movements need not be manifested by protest rallies but via a diverse spectrum of performances and 'repertoires'. Social movement literature is particularly helpful to understand people's 'action repertoires'. Social movements are

sustained campaigns of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise that claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015: 237).

This definition by Tilly and Tarrow (2015) emphasises the sustained aspect and repeated performances inherent in a movement. In addition, social movements can be sustained via networks, including online social networks. Social movements not only help to understand actions around migration as a network but offer the concept of *action repertoires*, which is particularly useful to understand the responses on the ground. Agency, the power to respond, take positions, and mobilise, is a key term for this study, and the social movements literature offers insightful examples of collective action.

Agency is a critical component of collective action frames mobilizing reactions around immigration. Following Gamson (1992:7)

agency refers to the consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action. They empower people by defining them as potential agents of their history. Thus, they suggest not merely that something can be done but that ‘we’ can do something.

The initiatives developed by the networks of activists can easily be characterised as *repertoires of collective action* (Tilly, 1987). These repertoires can be demonstrations, public meetings, press releases, petitions, to name a few (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015:236). Repertoires of collective action are influenced by both the contextual opportunities and the resources available for specific movement networks (Della Porta, 2018a). The repertoires are a part of the subculture of the activists, and they include options that are practical and available in their environment (Tilly 1986, p. 390 in Della Porta, 2018:465). The action repertoires are tactical, based on existing materials and aim to change the current structural conditions. In other words, there is a relationship between the action repertoires and the social structure, in such ways that the action repertoires, emerging from the current context to mobilise social action, change the structure from which they draw. The initiative of pro-asylum activists, such as cooking for newcomers, finding medical help, translating, supporting in camps, are limited by the material resources available to each activist and shaping the context to help the process for the newcomers to acquire citizenship (Della Porta, 2018b). The choice of certain repertoires for the anti-asylum activist are also constrained by their resources and traditions and located in the context of the pro-asylum activists. For the descendants of Thracian refugees, the repertoires are the preservation of memories, crossing the border to revive the journey of their ancestors.

In addition to pro-asylum action repertoires, this thesis looks at far-right social mobilisations and the movement of the descendants of Thracian refugees. Social movement studies rarely address the radical right as a mobilisation compared to left-wing rallies (Caiaini, 2021; Della Porta, 2008). The far-right has been most often theorised with respect to political parties and electoral support (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Mudde, 2007; Art, 2011), leaving out much of the initiatives of groups not affiliated with political parties. Approaching the extreme right as a social movement allows us to understand it as a network, with action repertoires, rather than sporadic episodes of violence (Caiaini,

2021; Rucht, 2018). Xenophobic sentiments are not new in Bulgaria. The country has a historical relationship with Nazi Germany as its ally during the Second World War. The continuing relationship in Bulgaria with Nazism is manifested to the present day in the yearly 'Lukov March' in Sofia to commemorate General Hristo Lukov (1887-1943), a Minister of War, who had close connections with the Third Reich and was a key supporter of Nazi Germany. Their repertoires in the march include wearing black and carrying torches in a hyper-masculine fashion (Staykova et al., 2018). Efthymiou (2019), for example, discusses how radical right groups in post-conflict Cyprus develop a militarist discourse, in pamphlets, websites and embodied by wearing black, and performed in the name of the nation, constructed as a victim of the Turkish aggressor.

A social movement approach to the far-right explores the variations of repertoires that exist within this category. For example, 'right populism', different from political parties, are groups acting at the local and regional levels who gain popularity, such as in the context of the 'migration crisis' (Rucht, 2018). While they are important to radical right political parties, the

right-populists idealize the common or everyday people as a homogeneous and authentic entity whose needs and interests are grossly neglected or violated by self-centred, privileged and immoral political, economic and cultural elites (*ibid.*:230).

The right-populist category, as identified by Rucht (2018), is one that tries to be not openly racist. Discourses such as 'we are not against refugees, but...[followed by a reason why they are against]' aim to draw local popular support and justify their actions. The 'right-radical' or radical right are local groups (rather than political parties), and their activities are more extreme, but not terrorist (*ibid.*, 230). Right-radicals endorse strong leadership (read as totalitarian) and believe in the natural superiority of the domestic ethnicity and culture over others (*ibid.*, 230). The anti-asylum movement repertoires could include verbal attacks, carrying flags at protests, signs and placards with messages such as 'We are the people' (*ibid.*, 234) or 'We can't cope' (Grillo, 2005), call for rallies, criminal acts, offences against shelters, concerts of right-wing bands (Rucht, 2018: 236). Photographs and media images of the protests usually include an angle to illustrate a large group of people, representing the collective body (Rucht, 2018: 234), pushbacks, When the right-populist and the right-radical overlap, usually attract significant media attention, which is disproportionate to other social movements (*ibid.*, 241), yet these movements cannot be reduced to such peak mediatised moments (*ibid.*, 238). The peak moments of

the protest cycle could be explained by the concept of *political and discursive opportunities* (Kriesi 2004; Snow 2004; Rucht, 2018:240-242). Possible opportunities could be national events, local events, economic and political change, as will be analysed in Section 5.5.

Repertoires of action develop and change (Castelli Gattinara, 2018; Della Porta, 2018; Froio & Gattinara, 2016; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). In some periods, protest action heightens, and the repertoires of contention may involve joining protest rallies. This wave of protest activity, however, decreases with time. The clusters of protest activity are called *protest cycles* or *cycles of contention*. The rhythm of change between protest repertoires and other repertoires could explain the escalation of violence for anti-asylum protestors, the duration of help for pro-asylum activists, the introduction of memory politics for descendants of Thracian refugees in the context of the migration crisis since 2013. At the peak of the protest cycle, repertoires include the construction of new collective action frames. Section 5.6. documents how the protest cycle changed with political and discursive opportunities in Harmanli.

Memory studies make valuable contributions in social movements studies (Armstrong & Cragg, 2016; Berger et al., 2021; Daphi & Zamponi, 2019; Kubal & Becerra, 2014; Rigney, 2021; Schwarz, 2022) which can help us understand the descendants of Thracian refugees. The Union of Thracian Associations unifies the descendants whose history is entangled with the national liberation movement and evolved to a Union to fight for the Thracian refugees and their descendants. The literature on social movements offer valuable insights into their repertoires. As Kubal & Becerra (2014:872) remind us, '[r]epertoires are historically built', and movements' convey meaning and repertoires from one group to another. Tactical repertoires of the modern civil rights movement, for example, could include sit-ins, teach-outs, demonstrations, boycotts (Tarrow 2012), and the public has expectations of these 'legitimate' tactical repertoires, which suggests the sustaining memory of activism (Kubal & Becerra, 2014). The term *memory activism* includes the work of 'sustaining momentum' (Berger et al., 2021:1). Memory activism involves 'the strategic commemoration of a contested past outside state channels to influence public debate and policy' (Gutman, 2017). There can be multiple entanglements between activism and memory (Rigney, 2021), and memory activists can draw on cultural repertoires. Schwarz (2022) argues that the memory of activism can be transferred from one generation to another and how movements can

organise around generational identity. The action repertoires of the descendants of Thracian refugees include memory work. Through the social movement concept of protest cycles, the repertoires of the descendants of Thracian refugees could also be analysed. The time frame of the protest cycle begins at the inception of the Thracian Association - the peak of the liberation movement. At present, it is in a more stable, everyday stage, yet still engaged in the core politics of the movement for recognition and rights. The contribution of the research is the study of the discourse and action repertoires of diverse movements. I study pro-asylum and anti-asylum movements, which emerged directly as a response to the refugee crisis, while the movement of the descendants of Thracian refugees changes its repertoires in the new structural context.

Overall, people not only express an opinion but actively engage in taking action – either against refugees (by ‘hunting’, searching, documenting and reporting, thus through ‘vigilance’, see Chapter 5) – or in favour of refugees, by volunteering, offering hands-on support, helping and looking after people who have lost their homes (see Chapter 6). Descendants of Thracian refugees actively maintain the memory of their refugee family members, a long-standing effort in their protest cycle. For them, the ‘migration crisis’ is only a discursive moment to reiterate the memory of their ancestors and their struggles of being refugees (see Chapter 7). Part of the social movements literature considers the roles of the bystanders, people who do not take part in the protests. In the first section of Chapter 8, I explore how bystanders conceptualise themselves and their non-involvement.

2.3. Us versus Them

As already argued in Section 2.1., this project will adopt constructivist theory to understand the migration crisis as a social construct. This section will take the discussion further by arguing that the idea of the ‘nation’ is constructed. This would help ground the discussion in the contestations of *Us vs Them* dimensions in the empirical chapters. Ernest Renan posed the question in 1882 in his famous lecture ‘What is a nation?’. He argued that the nations are a form of ‘large-scale solidarity’ (Renan, 1990:19) based as much on forgetting as on remembering. Renan makes an essential point that nations arise from people, the inhabitants, in their ‘daily plebiscite’ (Renan, 1990:19). A hallmark of the

debate on nations as constructed is the work of Benedict Anderson. In 1983 he theorised that nations are imagined political communities, which has changed how nations are discussed. Anderson's famous definition of the national community as 'imagined' proposes that

members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 1983:6).

Therefore, the nation is based on an idea, an imagination. It is a constructed entity that is prone to change. Anderson (1983) locates the nation's prominence in the 18th century with the development of the printing industry, which meant that culture was being popularised and was the basis of mass consciousness, replacing previous religious identifications. The modern state became the bearer of collective consciousness for the first time, replacing the last religious or kinship ties. Indeed, the traditions, norms, language, and modernisation associated with the nation are argued to be internalised social norms (e.g. Billig 1995; Fromm, 1945). However, as local loyalties have eroded, they have been replaced with the 'extensive industrial society of strangers' (Hutchinson, 2005:11). Thus, national identity struggles to produce an idea of *Volk* or *narod*, an invention in a society of strangers inhabiting a territory. In a religious-like adoration, the nation carries a shared memory of the people (such as national heroes) who died so that this community will continue to exist. Rather than being only a fabrication instilled from the 'top' (Gellner, 1983), the imagination of the national community takes place through the active involvement of people in the process of imagining and creating the coherency of the community. At present, increased migration challenges the nation's image as limited, sovereign and a community, which is how Anderson (1983) theorised this imagined community. Therefore, the violence produced concerning immigration stems from the fear of letting go of the fantasy of naturalised construction. At stake is a space of discursive pushing and pulling in how the nation is imagined and whether the dominant and hegemonic imagination should be sustained. Building on the work of Benedict Anderson, Nira Yuval-Davies and Floya Anthias (1992) argue that a nation is imagined as existing throughout time and space. These two features could be observed in the case of the countries in the Balkans, such as Bulgaria.

According to Ditcher (2002), a part of the Balkan nations' national myth was their claim to being ancient. Balkan countries trace their identity back through time to establish

an eternal continuity. The symbolic links with the Ancient Greeks, Thracians, Dacians, Illyrians, *et cetera* legitimised claims over territories and ruling over people. Key figures in fortifying national myths of ancientness have been national revivalists. Paisii, a national revivalist (*vyzrojdets* in Bulgarian), wrote ‘the first Bulgarian book’, *The History of the Slavo-Bulgars* (1762). The monk Paisii gathered about 40 materials to compose a history of ‘the Bulgarians’. ‘Read and know’, he writes, ‘so that you would not be mocked and judged by other tribes and peoples’ because he endeavoured to make people ‘talk and be proud of your [Slavo-Bulgarian] kinship and language’ (Paisii of Hilendar, 1762:19). This call to primordial national belonging, which Todorova (1995) identifies as the emergence of Bulgarian nationalism, is based on ‘an intensive defensiveness, a feeling of humiliation, and a struggle against an inferiority complex’ (ibid, 1995: 75).

In the Balkan nation-states and Bulgaria, the Ottoman rule is represented as oppressive, while meaningful analysis of the period and its impact on local cultures have been repressed (Ditchev, 2002:241). As Coakley (2018:329) suggests, nationalist historians came to be known as ‘fathers’ of nations because their writings aimed to create a sense of an exceptional national community through time. Such ‘fathers’ include Paisii for the Bulgarians, Palacký for the Czechs, Daukantas for the Lithuanians, the so-called ‘Transylvanian triad’ of Maior, Micu-Klein and Șincai for the Romanians, Hrushevsky for the Ukrainians, and Bofarull for the Catalans, amongst others (see Coakley 2012: 99–100; Coakley, 2018:329). The struggle of ‘fathers’ of nationalism in the Balkans, and in Bulgaria in particular, has created a distinct national identity that was also present during the Ottoman rule in the region (Ditchev, 2002:238). In the case of Bulgaria, this meant imagining and recreating the national identity over five centuries of Ottoman rule. As Todorova (1995) contends, this was achieved through a persisting defeatist stance of failing to be a nation. Instead of accepting the cultural heritage from the Ottoman period, thus a key feature of Bulgarian national identity has been defeatism. Present-day constructions of the Ottoman past through revivalist projects inform imaginations about Bulgarian national identity and the Turkish ethnic and religious oppressor. In discourses like ‘we disappeared from the map for five centuries’. National revivalist Ivan Vassov’s (1894) novel ‘Under the Yoke’ is compulsory in the high school curriculum detailing.

The ‘Balkans’ occupied the national identity of the Other of the West during the Cold War and after (Manolova, 2018; Ratcheva, 2014; Buchowski, 2006; Ditchev, 2002;

Todorova, 1995). Edward Said (2003) was the first to illustrate an Orientalism process whereby the West creates its Other, namely the East. Western culture, the East is imagined as barbaric, backward, uncivilised, exotic, and constructed as an antidote to the West, conceived as rational, advanced, civilised, and democratic. The two constructs reinforce one another in an imbalanced power relationship. While Said's research is mainly focused on East Asia and the Middle East, Todorova (2009) extends the concept of Orientalism to include Eastern Europe as the Other to Western Europe. *Balkanism* is a Western discourse on the Balkans (Todorova, 1997). A modern Other-identity, coupled with the defeatist national identity of the 'Ottoman yoke', characterised internalised imaginations of the Bulgarian nation (Ditchev, 2002). Ratcheva's (2014) research describes the discourse of 'Bulgarian mentality' – an imagined national identity as 'ill mentality' (In Bulgarian: *Bolen mantalitet*). The imagination of a Bulgarian mentality within national mythology can go as far as to suggest who is a 'Bulgarian person' (Ratcheva, 2014:82). An emblematic satirical character emerges to represent eternal national psychology in the main character of Konstantinov's (1895) novel, *Bay Ganyo* [*bay* is a conversational way to refer to an older person]. As Choleva (2008) reminds us, 'when saying 'Ganyo' in fact people often mean 'Bulgar''. Daskalov (2001:530) argues that the character of Bay Ganyo is 'a preferred means of self-reflection and self-interpretation for modern Bulgarian society at all level'. The satirical character of Bay Ganyo epitomises everything that is wrong with 'the Bulgarian'. Bay Ganyo is 'a brutal and repulsive character without moral scruple' (*ibid.*, 531). All interpretations of Bay Ganyo discuss him 'as a national disgrace when compared with a more civilized Europe' (*ibid.*, 535). The book elaborates on different encounters of Bay Ganyo in Europe, where he is manipulative, self-interested, and savage-like. He smells, is sweaty, loud, displaces nudity, and behaves inappropriately in public 'European' spaces. Bay Ganyo is a proud Bulgarian and is distrustful of Europeans. The representation of 'the Bulgarian' in the figure of Bay Ganyo is built on dichotomies of Bulgaria- Europe, periphery-centre, irrational-rational, backwards-civilised, much like the Balkanism discourse, and are part of contemporary discussions of 'Bulgaria' (Curticean, 2008). The temporal dimension of nations grant them eternity (Ditchev, 2002) and, in this way, omnipresence and omnipotence.

An important characteristic of Bulgarian national identity in the 21st century is related to the accession to the EU in 2007. As Yuval-Davies and Anthias (1992) argue,

in addition to the nation having a temporal dimension, it also has a spatial one. In the case of the Bulgarian nation, the spatial identity is one ‘on the move’ and ‘towards Europe’ and ‘return to the West’ (Curticeanu, 2008). Research has documented how this move towards Europe is represented in caricatures about Bulgaria’s accession to the EU (*ibid.*). EU accession is represented through metaphors of the poor Ganyo described as ‘the Everyman’ walking with his bag towards Europe, or in a petrol station waiting for the turn between 2006 and 2007 to start the move. This *Balkanist* discourse is a key feature of contemporary ‘Bulgarian’ national identity, while there are also deviations from it.

The ‘Other’ identity construct is developed not only for outsiders but also for insiders in Europe (Buchowski, 2006). Recent multi-sited ethnography of Manolova (2018) studies Bulgarian emigration to the UK as shaped by this East-West dichotomy. Manolova (2018) suggests that people leaving from Bulgaria to the UK imagine ‘the West’ (In Bulgarian: *Zapadat*) as a symbol of tradition, affluence, and possibilities. She documents numerous accounts that confirm the post-communist capitalist context where people feel that ‘going to the West is my last chance to get a normal life’ (Manolova, 2019). While there can be various motivations to leave post-communist countries, in rural areas, it is mostly perceived as ‘undesirable but inevitable’ (Dzenovska, 2013:213-214). Typical for countries of Eastern Europe is the decreasing public involvement in politics through the electoral system (Giatzidis, 2004) or in the trust in the nation-state to establish economic and political stability (Tanaseoiu and Colonescu, 2008). The struggle to conceptualise a social Self is further challenged by the destruction of memories of the past. This has been addressed in work discussing the destruction of socialist-related monuments, such as the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov (Vladova, 2012). In addition, after the fall of the socialist regime, studies that analyse the migration dynamics focus on the emigration from Bulgaria and emphasise ‘the search for opportunities’ outside (Mancheva & Troeva, 2011; Guntcheva *et al.*, 2003; Morokvašić, 2006; Reyneri, 2001; Wallace, 1999). This has shaped perceptions of the European Union as ‘the destination’ and the locals’ identity as those ‘left behind’. Dzenovska (2013), reflecting on the Latvian context, identifies a discourse of *the great departure* as a ‘national(ist) common sense’ (2013:203).

when suggesting that the scale of departure is noteworthy, people count how many of their peers (usually taken to be a person’s cohort at university or high school as far back as 20 years ago) are still around and how many are known to have left. People note

that houses and apartments in the areas they live in stand empty, that schools lack children, and that there are considerably fewer people in the streets than there were 10 or 20 years ago. Media reports contribute to the shared sense that something consequential is under way. Social media sites circulate cynical jokes calling for the last person at the airport to turn off the light, as one would when leaving (Dzenovska, 2013:203)

Such accounts were inseparable from my fieldwork and are documented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8. The Other aspect of Bulgarian national identity has connotations of the socialist past. The socialist period is perceived as making Eastern Europe backwards, in need to ‘catch up’ and reach the destination of democratised capitalist West. As Todorova (2014:2) reminds us

[f]ewer and fewer people have immediate memories of communism, and the pockets with positive memories—among the older and poorer—are marginalized or disappearing. In 2002, sociological surveys found that 33% of Bulgarians had no immediate memory of the socialist period.

Remembering communism is a key identity marker for post-socialist societies (Jõesalu & Kõresaar, 2013). The focus on the memories of the ‘past’ is significant as it is contained in the present, such as in responses (or lack thereof) to immigration and refugees. The post-socialist memories also orient present responses to the new border. Life history research in post-Soviet Estonia introduces fascinating accounts of the memories and narratives of everyday life during communism (*ibid*). Among the interesting findings of those who experienced communism include their employment experiences, as the account below illustrates:

I had just graduated from TEMT (Tallinn Construction and Mechanics School) as a construction engineer and had a letter of referral in my pocket. The people at my new place of work greeted me like a queen, and I will never forget how I was introduced as a specialist with a diploma. After we met, the manager asked me if I wanted to work at a construction site or in the office. Of course, I preferred the option of working at a construction site, since I had completed a six-month practical training course at various construction sites. Ever since I had begun my studies, I had had a bee in my bonnet about participating in the construction process both mentally and physically. I managed to do all this from 1 April 1971 to 14 October 1993. What did this period encompass? My entire youth. (Viitb. 1949, life story submitted in 2001, cited in Jõesalu & Kõresaar, 2013:189-190).

Memories of the communist past for the generations who experienced it are often narrated with nostalgia for the lost period (Creed, 2010; Pilbrow, 2010; Todorova, 2010). The Us vs Them could perhaps be reiterated as Then vs Now, referring to the socialist past and the neoliberal present. This temporal duality intersects with immigration dynamics. Then, in the past, immigration was literally impossible (except for the elite few), while Now, neoliberalism is characterised by the common sense of the great migration to the West. The nostalgia for the youth during communism easily translates into nostalgia for the friends and family lost to emigration. Accounts of the people left behind after emigration in post-socialist Europe are prevalent. Departures are often experienced as empty homes and buildings:

The departures of today also sever family relations, leave behind empty homes, and radically remake life in concrete localities. One woman in a town near the Russian border told me how painful and abnormal it is that she is not able to have an unmediated relationship with her son, who lives in Ireland. She said: 'If he only lived in Riga [the capital city of Latvia], I could at least bring him potatoes or something, but now, nothing. Now only moral support (Dzenovska, 2013:206-207).

Scholars discussing the European integration in Bulgaria emphasise the identity of minority groups in light of changing understandings of minority rights (Eminov, 1997; Dimitrov, 2000; Stamatov, 2000; Dimitrova and Dragneva; 2001; Vassilev, 2001; Krasteva, 2006; Mancheva & Troeva, 2011:36;). People who were oppressed under the ethnonational socialist state, particularly Muslims (Turkish, Pomak and Roma) had a space in the social and political domains. Despite these democratic changes, however, minority groups have remained marginalised, concentrated in different regions of the country (Pomaks and Turkish ethnic groups) or different neighbourhoods in the towns (Roma). Frictions between people often become escalated as ethnic struggles. Recently it has been identified that there are no laws and regulations for issues such as hate crimes towards migrants and minorities.

So far, I have argued that the experiences of the Us vs Them have many variations in contemporary Balkan and post-socialist societies. A prevailing feeling of inferiority and defeatism in relation to the West has characterised nationalism in the Balkans from its inception (Todorova, 2019). Rather than healed, such feeling of inferiority and defeatism becomes transformed in different periods, such as the EU accession, or through fictional characters such as the Bay Ganyo in Bulgaria. The perception of Us vs Them,

where We are inferior, has informed choices in migrating to the idealised West (Manolova, 2019). The discourses of mass emigration, in turn, have impacted feelings of emptiness for people who stay behind, such as my interlocutors.

To understand how the Us vs Them constructs are developed by diverse groups to justify action repertoires about immigration and asylum, we need to explore such repertoires as embedded in everyday life of the ‘framers’. The. In trying to understand the responses which emerged in a European border region, we can explore the extent to which the border, as a material and symbolic entity, penetrates the daily life of the townspeople. The recent literature on everyday bordering developed by Nira Yuval-Davies and colleagues (Cassidy et al., 2018b; Tervonen et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017, 2018, 2019) is an aid in this endeavour. Together with the literature on everyday bordering, the literature on everyday nationalism will be explored. Everyday bordering and everyday nationalism help contextualise the rise of anti-asylum protests (as discussed in Chapter 5) and restrictive policies (See section 3.1) that this thesis studies. After exploring these two strands of literature, I will move to explore solidarity networks and mobilisations in more detail.

2.4. Everyday Nationalism

Hutchinson (2005, 2012) suggests that nationalist social movements, what he calls *hot nationalism*, are not the only expression of collective identity and collective agency. He conceptualises the two, the hot and the banal, together in his analysis of nationalism. Thus, the response to a crisis can be observed in protest rallies and everyday practices. This is particularly useful to study the border region of Europe, where anti-asylum protestors emerged and also to explore if there were different, banal expressions of nationalism that emerged as one of the responses to immigration, such as searching for information or photographic refugees (see Section 5.5).

The literature on everyday nationalism emphasises the interactions between people, discourses that emerged in conversations, various social networks, and mobilisations. This literature explains how the 'nation' is reproduced in daily life and by whom. This body of literature overall belongs to a social constructionist tradition. This scholarship focuses on the experience of 'ordinary people' or 'the masses'. It queries their

role in reproducing the nation, rather than the role of elites in producing the High Culture or the Reason of State (Gellner, 1983). As Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008:554) explain, 'nations are not just the product of structural forces; they are simultaneously the practical accomplishment of ordinary people engaging in mundane activities in their everyday lives'. Therefore, the focus on the 'microcosmos' allows us to understand the extent to which nationalism has penetrated everyday life.

Every day and the banal concepts are slightly different in a meaningful way (Jones and Merriman, 2009; Knott, 2015). While the banal is 'mundane', repeated events and discourses, or naturalised experiences, the everyday concept emphasises both banal and hot locus of human interaction. Everyday life brings forward the politics of ordinary people in contrast to macro-sociological approaches; it focuses on what agency means and how the overarching structures of modernity shape it. Emphasising the diversity of daily experiences, we can understand the convergence or divergence of practices, beliefs, and drives. In that sense, everyday life brings people's politics from below' to the forefront (Highmore, 2002). The everyday problematises framework the things taken as too usual to be analysed and too trivial to be questioned as political practices. It helps us study what part of this sphere is for the people 'on the ground', what becomes internalised and what is excluded from it as active interaction with the everyday space. The everyday experience is not static or timeless (Lefebvre, 1991); instead, it is part of the dynamics of modernity. It is political, contested, and subject to reshaping by its inhabitants. It reflects the changes that societies experiences (or do not) first-hand. The local space directly contrasts with the grand international relation arena or the sphere of elite state representatives. This is the space where ordinary people interact and form meaning for themselves, their belongings, boundaries, and the interaction between different boundaries. Every day politics brings forward a case study in how people interact and embody political positions. The topic of this research, which aims to understand discrimination in the local space, necessitates the careful understanding of the everyday. This would problematise the 'normality' of everyday life.

The events of the protests and the contentious politics they reveal are not necessarily the expressions of homogenous or pre-existing groups. The rally is not an isolated entity from its surroundings as it includes bystanders, counter-protesters, supporters, media (Benford and Snow, 2000). As we shall see in Chapter 5, the involvement of the ideals of the Bulgarian nation does not end with one 'event' of the

protest. Since 2013 protests on the one hand and the caring networks, on the other hand, the public sphere must be conceptualised not as divided between separate 'insiders' and 'outsiders', between active protesters and passive observers, but as a totality. These differentiations are part of a negotiation process (Keenan, 1997); often, the 'active' position of the protester begins as a response to the work of the carer and vice versa, contesting the meaning of European national identities. This sense of common ground is a discursive field where ideas about immigration and national identity more generally interact, become contested, and re-imagined.

This conceptualisation of the nation and the 'ordinary people', which I adopt, emphasises the mutual constitution of (social) structures and agents. In other words, while acknowledging the 'objective' or structurally existing context which also shapes a national Ideal, we can (and should) conceptualise the different responses and variable interpretations of this ideal at the local level (Risse 2004). Moreover, vice versa, while accepting the particularity of the case study undertaken, broader interpretations can be drawn. Then, nationalism can be understood as a process of interaction (Edensor 2002). As varieties of identifications within the nation exist, they shape and contest the structure of nationalism (Hutchinson 2005). The nation becomes a space for actively making meaning of the different identities as competing claims to nationhood are made about 'being Bulgarian' (Delanty 2008).

The literature on everyday nationalism is relatively new. The work of Michael Billig is considered a foundational work in the field with his book *Banal Nationalism* (1995). Billig (1995) proposed that the 'nation' manifests itself not only in grand narratives or in national liberation movements; indeed, nowadays, the nation is part of the 'common sense' of people. His understanding of the banal is argued to have changed the scholarship on nations and nationalism (Skey 2009). Billig (1995) argues that the nation and national identity are 'ways of talking', 'ideological discourses' or 'forms of life', which become 'embedded in habits of thought and life' (1995:63). Billig (1995) argues that once nations are established, the imagination process which reified the nation as an external and purely objective entity ceases. The now 'world of nations' process is re-imagination and re-production in particular patterns or habits. In other words, the nation becomes habituated, and it is 'common sense' what is a nation, what is patriotic, what is just, and heroic (Billig 1995; Edensor 2020; Skey 2008, 2009).

The 'nation' is a pervasive part of our daily experiences with 'infinite possibilities for talking nationally about 'us', 'you' and 'them'' (Billig 1995:87). The formation of collective identity is then contingent on the context and the interaction with the hegemonic ideal of the nation, which provides a context for categories of thinking. In that sense, collective (national) identities are not independently experienced, not as individuals or internal psychological states. While national identity (e.g. talking about national history, 'our' community, uniqueness) may become 'latent identity', giving space to other identifications, it is not forgotten. Billig (1995) proposes that nationalism is an integral part of modern society, and indeed society is a 'world of nations'. He sees society and the nation as interchangeable and claims it is misleading to speak of society as a neutral non-national entity.

There has been an increasing interest to understand agency and how people 'operate' and 'make sense' of themselves, the 'community', and the world (Brubaker, 2002; Brubaker et al., 2006; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Hernández Burgos 2021; Knott 2015; Mavratsas 1999; Skey 2009; Edensor 2006, 2020). In contrast to Billig (1995), who sees the 'nation' as part of habits, other scholars have emphasised the agency in shaping national identity. On the one hand, Mann and Fanton (2009) insist that to understand the 'nation's everyday role, we need to study the subject more 'intimately' concerning a person's life. Thompson (2001) also emphasises the role of empirical research in understanding topics of nations and nationalism, which brings in the perspectives of people and conceptualises agency. As he contends, 'there are probably as many ways of being German as there are Germans', arguing that we cannot take culture within which we may be embedded as naturally unifying. In that sense, we cannot rely on the 'casual efficacy of a 'common culture to explain how people behave towards others and how they position themselves in relation to others' (Thompson, 2001:27). Fox and Miller-Idriss understand everyday nationalism as 'the actual practices through which ordinary people engage and enact (and ignore and deflect) nationhood and nationalism in the varied contexts of their everyday lives' (2008:537). In the everyday, the 'nation' is reproduced differently. They argue that it is talked, performed, chosen, and consumed. The nation is constructed in conversations and narratives and is performed through wearing symbols, attending symbolic events or movements, and buying material things that produce meaning. However, because 'nationhood does not define all interactions all the time', this necessitates studying the contexts in which it is, in fact, invoked in the realm

of the everyday. This suggests that society is not 'the nation', and only occasionally, we discuss the nation or reproduce it (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008).

National identity can be banal or hot, a differentiation that studies nationalism (Hutchinson, 2005). It can be understood through emotional expressions (Sayer, 2005; Mann and Fenton, 2009). The emphasis that Thompson (2001) makes concerning everyday nationalism focuses on the locality and the active engagement of people in the nation's imagination. Therefore, debates on refugees take different forms. Debates can be casual talks at the local store or part of a rally against the settlement of refugees. They can be part of a more personal experience of the 'news' or part of a publicly shared and politicised positionality. Alternatively, they can be part of anti-asylum protests in front of a reception centre. The emphasis on the 'nation' being narrated (Bhabha 2013) suggests it is in the process of construction. De Cillia et al. (1999:149-150) highlights anecdotal remarks about nationality or alleged 'mentalities' of the nations as fields of contesting political struggles. Anecdotes, jokes, stories reveal the more sensitive and contested political positions in a conscious and socially acceptable manner (e.g. Cochran, 1989 on Jokes in Romania). In understanding the nation as a social construct, an emphasis has been placed on the role of monuments as heritage institutions (Vladova 2012) and the politics of constructing or destroying monuments. Bulgaria, where monuments of national heroes, remnants of socialist factories, occupy the landscape and narratives in towns (Todorova 2009; Vladova 2012). National symbols such as the 'flag' occur in everyday life (Billig, 1995). Billig's 'flagging the nation' argument is that the flag, like other representations of the nation, has entered the banal scenery, where people can flag its meaning. Observing where a flag is placed, thus, can be an insightful methodological tool to grasp collective identity expressions.

The literature on everyday nationalism has emphasised the 'mundane' or the 'cliché', repetitive presence of the nation in everyday life, which can be linked with the action repertoires when the protest cycle is at its low, mundane phase. Regular or more repetitive practices in which the nation is chosen, performed, discussed, or consumed (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008) could be conceived as everyday action repertoires. The agency of everyday action repertoires recreates nationalism. The difference between 'hot nationalism' (Hutchinson, 2005), such as protests and nationalist mobilisations, and banal nationalism, is less easy to identify and can be considered a hot-banal spectrum (Jones & Merriman, 2009; Knott, 2015). The current period has been characterised as 'contentious

politics' (Della Porta and Diani, 2015) because of the increasing role of social mobilisation as self-expression and response to the developments of modernity. The word 'contestation' is part of scholars' vocabulary on nationalism and emphasises the fluid and heterogeneous composition of nationalism (e.g. Hutchinson, 2005).

I have suggested that the literature on everyday nationalism highlights the meaning of objects, artefacts, songs, even some language nuances as crucial expressions of collective identity and agency. For this study, the literature on everyday nationalism is constructive to understand the collective identity and agency (or lack thereof) of the descendants of Thracian refugees and the anti-asylum protestors, namely their hot and banal expressions. Everyday practices, such as visiting the Thracian café and decorating the café 'flag' the collective identity of the descendants of Thracian refugees. Such images of liberation heroes who fought for the unification of lands where Thracian refugees lived all point to the performance of everyday nationalism, as discussed in Chapter 7. The everyday nationalism of the descendants of Thracian refugees could be characterised as banal rather than hot, as it is expressed precisely in such 'mundane' performances, such as cross-border trips to the lands of their ancestors, social gatherings and commemorations. It serves to preserve the identity of refuge within their families, even though their ancestors who were expelled from present-day Northern Greece and the European part of Turkey have passed. Perhaps everyday nationalism found fertile ground precisely because of the need to acknowledge the suffering from refuge in a post-war country their ancestors experienced, which was in some ways passed through generations. For the descendants, the national border between Bulgaria-Turkey and Bulgaria-Greece is only symbolic, as they envision their national identity beyond the border, extending to the locales of their ancestors. The national border then plays a small role in the everyday nationalism of the descendants, who often have images of the 'Bulgarian' that does not include the present border, but extends to Northern Greece and European Turkey⁶.

For anti-asylum protestors, discussed in Chapter 5, the concepts of hot nationalism allow grasping both the nationalist discourse and the social movement aspect of their repertoires. More importantly, perhaps, is the possibility that their hot nationalism may

⁶ Some of the large cities in the Thracian region are Plovdiv, Haskovo, Yambol, Burgas, Stara Zagora, Sliven (in Bulgaria), Komotini, Alexandroupoli, Xanti (in Greece), Edirne, Istanbul, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, Çorlu (in Turkey).

have other everyday expressions, which escape the scope of social movements but are nonetheless flagging the nation in the direction of the anti-asylum protest movement. The literature on everyday nationalism stems from a social constructivist tradition to nationalism which places the everyday as the sphere of the different discourses, actions, symbols that re-create the nation. The national border continues to have an essential role in constructing the local narratives towards immigration, more so for people who mobilised against asylum. To explore the role of borders in everyday life, I aim to highlight the particular role of border regions, the modalities of borders and boundaries, and how people produce and reproduce the border. To explore everyday life as a context and the literature on everyday nationalism, I also explore the literature on everyday bordering. The literature on everyday bordering is recently emerging and developed by Yuval-Davies et al. (2018, 2019) and explores the role of the border in everyday lives, making it suitable for this research.

2.5. Everyday Bordering

The everyday life on the border shapes the contexts of my interlocutors and, therefore, the discourses and actions they form about migration and asylum. As the context of this research is everyday life on the EU external border, literature in everyday bordering lends some valuable concepts. The literature on everyday bordering is pioneering and only emerged in the last ten years to reflect a social shift in the role of borders in Europe. The concept of everyday bordering is beneficial. The concept of everyday bordering was first developed by Yuval-Davis (2013). Since then, the scholarship on the topic has evolved to highlight the nuances of everyday bordering across Europe and for different communities. While some research applies the concept specifically to border towns such as Dover (Cassidy, Yuval-Davis, and Wemyss 2018; Wemyss and Cassidy 2017), others focus on policies (Cassidy 2019; De Genova 2017; Özdemir and Ayata 2018) or media narratives (Collyer and King 2016; Pellander and Horsti 2018) that produce everyday bordering. Recent research has studied the everyday bordering of migrants in immigration interviews due to lack of interpreters, standardised training on interpreting and officers working with interpreters, lack of quality control (Innes, 2021).

Everyday bordering refers to the practices and processes that place the national border in everyday life. As Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy (2019:1) argue, 'borders

and borderings have moved from the margins into the centre of political and social life. While studies often draw on research with everyday bordering for people with a migration background, a general theme for the research is the widespread bordering in society. Everyday bordering implies that ordinary citizens who may not belong to a policing institution or a border agency, i.e. do not have the jurisdiction to police, practice everyday on the street, in an internet club, and a park and other such 'mundane' locales. Beyond the bordering of visas, immigration officers, airport check-ins,

everyday bordering processes [...] are moving further away from border-crossing points into everyday encounters between all residents, differentially affecting individual citizenship duties and solidarities (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019:97).

The authors identify *bordering scapes* – places where citizens practice bordering in the UK context (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Some examples include employment, university, accommodation, and the expectation for staff to check, record and report on the immigration, attendance and collect other 'intelligence' for irregular migrants. In this thesis, I add to the study of bordering scapes places such as the park, outside the refugee camp, coffee shops, and internet cafes.

Everyday bordering is an action repertoire of the nationalist movement. It signifies the acts, practices, policies, and discourses that bring the national border in everyday relations between people who do not otherwise have any border regulation function. The border emerges through rhetoric or the imposition of restrictions that limit the movement of people. The effect of everyday bordering discourses and repertoires is the creation of two groups of people within the public and private spheres: those who check and inspect the validity of the migrant identity and those who have to perform the 'good migrant'. In other words, the spectacle that nation-states impose at their national borders becomes rehearsed in everyday life: in shops, in cafes, in part, at school, at work, on the street. Vigilant citizens engage in public reporting (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019) and normalise and glorify collective civilian violence. Citizens who observe, patrol, collect information and report to the authorities produce this border-order-other (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002) via state awards recognising vigilantes' 'work' and state policy changes informed by the public reporting. While vigilantism in Bulgaria gained prominence with the brutality of 'refugee hunting' repertoires (Stoyanova and Dzheкова 2020; Krasteva 2020), the violence of hunting refugees are spread to citizens in the everyday milieu, especially in border regions and around refugee communities and camps

(Gardenier 2018). Everyday activities in border regions such as going for walks, to the shop, to the park, for coffee, etc., become punctuated by everyday bordering. Ordinary citizens subsume a modality of policing in their encounters with migrants, which is validated by state officials, police, and detention managers. In short, everyday bordering alludes to the power of ordinary citizens to produce the national border in everyday life in border regions.

Everyday bordering is effective and hostile due to the relationship between citizens and state agencies. The relationship between such vigilant citizens and the state institutions produces forms of social control and collective violence (Roche 1996). Moreover, the bordering duties of state officials (border and policing officials) have been outsourced to everyday citizens, especially so since 9/11 (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019). Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy (2019) deploy the concept of everyday bordering *technologies* to highlight how borders become deterritorialised and moved into a multiplicity of places part of everyday life. They illustrate everyday bordering via public reporting, police and street-level eurocrats, ID documents, and constructing the 'hostile environment' in Britain (Goodfellow, 2020). Everyday bordering via public reporting refers to the notion of 'good citizens' who collect information ('intelligence') on each other. Immigration policing relates to a social order whereby the civic responsibility of 'good citizens' is to collect information and report where they see things that appear 'suspicious'. The concept of everyday bordering thus advances the meaning of borderlands: borders are technologies that operate in everyday interactions inflicted by ordinary citizens. Recent research has indicated that various services, including social services in Bulgaria, Sweden and England, surveil and control immigration (Walsh, Khoo and Nygren 2021). The authors illustrate how everyday bordering practices have impacted social work for migrant families since 2015.

Everyday bordering has been applied to the memory of borders (as will be illustrated in Chapter 7). Research on the Russian-Estonian borderland suggests that memories of the past, including memories of population displacement, past special orders, play an essential part in constructing identities, belonging, and evaluating the present through the lens of the context border change (Pfoser 2020)

2.6. Friends of Refugees and Care Repertoires

One remarkable strand of agency that emerged in Europe since 2013 was solidarity mobilisations with immigration. The period witnessed a massive self- mobilisation of people, many of whom had not previously been involved in volunteering or political activism, to respond with support initiatives for people seeking asylum across Europe. Key concepts have emerged: solidarity with refugees, a welcome culture, friends of refugees, which defined the new pro-asylum movement, as discussed in Section 2.2. above.

To theorise the pro-asylum mobilisations, the most prominent have been Derrida's notion of hospitality (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017; Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Darling, 2009; Derrida, 2000, 2005; Gill, 2018; Malakasis, 2021; Patrick, 2018; Voutira, 2018). Derrida's elaboration of the *principle of hospitality* begins with the premise that every culture and every society has some form of hospitality. Therefore there can be many ethics of hospitality, but they are always present. 'The principle demands, it even creates a desire for a welcome without reserve and without calculation, an exposure without limit to whoever arrives' (Derrida, 2005:6). This is an account of caring for the newcomers at the 'door' or on the 'border'. His contribution is the discussion on the relationship between *unconditional hospitality* and *conditional hospitality*, which is concerned 'not with philanthropy but with *right*' (Derrida, 2000:5, emphasis in the original). Hospitality

means the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory. He can indeed be turned away, if this is done without causing his death, but he must not be treated with hostility so long as he behaves in a peaceable manner in the place he happens to be. The stranger cannot claim the right of a guest to be entertained [un droit de résidence], for this would require a special friendly agreement whereby he might become a member of the native household for a certain time. He may only claim a right of resort [un droit de visite], for all men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth's surface. (Derrida, 2000:5)

His understanding of hospitality and 'welcome' overlap, however being 'friendly' adds another layer of proximity, intimacy, and inclusive membership. Friendliness towards newcomers mean something more permanent, than the first hospitable initiative. Part of the ethnics of hospitality for Derrida is to not treat migrants with hostility (read as: on an individual or structural basis), and to also have the right to turn them away, if

this is not leading to their death (which in the case of asylum seeking). If all this hospitality is at place, the, the newcomer in turn ought to respond with peace. Unconditional hospitality for him means letting migrants in no matter what, without asking for papers, which however would lead to chaos, and thus necessitates the search for conditional hospitality (Derrida, 2000, 2005; Lawlor, 2021). The conditional and unconditional hospitality, importantly for him are not in opposition to one another, but

it is between these two figures of hospitality that responsibilities and decisions must in effect be taken. This is a formidable challenge because if these two hospitalities do not contradict each other, they remain heterogeneous at the very moment that they appeal to each other, in a disconcerting way (Derrida, 2005:6).

In her work 'We Refugees', Hannah Arendt proposes that the figure of the refugee precedes the figures of the citizen and the associated with it human rights (Agamben, 1995). The human rights of citizens are constructed only in relation to a nation-state, and not before and not in the cases of statelessness, meaning they are not primary. From this understanding, what is universal is not the human rights of the citizen but of the human. The Arendtian refugee at the time of her writing is both without a state or a stateless person (without a clear distinction between the two), is an example of the universal person, 'the pure man in himself' (Agamben, 1995). Refugee rights, rather than citizen rights, ought to be secured as they encompass all. However, the idea of refugee rights as the rights of human beings are enshrined within nation-states. As Agamben, in his analysis of Arendt's work, contends:

The paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man par excellence, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept [for nation-states] (1995:116).

Because of the centrality of nation-states to ensure refugee rights (the rights of the pure wo/man), the rights of human beings have become the rights of citizens, but not humans. Hannah Arend suggests that refugees illustrate how the system of states is a failed one (Arendt, 1951). Refugees and refugeehood cannot be understood and adequately addressed or cared for within the current state-centric system. Drawing on Arendt' some suggest the *no border* argument of living in a world not controlled by national borders (e.g. Hirsch and Bell, 2017; Chamberlain, 2019). Furthermore, the notion of citizens proves itself inadequate for *cosmopolitan care*, which is caring for the self,

caring for the other and caring for the world (Czobor-Lupp, 2018). According to the feminist Joan Tronto, care is

everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (Tronto, 1993:103).

In contrast to Derrida’s host-guest dynamic (Chamberlain, 2020), cosmopolitan care is often conceptualised through equal relationships, where ‘individuals are both care-givers and care-receivers [...and their] dependence and autonomy are not mutually exclusive’ (Tronto, 1993; Slote, 2007, Czobor-Lupp, 2018:2).

Both notions of ‘refugee’ and ‘care’ are often wrongly assumed to be apolitical. Voutira (2018:69), for example, analyses the relationship between newcomers on the island of Lesbos, Greece and the host population and argues that refugees ‘deny’ the local hospitality as they are not interested in settling in Greece but instead seek ‘sanctuary elsewhere in northern Europe’. This can be understood as an act of citizenship. The arbitrary assignment of the refugee label (Zetter, 2007a) is constructed in interview rooms staffed with case workers native in the host state. To defer from establishing robust care programmes, then, institutions and popular attitudes have separated a different label for people seeking refuge – ‘economic refugees’ (Apostolova, 2016), who are less deserving of care (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014). These labels suggest that only a few very specific groups of people (‘the real refugees’) are deserving of care.

The site for care would usually be hospitals, hospices, orphanages, rehabilitation centres, kindergartens and institutions of similar nature – occupations have been taken up mainly by women. Living with a *caring deficit* (Hochschild, 1995), a shortage of resources for providing care institutionally, has led to exploring alternatives to care. When discussion of the geography of care (Pascucci, 2018) as shifted towards the broader community, Balloch and Hill (2007:1) identify *the conventional community care umbrella*. These are ‘older people and those with physical and sensory impairments and mental health problems’. In broadening the notion of community care, they go further to discuss families with young people under anti-social behaviour orders and women experiencing domestic violence as part of the communities and, therefore, as part of the need for ‘community care’ (ibid., 1).

The universal notion of Derrida's cultural hospitality has been challenged, especially in the context of the current refugee crisis (Quagliariello, 2021). In the context of the border region of Lampedusa (southern Italy), Quagliariello (2021) argues that rather than a universal Mediterranean hospitality, the motivations to take care of the Other can be explained with the border migration history and economy of the region. As an island, Lampedusa has historically attracted different migration waves over the past centuries, and the current migration is the fourth on the Mediterranean island (*ibid.*). The 'local' identity is characterised as 'mixed'. In addition to this mixed local identity, many of them emigrated to the northern part of Italy, consistent with the historical division of productive and reproductive work. Most of the emigrants were men, while women stayed at home (Quagliariello, 2021:22). Drawing on the migration experiences of leaving one's family or having a family member away motivated Lampedusans to identify with the newcomers (*ibid.*, 25). Because of the economy of the island, Lampedusans had migration experiences themselves, as the ethnography of Quagliariello (2021) documents. In addition, their hospitality is linked to the awareness of the new migrations' transit character, as people who arrive in Lampedusa are moved elsewhere within days or weeks⁷. Indeed, Quagliariello (2021:26-35) documents how *caring* practices transform towards *managing* practices over time. Local populations who continue with care work and a solidarity attitude were not cooperating with the state reception system but have been cooperating with the humanitarian sector. The action repertoires of the local the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum group included

offering food and hot drinks as migrants disembark at the port of Lampedusa; offering clothes and other necessities (soaps, towels and blankets) to migrants who live at the reception center; offering Wi-Fi access and other means of communication (e.g. SIMs) to allow migrants to get in touch with their families; the reconstruction of the migrants' kinship network for the burial of people who died in the Mediterranean; and management of the Lampedusa cemetery area dedicated to migrants. (*ibid.*, 31).

The networks of care in the town are the ones that determine who needs care, to whom care should be delivered, what type of care is necessary, and when and how. Care for people seeking refuge becomes actioned within the connections of the network. The points of contact form clusters of meaning. It is in this process that people and actors

⁷ National law on migration and border controls (law 40/1998), states that the island of Lampedusa is a place of transit since 1998. Only a first reception to foreigners is provided and some initial administrative procedures take place immediately upon landing (Quagliariello, 2021:24).

(read as agencies, media who have an active power to shape) create and practice care. Much like knots in a fishing net, ‘all linguistic signs can be thought of as knots in a net, deriving their meaning from their difference from one another, that is, from being situated in particular positions in the net’ (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002:25). Networks of care are formed by people relating in a way that clusters meaning and practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) of care. ‘The analysis of care, and the actors, relationships and contexts involved, is not a linear or additive process’ (Leira and Saraceno, 55). Rather than seeing humans as independent or as self-sufficient, ‘an alternative picture emerges that shows humans as beings that are a part of complex networks of care and responsibility’ (Czobor-Lupp, 2018:10). Care can be understood not only as material practices and meaning-making (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) within one particular institution, such as a hospital or a camp. Instead, politics of care can be understood as a part of a broader social sphere, which defines people as ‘selves-in-connection’ (Clark Miller, 2011:396; Czobor-Lupp, 2018). Politics of care relates to networks of care, which expose the individual as vulnerable and as a part of an interdependent nexus of human relationships (Tronto, 1993; Engster, 2005; Clark Miller, 2011).

2.7. Conclusion

Protests and other forms of social mobilisation related to refugees invoked claims politicising care. These politics were taking place in everyday defined and redefine ‘common sense’ of how to care for ‘us’, for ‘others’ and for the world. The argument of radical-right groups is that because different people need care (‘Us’), the care for people seeking refuge (‘Them’) is not self-evident or a priority. In other words, “we have to care for the things that are ‘ours’ first—the ‘us’ before ‘them’” (Sid, 1978). Pro- or anti-immigrant movements are political and embedded in a particular historical and economic context. Also, anti-immigrant sentiments are not merely part of the extreme right rhetoric. Idioms of ‘caring for nation/people’ are part of the ‘naturalised’ common sense that legitimises local radical-populism and anti-asylum bordering. Far-right movements provoke a type of argument: care is needed in a lot of social domains, not only for people seeking refuge.

Research on everyday nationalism, which seeks to 'bring the masses back' into the scholarship on nations and nationalism, has restrained from analysing local protests. Protests, usually understood as 'hot' expressions of nationalism (Hutchinson, 2005), have received little attention as part of the everyday, in particular how repertoires evolve and manifest when not at the peak of the protest activity. Protests have been mainly studied in the social movement literature, and the concepts of action repertoires and the protest cycle are particularly useful to understand why and how ordinary people respond to immigration. Far-right politics around immigration provoke a type of argument: care is needed in a lot of social domains, not only for people seeking refuge. While recent research in social movements has explored radical right mobilisations in relation to the 'refugee crisis', which illuminate important nuances of their repertoires, we don't know how such responses are linked to pro-asylum mobilisations. Researchers within migration studies and within the social movements have also focused on pro-asylum mobilisations, identifying practices, discourses or theories of care for the self, the other, and the world.

Chapter 3. Situating Bulgaria

Bulgaria has one of the EU's external borders in its territory, with a non-member state, Turkey makes it a border region of the EU. However, the role of Bulgaria as a border region became more important with the EU migration crisis beyond its position at the periphery of Europe. Countries such as Bulgaria, including Greece, Italy, Malta, and Cyprus, became significant as border regions are partly due to the Dublin Regulation. The 'crisis of Dublin' as Hess and Kasperek (2017) describes it is

the creation of the Common European Asylum System, after the Treaty of Amsterdam, [which] established an internal mobility regime (Kasperek, 2016a) for third-country nationals without residency permits or visas, with the Dublin and the Eurodac regulations as central components. The Dublin system determines which European state must process an asylum application. It is explicitly not a quota system but instead assigns this responsibility according to different criteria. The country of first entry is the most prominent. In practice, this meant that the Member States situated on the EU's external border were obliged to process most applications. The implementation of Dublin III

was predicated on the Eurodac database, in which the fingerprints of all apprehended migrants were stored (Hess and Kasperek, 2017:62).

The EU's external borders, which located 'countries of first entry', then became the critical points of the Common European Asylum System. The 'country of first entry' has remained a guiding principle for distributing care for newcomers. According to the European Council on Refugees in Exile and UNHCR, the Dublin system does not provide an effective strategy. Beyond the crisis, exacerbated by this inefficiency, the role of border regions takes centre place in the management of refugeehood, impacting local national identities. Different migration management shaped southern and southeastern Europe border regions as particular spaces of migration. Indeed, specific areas within the border regions were formed, as evidenced in the phenomenon of 'hotspots' and permanent refugee camps.

After the Dublin Regulation (from June 2013), the EU-Turkey 'refugee deal' (March 2016) (European Commission, 2015; Saatçioğlu, 2020) continues to focus migration politics on the border. Only this time, it is 'outside' Europe's border. As the agreement states, 'all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands and whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible should be returned to Turkey' (Chamberlain, 2020:62). In exchange for this export service, the EU offered a payment of three billion Euros, while Turkey, in turn, used it as a bargaining chip to decrease the gatekeeping of its EU accession. The EU-Turkey Settlement is illustrative of the Union's attempts at managing the crisis and the construction of the border region of Europe. The settlement is one of the two main approaches developed after the unsuccessful quota allocation system. The idea was to use Turkey as a container for migration coming from Syria, with some arguing this settlement is illegal by design. One of the reasons for this assessment is that it curtails the right to free movement. Effectively, it constructs Turkey as a police officer of the EU vis-à-vis migration. Thus, the border of Europe became an arena for migration politics.

Turkey has become a prominent political ally to the EU to manage its immigration. Shortly after the 'refugee deal' was signed, Turkey's political and everyday context changed. The Turkish opposition attempted coup d'état in Turkey on 15th July 2016, followed by the mass incarceration and disappearance of people from the opposition occupying key leadership positions. Soon after, Turkey was declared an 'unsafe place',

meaning that people fleeing Turkey themselves would be granted asylum. The issue is that there is still a regulation stipulating that asylum is awarded to people who flee countries declared 'unsafe'. This leaves people who were stopped before entering the EU in a grey area, intermittent possibilities for open borders allowing EU entry, dependant on the politics of Turkey.

The specifics of the EU's way of managing the crisis is one reason why the 'migration crisis' has been identified as an incorrect term. Some have referred to it as a European migration crisis. Since people have the legal right to flee conflict and seek asylum, the crisis is not one of migration rather one of management on the European level. The EU migration regime is primarily regulated via Dublin III from 2013, setting the terms for asylum claims and deportations. The system has been criticised as ineffective, and this research confirms this finding. The ineffectiveness of Dublin III posed problems from a legal perspective and has brought political challenges at the Union level together with a host of collective identity issues. Border regions have been bestowed with the responsibility to contain migration (Hess & Kasperek, 2017) and shape a collective image of Europe inclusive of refugeehood as visible by the domestic care practices and networks (Malkki, 2015; Papataxiarchis, 2016b). The issue is that countries on the southern border are a few. Also, border regions tend to be neglected areas within the national states. They are often rural areas with little infrastructure to accommodate people seeking refuge.

That border regions must be at the centre of the migration management policies (Ghosh, 2000) is not natural. There have been calls to provide a 'safe passage' or a corridor for people seeking refuge. This would have served as a safe process for people fleeing war organised by states and the EU for reaching various destinations in Europe. The call for 'safe passage' has come from NGOs. The lack of 'safe passage' or a corridor for bringing people seeking asylum in the EU safely from internationally declared unsafe (such as Syria and Turkey) has meant that countries in southern Europe have had to shoulder the most responsibility. Safe passage is essential because, besides the legal and political debates of 'where to leave the refugees', this is a question of profound human struggle. People seeking asylum have gone through the trauma of fleeing one's home country and lack a safe passage to do so. Safe passage would have addressed the phenomenon of trafficking of people through borders, which most often leaves people seeking asylum without passports or money since traffickers use both in exchange for the service of leading them through countries. Greece and the 'hotspot' phenomenon are

similar cases to Bulgaria, where small local communities developed new practices and debated the meaning of community.

Chapter 3. Situating Bulgaria

3.1. Policies of Containment and Encampment of Immigration after 2013

Some of the emblematic images of the European migration crisis are images of camps. These are facilities built at the moment, which initially comprised green military tents. The government officials often organised them since this is what governments could provide. Others were white and arranged by the UNHCR, the UN agency for refugees. Later both got upgraded to the European standard of white caravans, resembling the summer residences on the UK coast. Nonetheless, the grouping of populations in tents or caravans in border regions produced a particular phenomenon. Primarily visible in the Greek islands, this phenomenon was referred to as ‘hotspots’. Hotspots are overcrowded places that resemble mini villages where a whole new social and health care system are built from the ground up. This is where people seeking refuge reside while they go through the process of applying for asylum. This is most often the only place they are legally allowed to be in countries on the border of Europe.

In Greece, people cannot leave the island and are stranded in Lesbos. This is because Greece has the power to decide how it manages its space. Nowhere in international law is it stipulated that there needs to be dignity in applying for asylum, and no individual state has taken on the political role to advocate for such a right. Still, international organisations providing care on the ground have raised concerns about living conditions, access to water and sanitation, sexual assault, and illegal deportations. It is also noteworthy that people seeking refuge live in neighbourhoods ‘on the border’ of capital cities. Such is the case of Exarhia Neighbourhood in Athens and Ovcha Kupel in Sofia. Since 2013, when the number of people seeking refuge increased, the Bulgarian government ‘opened’ the first camp in Harmanli on the unused military camp building. Every person seeking asylum who is ‘caught’ is now placed in a Refugee Reception Centre in Bulgaria. The Refugee Reception Centres are managed centrally by the Ministry of Interior. The name Refugee Reception centre is sometimes replaced with camp. This is partly because the newly opened ones did not start as centres – including information bulletins or a name sign – but were simply camps made of green canvas tents. Even after modernising the camps to match European standards, some people still use the term camp

to describe the place hosting people seeking refuge. There are several ‘reception centres’ in Bulgaria: on the border with Turkey – Harmanli, Lyubimets; and on the outskirts of Sofia – Ovcha Kupel, Bankia.

In addition to containment in ‘reception centres’, mainly referred to as camps, Bulgaria has another policy for placing people in closed reception centres. This means that people cannot go out, and neither can visitors, journalists or NGOs go in. These closed camps are only on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey. Lyubimets is one of them. It is a policy that was only developed in 2013, with this way of receiving applications not practised before. Essentially, these reception centres are like prisons, and Prime Minister Boyko Borisov from the centre-right party GERB has claimed them to be hosting ‘the most dangerous’ people seeking asylum. Who these people are and how they are selected, or how they live inside, are questions that the state of Bulgaria has not yet found itself fit to explain?

The EU has exercised power in the management of migration via its border agency Frontex. In the context of an ineffective Dublin and EU- Turkey deal, the EU has focused its efforts on the border regions. This has manifested in the expansion of the practices and capacity of border agency Frontex. Frontex has produced videos illustrating its approach. Online podcasts depict migrants arriving, overflowing, and shaping an emergency, thereby blaming the flow of people rather than their failed management of them. Frontex aspires to a military approach in handling people seeking refuge. Their officers, dressed in police-like uniforms, hover in helicopters above borderlands, or the sea, observing somewhat distantly and unemotionally the strife of people seeking refuge. This approach constructs migration as contained, where migrants have to be captured. With the number of employees expanded, Frontex personnel have been sent to border regions to cooperate on protecting the European border (Aas & Gundhus, 2015). This has also included the incorporation of various surveillance technologies on the border. The purpose of this is to gather intelligence and capture people making their passage to a destination and consequently place them in a refugee reception centre. Frontex personnel also allegedly have the role of ensuring local border police officers are not themselves involved in the trafficking of people. Indeed, increasingly, the work of Frontex on the Turkish border has been associated with a duality of care and control, or in other words, border policing built on a humanitarian argument (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015).

In 2017, after migration flow had reduced and after the EU-Turkey deal, the Bulgarian government developed a policy restricting movement to refugees and asylum seekers within the region where they submitted a claim. After Border Police detains people on the border entering Bulgaria from Turkey, they drive them to the refugee reception centres to submit a claim for asylum and stay and live there. They are not allowed to leave the premises of the centre without authorisation. Furthermore, the policy restricted the movement to request permission from the central government if one wanted to leave the *oblast* (region, area). The restriction includes a necessary visit to a hospital if it is in a regional city. For people in open camps, the containment manifests in the policy for limiting travelling only within the municipality – oblast – of where the person has submitted an asylum claim.



Figure 1: Migration Routes through the Balkans

Source: InfoMigrants research, cited in DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/is-frontex-involved-in-illegal-pushbacks-in-the-balkans/a-56141370>

The strategies of containment and encampment of migration have resulted in the trafficking of people by local carriers (In Bulgarian: *prevozvachi*). Trafficking emerged in Bulgaria and its neighbours Greece and Macedonia, a part of the so-called 'Balkan route' for migration into Europe (Dimovski, Babonoski, Ilijevski, 2013; Weber, 2017). Key transit points, of course, are border regions and checkpoints, where smugglers rely on their local knowledge to transport people seeking refuge (Mandić, 2017). The same national border regions along the 'Balkan route' were drawn at the turn of the century and in the interwar years while producing a series of settlements of people, finding themselves to be on the one side of the border and moving towards the other.

Overall, since 2013 people seeking refuge were managed with various approaches and policies of containment and encampment in the EU's border regions. In Bulgaria, the construction of new refugee reception centres and the containment of migration to oblasts set out to contain the movement of people. The EU also supported this via the border agency Frontex. The historical context of the country shaped the lives of these spaces. Memories of the refugee waves from 19th century Balkans became entangled with present-day refugee experiences from Syrian refugees taking the route into Europe. In Bulgaria, there were remnants of the socialist past, visible in the architecture of some of the camps. The EU membership is flagged every day with the blue flag with 12 stars and the occasional visits of EU officials' buildings decorated with this symbol of unity. As part of Eastern Europe, part of the border scenery of Bulgaria has been monuments to national heroes who overthrew the Ottoman empire.

3.2. Bulgaria's Multiple Contexts

Bulgaria's multiple historical contexts intertwine with its current border role and this research. Bulgaria is a European country, although its relationship with Europe has complex dynamics. The history of Bulgaria shapes identity perspectives framed as Self and Other. Bulgaria's relationship with 'the West' and the European Union, as well as being a 'satellite' of the former USSR, and before that, a part of the Ottoman Empire all shape not only Bulgaria's history but also national identity and what 'being Bulgarian' means today. Bulgaria became a member of the European Union in 2007, a belonging alliance that shapes national identity. That European collective identity is not

homogenous (see Orchard, 2002; Delanty, 2010). Instead, it is a space with contesting visions for the project of European integration. Scholars indicate that the post-socialist context of Eastern Europe shaped an idealisation of ‘unity’ of Europe, in comparison to no such visions in Western European states (Haas, 1961; Pichler, 2008; Hroch, 1996a). Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007 with an average of 60% of its citizens voting in favour, for several years making Bulgaria one of the most pro-EU member states (Tanasoiu and Colonescu, 2008). Since 2007, Bulgarian citizens have enjoyed their rights to travel freely, work and settle in the EU. Belonging to the European family has given Bulgarian students access to education in other European states and workers to European labour markets. There have been some estimations that half the working population of Bulgaria, about two and a half million people, now works outside Bulgaria. Within the EU, Bulgaria has become one of the destinations for ‘lifestyle migration’ and Spain or Greece. EU citizens’ migration to the country, such as to buy summer houses or retire, is generally viewed positively within the country (Kaneff, 2020). Scholars discussing European integration in Bulgaria emphasise changes in the understandings of minority rights (Dimitrova and Dragneva, 2001; Mancheva and Troeva, 2011:36; Krasteva, 2006; Eminov, 1997). People who were oppressed under the ethnonational socialist state, particularly Muslims (Turkish, Pomak and Roma), had to have their space acknowledged in the social and political domains. However, these studies explain the perception of the idealised European Union, rather than the (internal) collective processes, as ‘fixing’ the perceived ‘backward’ state (Raik, 2004), which becomes further intensified in the context of the ‘migration crisis’ and the role of Bulgaria as a guardian of the European border.

Since the application for EU membership in 1995, enthusiasm to ‘join’ EU became a symbol of transforming the tottering economy. The elected socialist government of Jan Videnov and following governing elites all built their platforms on the idea of belonging to the European Union (Giatzidis, 2004: 439-440). This aspiration was built on idealising the Other through the values of privatisation, economic deregulation and the upholding of human rights (Dimitrova and Dragneva, 2001; Christin, 2005; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2006). At the same time, academic and public rhetoric on the transition from the socialist regime appears oriented towards a ‘return to Europe’ (Vachudova and Snyder, 1997). This suggests that the context of Bulgaria and other Eastern European states is implicated with the idealisation of belonging to the ‘European family’.

After the fall of the socialist regime, the states' internal politics shaped a context of political disillusionment. The expression 'real' or 'actually existing' socialism distinguishes 'its messy reality from its hopes and claims' (Verderey, 1996:4). Typical for countries of Eastern Europe is the decreasing public involvement in politics through the electoral system (Giatzidis, 2004) and decreased trust in the nation-state's capacity to establish economic and political stability (Tanasoïu and Colonescu, 2008). The type of nationalism shaped by the reality of socialism in Eastern Europe characterised as 'socialist paternalism', where 'subjects [...] were presumed to be grateful recipients – like small children in a family – of benefits of their rulers decided upon them' (Verderey, 1996: 63). After 1989, the paternalistic state, previously headed by Zhivkov, was transformed. The struggle to conceptualise a social Self is further challenged by the destruction of memories of the socialist past. This problem has been raised in work discussing the destruction of socialist-related monuments, such as the mausoleum of emblematic socialist leader Georgi Dimitrov (Kaneff, 2002; Topouzova, 2015). Like other Eastern European countries, Bulgaria has not developed a collective narrative of integrating the past of communism into its new and transforming post-1989 identity. Experiences of communism are often simplistically presented in dual forms of good or bad or not present at all in the public sphere. Studies have even pointed that in state education in many post-socialist contexts, in subjects such as History, teachers would not cover the socialist past simply because there was no one way to conceptualise it or express two-party views, be that left or right. Germany, which also had to integrate a socialist past as part of its national history and identity, differs from Eastern European countries in this respect because as early as 1989, the narrative was about breaking the wall and coming together with family members living in the West.

Post-socialism as a study focuses on the impact of socialism on people's lives, especially after transforming the socialist system (Verderey, 1996). After the fall of the socialist regime in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe more generally, studies that analyse migration dynamics focus on the emigration from the country and highlight 'the search for opportunities' outside (Mancheva & Troeva, 2011; Guntcheva, 2003; Morokvašić, 2006; Reyneri, 2001; Wallace, 1999). As the recent multi-sited ethnography of Manolova (2018) studies Bulgarian emigration to the UK, she identifies 'the West' (In Bulgarian: *Zapadat*) as a symbol of tradition, affluence, and possibilities, which motivates emigration and remaining in the UK despite disappointments associated with migrant life

in the UK. As Creed (2010:34), who conducted ethnography in a Bulgarian village, Zamfirovo, before and after socialism, contends, ‘in 2006 the village had half the population it had when I left there in 1988’. This change in the demographic structure also shaped conceptions of home and leaving home. Not so much driven by cosmopolitanism, but ‘because the home/village they have left behind is not a place one would want to be, so there is nothing to be homesick for’ (*ibid.*, 35) shaped the post-socialist context as something to be left behind. This has shaped perceptions of Western Europe as ‘the destination’ and the locals’ identity as those *left behind*. The socialist past has marked the context and collective identity in Bulgaria.

The Ottoman past has also left its mark. Remnants of the Ottoman past are salient in the region, not least in the nationalist rhetoric, which could still debate the proper allocation of borders across different nation-states in Eastern Europe. The Ottoman Empire governed present-day Eastern Europe for over 400-500 years, while kingdoms existed before that region. This means that a national consciousness was present before the multi-ethnic Ottoman empire began to rule; that struggled to find its boundaries as the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating. In the historical period between the 1830s, when Greece became the first independent state in South-eastern Europe, and 1912, with the Balkan Wars, most of the present-day borders in the region were shaped.

Being Bulgarian is intertwined with a feeling of belonging to an ‘ill’ nation (Ratcheva, 2014) since ‘we allowed ourselves to be treated as slaves for five centuries’, typical rhetoric goes. These feelings become manifest in various public debates – from the material selected for inclusion in textbooks to the monuments earmarked for construction to the quality of the Bulgarian language spoken and so on. The essence of the *post-Ottoman Bulgarian identity* is to try and compensate for not being on the world map for five centuries. Drawing on Julia Kristeva, Ratcheva (2014) suggests that the experience of belonging to an ill nation and having an ill mentality (In Bulgarian: *bolen mentalitet*) shapes ‘Bulgarian’ national consciousness, which assumes the need for someone to take care of the nation, to offer a cure, or a fix.

The Thracian region is a historical and geographical region that currently spreads on southern Bulgaria, northern Greece, and European Turkey. The region is brought together by the mythology of the ancient tribe of the Thracians (In Bulgarian: *traki*), who inhabited Southern Europe before the Roman conquests. In historical terms, the map of

the ancient tribe in the second century BC extends further north in present-day Romania (see Loulanski and Loulanski, 2017:247). The archaeological research continues in the region, trying to grasp Thracians' way of living and preserve their heritage. The Thracian heritage is a source of national pride in the countries in the region. The Thracian gold finding, for instance, is cited as the oldest gold treasure in the world, dating to 4560–4450 BC discovered near Varna, Northeastern Bulgaria. According to a review on the exhibition of the treasure in the Louvre, Paris, 'the large number of artefacts shows the relations and influences between the Thracians and their close or more distant neighbours (Europost, 2015).

The need to care for the border becomes more salient in border regions, such as in the southern town of Harmanli. Gencho Stoev (1925-2002), a renowned local poet, writes in the forward of one of the books about Harmanli by Kiril Dinkov (1985):

Little is written about Harmanli. This little town, located at the lower spring (*techenie*) of Maritsa, has long stayed at the border: in geography, in history, in the economy, in the country's culture. Helped only from the *nevolya* (lack of luck), literate people of Harmanli use their capacity to satisfy their fellow townsmen interested in their righteous heritage- the past. (Stoev in Dinkov, 1985:i).

This extract reflects two critical things. Firstly, Harmanli is perceived as a border town in a variety of interpretations – the national geographic border, the historical divide between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, the rural subsistence economy, and the border of the culture of the country. Secondly, the way this border is interpreted is emotive. The locals have relied on self-help, on the lack of luck (*nevolya*) at the border. The figure of the local is constructed as the 'literate people of Harmanli' who rely on themselves to learn about their past and convey it to 'their fellow townsman'. Already in 1985, when the new book about Harmanli was published, key symbols of the town were the Church St Atanasii and the Spring of the White Footed.

The border location of the city, between Europe and Asia, is the basis for the statement of the writer Gencho Stoev: 'Harmanli does not need to travel, because the world passes through it.' This statement has become an often-cited motto for Harmanlians. While often pronounced with pride of the local geography, history and culture, the idea that 'Harmanli does not need to travel' has been challenged by recent changes, such as emigration abroad to bigger nearby cities, such as Plovdiv, and depopulation. The second

part of the saying characterising the border-ness of Harmanli - ‘the whole world passes through it’ – has undergone a similar transformation: from a feeling of pride towards an experience of new social transformations.

The book by Kiril Dinkov (1985) *The Town by the Spring of the White Footed*, written in the traditional for the country bordering documentation (In Bulgarian: *kraevednicheska dokumentalistika*), does not aim to survey modern and ‘bordering’ questions but to recreate a rich panoramic view of the nation’s life in Harmanli – from its inception until the Liberation. It will awake expected and unexpected imaginations amongst the different readers’ imaginations. In the lower spring of Maritsa, close to Istanbul, to be Bulgarian was an inherited will for some and a saving unquestioning idea for others. Interesting is the understanding that Dimov (2010, pp.51-58) puts forward that the birth of the community in Harmanli is related to a road. At the beginning of the 16th century, the area here is known for the military road *Via Militaris*, also known as *Orta Kol* (i.e. intermediate direction) or the Diagonally Road. This road facilitated the commuting link between Edirne and Tsarigrad (also known as Constantinople or today’s Istanbul) with the Danube River and Western Europe. The Ottoman Empire maintained the road by constructing bridges, *kervansarai*, and *imarets*, facilitating the movement of the sultan’s army and other’s diplomatic travels. This is confirmed by the first mentions of the town from different travellers’ accounts. Today this road is an international highway connecting Istanbul- Edirne- Plovdiv-Sofia- Nish- Belgrade- Vienna.

The year 1585 marks the construction of the Back Bridge (In Bulgarian: *Gyrbav most*), with its Arabic architecture, which Dimov suggests is the beginning of the town. This bridge is, to the present day, a hallmark of the town. During the fieldwork, the bridge was foreclosed for pending restoration. The river beneath it was not running, and its construction located at the end of the main street by the police station remained unappreciated. Other constructions to follow the bridge are – a *kervansarai*, mosque, bath (hammam) and others, making travellers (such as Stephan Gerlach) remark that there is a ‘Turkish village’. The region got populated, some claiming with people moved from Mala Asia- today’s city of Bursa and/or with people from the region of Maritsa River. The village developed a threshing floor (In Bulgarian: Harman)- a place where people would get together to harvest their beans, corn, drying sesame, supervised by a Turkish official (*subashia*) who would determine the tax. From this word- Harman- came the name of the

village- Harmanli. The more developed the station becomes, the higher image it brought for the Ottoman Empire to the traveller.

The geographical position of the town, at the southern border of Bulgaria, becomes entangled with its location as a border town of Europe, since the country's accession into the EU in 2007. This location places Harmanli on the Balkan route, travelled by those fleeing wars and famine. Following policies of containing immigration 'outside', the border town also hosts one of the refugee camps (Registration Reception Centre Harmanli) on the Balkan peninsula. Everyday life in Harmanli reflects all of these global, regional, and national dynamics, reflected in the action repertoires around the border and migration.

Chapter 4. Researching Migration, Post-socialism, and Nationalism

Qualitative research is most appropriate for this study because it is a situated activity that, by locating the observer in the world, aims to understand the meanings that participants give to the issues of research enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 4). Qualitative research allows for multiple perspectives and stories to be embraced; and, thus, to reflect on the many different and changing cultures, histories, and contexts (Flick, 2002). Therefore, by allowing a window into the variations and often-contradictory social behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals in context, qualitative research provides the opportunity to obtain complex and multiple descriptions of how people experience specific issues research enquiry (Efthymiou, 2015). The qualitative methodology allows researchers to study subject areas in their entirety and represent their complexity, ambiguity, and variability. In this way, diversity can be found, valued, and interpreted. I adopt a qualitative approach to study immigration because I am interested in exploring peoples' accounts in their own words and mapping out the complexity and diversity of attitudes towards immigration. By conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups, discussing views on the European migration crisis, my study provides 'thick data' on the complexity of attitudes towards migration. Qualitative methodology is most appropriate to study the new developments and responses to the 'European migration crisis with the case study of Bulgaria, where such events have not yet been investigated and thus no interpretations of such events have been formulated. I was keen to allow the informants to narrate and formulate the meanings of the events taking place. While there is an empirical gap in the literature on immigration in Bulgaria, and the European migration crisis, using qualitative methodology to study the formation of attitudes *vis-a-vis* migration is itself a methodological innovation.

Similar to collective action frames, which have a long history of being applied in social movement research, people's attitudes on the European migration crisis could be understood through the collective action frames. Collective action frames are ideas, sets of beliefs, and meaning that 'inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns' (Snow and Benford, 1992, quoted in Gamson, 1992:7). Social movements

show how groups of people become motivated to act in response to political decisions. The social movements have been broadly classified as left-wing and right-wing; however, scholars agree this is only a loose categorisation since people participating may not impose these collective identities on themselves. Benson and Snow are the proponents of collective action frames, which it has some 20 or so years of application. Efforts have been developed to bring together all research on collective action, which has relied on frame theory. Collective action frames help understand what motivates people to respond using protest or other forms of collective action. Research on collective actions is supported by thinking in terms of frames in demonstrations. It facilitates the understanding of what unifies or frames a protesting public. According to Della Porta (2017), we can separate two strands of collective action frames: those that study the protests by organised parties and organisations or by ordinary people (Gamson, 1995). In the next two chapters, I discuss the acts of ordinary people in Harmanli. I discuss nationalist protests and volunteering, thereby bringing together right-wing and left-wing perspectives of the three collective action frames – injustice, agency, and identity. Relying on social constructionism and qualitative methodology, in the next chapters, I review public attitudes towards immigration. I use frame analysis to analyse public opinion from data gained from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (see also Chapter 4). Frame analysis is based on social constructionist understandings; it illuminates ways of making sense of events happening in people's lives and discourses that mobilise action.

4.1. Everyday Life in a Post-socialist Town: Harmanli

The proximity of Harmanli to the southern Bulgarian border allowed me to use the border as a tool in ethnographic data collection. Harmanli is a rural town in southern Bulgaria, which I visited for the first time in May 2017. It has a population of approximately 25,000 people (2011 census) and belongs to Haskovo Province in the southernmost part of Bulgaria. Born and raised in southern Bulgaria, I had not visited this region in the south, where Harmanli is located. Selecting a town community as a unit of the study had the advantage of being a confined, constructed entity. Within a place and time, selecting a specific context helps to understand how it shapes knowledge (Velody et al., 2014). I decided that the place should be a township. In post-socialist Bulgaria, towns have typical features, as they developed in a generally uniform way during communism. A hallmark of communism, for instance, is the brutalist-style architecture and the belief that township

communities should be the same. I could study the context of Bulgaria by exploring the perspectives in the township. While I cannot suggest that all towns in Bulgaria are like Harmanli, there are typical 'Bulgarian' material and social structures embedded in a township. As 'everyday life is the locus, broader lifeworlds can be inferred from this' (Berger and Luckmann, 2001: 28). A town's infrastructure, the remains of the socialist architecture embedded in everyday life and socio-economic opportunities have little variation across rural townships in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is a helpful site for studying migration, post-socialism and nationalism as it lends itself the possibility to study various types of migration. The country is part of what became known as the 'Balkan route' – sets of checkpoints that assisted in the smuggling of people seeking refuge from Turkey to northern Europe. As part of its response to the European reception crisis, Bulgaria developed new mechanisms to address the crisis. One of the first mechanisms was the construction of new Registration-reception centres for people seeking refuge. These facilities are on the outskirts of Sofia and southern Bulgaria. Harmanli is one of the places which opened a new Registration-reception centre in 2012, enabling me to research a community with 'migrants': a migration space. In this sense, Harmanli was similar to a city such as Sofia, where Sofians in the neighbourhoods of Sheep Font (In Bulgarian: Ovtcha Kupel) and Bankia were living with asylum seekers, more than in other towns in Bulgaria, which did not have a Registration-reception centre.

Harmanli is close to the border with Turkey and Greece, 25 and 30 kilometres away, respectively. Following ethnographic research on the Bulgarian-Turkish border (Ganeva-Raycheva and Zlatkova, 2012), I understand the border as a methodological tool, which helps understand migration perceptions and 'national communities'. As Ganeva-Raycheva (2012:6) explains, the political border 'predetermines discussing migration in terms of 'national territories', 'national communities', and 'national cultures''. Using the border theme in conversations, I discussed what it means, how it was constructing the national community and the people who were crossing it or who have crossed it in the past. As a 'border town', Harmanli was a migration space.

The main findings of the ethnography in Harmanli are that people feel a lack of governance. They also spoke about asylum seekers needing better health care, that locals need information about what has happened and how it is governed and that they would

like their efforts of providing care in a situation of emergency to be acknowledged. These findings are also confirmed by the research of the Multi-Kulti Collective (Ivanova 2018), which captured three different towns and cities. The Bulgarian central government did not distribute Registration-reception centres evenly across the country, and the experiences of interactions with people seeking asylum differ across the country. Nevertheless, news coverage on refugees in all settlements in Bulgaria portrays the same attitudes vis-à-vis refugeehood.

A difference can be grasped in more prominent cities in Bulgaria, such as Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna. The socio-economic structure varies more by population, geography, and socio-economic opportunities. Therefore, I cannot easily generalise the findings of rural Harmanli to cities in Bulgaria. I have, however, relied on reports from research conducted in various places in Bulgaria by the not-for-profit organisation Multi-Kulti, which specialises in research and campaigns concerning refugees in Bulgaria. National identity is composed of different and sometimes competing claims. Bulgarian national identity has had its own competing claims. The perspective of descendants of refugees from Eastern and Western Thrace differs significantly from those from Sofia and other regional Bulgarian identities and illustrates the multicultural landscape. Harmanli is a settlement inhabited densely by descendants of refugee families from the region of Thrace, today's European Turkey and Northern Greece. I conducted participant observation in the café of the Thracian Society named after Boyko Tchavdarov, which is a part of the nationwide Union of the Thracian Societies in Bulgaria (UTSB). As Ganeva-Raycheva (2012:31) explains, 'Thracian Bulgarians are the bearers of different local cultures. What they have in common is having to leave their homes behind, settling down to a place thought of as 'the land of our ancestors', experiencing the locals' perception of them as 'alien', overcoming otherness, adapting and socialising in the host society'. Having tea with members of the Society in the mornings between 10-12 am, I observed how they reproduced national identity and refugee identity. I also recorded two focus groups and an interview in the café.

As usual with the ethnographic method, this study does not aim to recreate a survey of opinions distributed across Bulgaria or Eastern Europe. The goal of the ethnographic method in the research design has been to illuminate ways of forming an opinion about migration in speaking within a natural setting. Situating meaning-and-action-making about migration in a migration space, such as Harmanli, I was able to grasp

new frames that enabled the understanding of the relationship between perceptions of the self, the collective community and migration.

This research project was designed to be qualitative right from the beginning. To complement my ethnographic study, I developed in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in the fieldwork. I will discuss these in further detail below. Qualitative research is necessary to unveil the complexities in decision-making, attitudes formation and identity contestation of intense right-wing populism. This choice of methodology, combining ethnography with semi-structured interviews and focus groups, proposes a particular way of understanding the social world by locating research within the community (Bloor, 2016; Creswell, 2003), enabling a deep understanding of social mobilisations and debates concerning refugees. I aimed to develop ‘interpretative practices’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:4) and gather ‘rich’ data of meanings and experiences that underpin social positions, representation, and social organisation (Silverman, 2016).

Recruitment

I built valuable relationships and acquaintances through ‘snowballing’ and ‘convenience sampling techniques’ (Creswell, 1998). I would ask a research participant to refer me to another person they know, thereby drawing on my interlocutors' network of personal connections. I also developed purposive sampling to maintain diversity, whereby I would specifically request to be acquainted with someone who belongs to a particular social or age group. While in my everyday encounters, I spent time with two Bulgarian Turks – a male and a female and had occasional conversations with a few Bulgarian Romas. I did not manage to capture perspectives of Bulgarian Turks and Bulgarian Roma in recorded interviews. I asked my gatekeepers, rather than my interlocutors, to acquaint me specifically with members of ‘minority groups’. I did not ask my everyday interlocutors or interview informants because I did not want to impose the ethnic identity onto the people with whom I was ‘hanging out’ daily. Wanting to grasp more diverse perspectives in Harmanli, I met a Russian refugee who settled in Harmanli during communism.

With purposive and snowballing sampling techniques, I was able to have access to people I would not otherwise have met. Because discussions about collective identity and migration are political topics, they necessitate a certain rapport. I began the

conversation with a level of trust since people from the local network introduced me or referred me. It was interesting to see that my gatekeepers prided themselves that they could link me with ‘all kinds of people’ in Harmanli. I developed a more diverse and random understanding of Harmanli three months after I had arrived in Harmanli when I was looking for a flat to rent. I walked in different neighbourhoods in Harmanli, intending to find accommodation. I was directed by rumours that there may be an available flat or that someone had in the past accepted tenants, or that someone might know of someone who knew. In this way, I surveyed about 70 people in neighbourhoods in Harmanli on local accommodation and gained short opinions on the topic of migration.

4.3. Border Ethnography and Interviews about Migration

Living in a Border Town

I first arrived in Harmanli on 1 May 2017 for a 10-day preparation trip. I stayed in Dimitrovgrad, a model town planned and built by the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in 1947 as a representative town of communism, named after socialist leader Georgy Dimitrov. In Dimitrovgrad, I could book online a room in a socialist residence hotel on a town's hill. From there, I travelled daily to Harmanli, which was merely 30 minutes away on the train. This was a pleasurable and reflective journey, as I was gazing over the yellow valleys of rapeseed, funded with ‘European money’ for the European market. Typical travellers on the train included: – an older woman going to Plovdiv for a doctor's visit; a female student in Plovdiv returning home for the weekend and a merchant and his family returning from a shopping trip – daily train trips made no sense. The train transportation, facilitated by recently purchased second-hand German trains (the slow trains) or what felt like centuries-old ‘our’ trains (the fast trains), is for some reason not popular in the country. As a non-driver, the aim was also to ‘be like everyone else’ and find accommodation in small Harmanli.

The ethnographic component (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007; Shevchenko, 2009; Philips et al., 2013) revolved around living in Harmanli. The process of settling in the Harmanli community to live there for the period from 3 June 2017 until 29 March 2018 proved demanding. I lived in three accommodations during the fieldwork, which illuminated the difficulties of the process of becoming local. The first one, which I

managed to secure from my preparation trip, was a one-room ex-office space in a building built before the rise of communism. It was supposed to be turned into a flat for me, as per the advice of a housing broker to the owners, who otherwise had too high expectations on the amount they would get for selling the apartment, the broker told me. To make it liveable, the owners had to deliver their old washing machine from Plovdiv, where they had migrated to live. The tiny toilet was makeshift into a bathroom by attaching the tiniest water boiler, which was unlikely to work. The housing broker tried to convince me they would fix this after I had arrived in June. Alas, this never materialised, and the few days without a shower prompted me to search for another place. The process proved very informative regarding the housing situation in Harmanli. Harmanli is a rural town where people do not move around, much like any other small community. The people who were renting were known by the community, making housing brokers somewhat superfluous. The second housing broker I managed to find explained the business, as well as the accommodation and housing conditions. It turned out he was better off than his 'colleagues in Sofia', as he narrated that his colleagues in Sofia were

wondering what work we have here in Harmanli at all. Well, I tell them the work has been just great! I have rented a 200-leva flat for 5000 leva per month; now you tell me if it is not worth it'. [The increase from 200 to 5000 was significant, how was this even possible?] 'Well, because of the refugees. They will pay anything for a place to live (Housing broker, 50s).

I was referred to my second accommodation by a lady cleaning one of the pharmacies in the centre. The house was not far away from the pharmacy and only 15 minutes walk from the flat without sanitation. The owner, who introduced himself as a 'factory director during communism', drove to the four-story house he was subletting and gave me a tour of the one-room flat/ one-room construction on the floor (it had a proper shower and washing machine). I shared a floor/ flat with Beisim. A man in his late 30s, a 'construction worker', who had been living in the room next door for 18 years. He would go home in a nearby village to his wife and young son for the weekend or a Muslim holiday. We were sharing a terrace and a corridor. By way of an entrance, the start of his room was covered with a couple of blankets hanging from above and some clothes hangers standing, making it difficult to guess where the entrance really was. My part of the flat had a door that could be locked, yet the construction did not reach the ceiling. In other words, my flat was separated from the shared corridor by a half wall, and a door with a key, making its construction of comic character. With a bit of effort, one could have

jumped over this wall. An iron door separated the shared corridor from the staircase to three other floors and the house entrance. This door was attached adequately on a wall from ceiling to ground, but for some reason, the door could not lock. Protection was administered by the shop owners renting on the ground floor, who assured that they ‘have the shop open until 8 pm, so nothing would happen. Also, if you have a problem, just give us a shout’. I lived there for a month, making sure I invited friends or family ‘to visit’ until my nerves became too distrustful. Finding accommodation was a rite of passage of becoming local, which on numerous occasions made me question my life choices and the chances of completing the fieldwork. I wondered if ethnographers in Bulgaria also lived with the people they studied or they were simply ‘local’ to begin with.

My third and final accommodation was in a ‘living complex’ in a neighbourhood named ‘Thrace’. I lived on the third floor of a panel, a block of flats, developed during communism not only in Bulgaria but the whole of the ‘socialist world’. The buildings were built not with bricks as houses usually are, but by standardised and manufactured cement blocks (panels), assembled into a cold and brutalist architecture. Kapka Kassabova’s (2008) intimate memoir, *Street without a Name*, reflects life in the ‘living complexes’, areas with erected blocks of flats, where streets in-between are not named, but one’s residence is identifiable by the number of the block. In Harmanli, mine was 16, ‘the police block’, since the socialist regime gave the flats to police personnel. I was well familiar with the type of building and its implicit culture from my childhood in a one-room *garconier* in Sandanski. The flat in Harmanli was also a *garconier*, as per usual – the middle of the three flats on each floor. It was half therapeutic and half painful to think that I grew up with three others in the same-sized flat in which I was living alone during fieldwork. Living alone in Harmanli was odd, even to a landlady, who on a couple of occasions offered the possibility to share the flat with an unknown girl ‘to share costs of living’. The cost was 120 leva per month [£50], excluding bills. I never got my head around the amount of the bills, which were a surprise every month and included having my electricity stopped for delayed payment.

Life with accommodation became more bearable as I felt less of a newcomer with no place to be. The Lidl Store was just a couple of minutes’ walk away. A small corner shop of the sort with plastic tables in front of it was nearby. The Dolphin Bistro made affordable and homemade food, where the working population of Harmanli, as well as the truck drivers who stopped from the nearby highway, would take their lunch break.

The flat-screen TV coloured the atmosphere with chalga songs, overly sexualised pop-folk music, the occasional football game, or a popular ‘Turkish’ TV series.

I would study the ‘public sphere’ by recommendations to the places ‘I should go and visit in Harmanli’. I would go to the Friendship Community Centre, or *chitalishte*, which brings together the cultural activity in the town. New addition built during the left-wing government of Michail Liskov is the modern Cultural Centre. I would often get sent to the History Museum if my interlocutors assumed they were ‘not interesting’. Occasionally I would be advised to visit the Old Market, where I would get cheaper fruit and vegetables, or to lunch restaurants, such as The Dolphin Bistro or the Lamb Shacks, as my interlocutors were making sure I had eaten.

A part of my participant observation of Harmanli was meeting people randomly. I would begin a conversation with a shop assistant, often outside for a cigarette. Alternatively, I started a conversation with a bystander having a typical breakfast of *banitchka s boza* - pastry and a wheat-based drink, eating standing outside the tin-roofed pastry shop or eating standing outside with a slice of pizza (In Bulgarian: *pitsa na partche*). With people I would meet randomly in this way, I would most often share short conversations of about 5-10 minutes. Most often, they would shyly comment, ‘I do not have anything interesting to say’, followed by some very interesting or useful information about migration and refugeehood. It was people I met randomly in this way that suggested a village outside Harmanli or with whom I cross-checked information I had already heard. They would also point me to new potential interlocutors invested in the topic or recognised as ‘people who can tell you something’.

Doing ethnography of the ‘public sphere’ during the winter proved a challenge. Yet, the context of the closed community provided its wisdom for being. In the winter period, this was simply staying in, recuperating. ‘People do not go out in the winter’, emphasised the local librarian, warmly dressed in her hand-knitted pullover.

The place where I used to ‘hang out’ most was a local café and bar called Modero. It was the only café with heating, which instantly made it cosy for longer visits. The bookshelves and books used to decorate the interior made it welcome for people with notebooks, such as myself. The other cafes in town had only a couple of tables indoors, the tables outside covered in a plastic gazebo with heaters hanging from the top corners. Modero was famous for young people – mostly young families and teenagers, who would

come in groups. The girls' groups tended to be smaller, with two-three girls at most and only a few of them. The boys were in larger groups, on average five, sometimes they had to take two tables. They would come to Modero to watch a football game or to 'hang out'. Schoolboys in Harmanli who visited Modero played it rough: wore black or dark colours, often gym tracksuits, which of course were too neat to have been worn at the gym: this expressed rough masculinity, conveying the idea of athletic young males. The waitresses were also young girls, presumably in their early 20s, who still tended to be smiley on occasion, mostly as they were bubbling together behind the bar. Other coffee places – Pizzeria Verona and a 'lefty' coffee place in the centre were of the gazebo variety. They attracted mostly middle-aged white men, going there for their coffee, newspaper, and some political discussion. On occasion, the conversations I could overhear were about refugees. Despite my efforts to blend in these two settings, tips to the waitresses, small coffees, even tea-drinking with regular customers, I would get glances from customers and never a warm welcome by the waitress.

People from the Reception centre or with a 'refugee status' would rarely go to Modero. I saw 'them' in the lefty coffee place and the Pizzeria, which were also closer to the Registration Centre. Waitresses attempted to engage the refugees with some Turkish words, some Russian words. I happened to translate on occasion using English as an intermediary, which the waitress did not know, but the newcomers did. I was more an observer than a participant in cafes. I kept on going whenever possible.

Besides observing life in cafes and public spaces, I also played an active, fully immersed member who was regularly 'hanging out' with several people who gradually became my friends. In contrast to researchers who adopted the more detached observer-as-participant role, I was continuously involved in everyday life in Harmanli. Auntie Venera, Mrs Irina Stavrova, Liubomira, and Berzan became the people who took me to different places in Harmanli and into their lives and symbolised Harmanli. Most of the conversations and stories they told me were not tape-recorded. Instead, we were naturally occurring conversations while spending time together for a coffee, lunch, or a walk. While my partner was visiting me, we went to the barber's, which a Syrian man owned. There we met and befriended Berzan, a young boy of 21 from Syria who had received a Bulgarian passport. He showed us proudly while waiting for my partner's turn in the Hairdresser Saloon with a refugee-owner.

I was taken to Church by my landlady. I saw neighbourhoods in Harmanli toured by housing brokers who were offering flats to rent. I was driven to the hallmarks of Harmanli, such as the White-legged Spring (In Bulgarian: *Izvoryt na Belonogata*), or the monastery, by my interlocutors who realised I had not seen these parts of their hometown. I got invited to events celebrating national holidays, such as the Hanging of Vasil Levski, a national liberation hero. I got an invitation to local festivities such as two dinners evening events. POKI, an abbreviation for ‘poets with guitars’, is a remnant from the emblematic series that originated in Harmanli and is part of Bulgarian National Television. In the last week of the fieldwork, the Women’s Forum in Harmanli, a non-governmental grassroots organisation, held a fundraiser to reconstruct the local church. Participant observation is instrumental as it is a method for studying everyday life in a post-socialist setting and the phenomenon of migration. It allowed me to understand the often-banal reproductions of nationhood which Billig (1995) and Brubaker et al. (2006) discuss.

There is one distinct way in which Harmanli was not ordinary – it houses a Registration-reception centre, managed by the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers (SAR). The State agency for Refugees transformed the football fields inside Harmanli's deserted military barracks in Friendship Neighbourhood into a makeshift camp with green tents in 2012. These tents housed people captured on the border and brought them to Harmanli in police cars. Later, in 2013, the tents transformed into white caravans, and the camp evolved into the present Registration-reception centre. It is still commonly referred to in Harmanli as ‘the camp’, which politicises the building and the institution. I could barely find a person who had something positive to say about the camp, not even staff members from the transformed military barracks. I tried to come close to the Reception centre and the refugee spaces in town. I volunteered in the Refugee reception centre, alongside the separate fieldwork process. It was essential to honour the commitment to the process by which I had been granted permission to be ‘inside’. The condition was that I could be present, but I was to conduct no research. However, I was able to keep a diary as part of the mutual understanding, and perspectives that I developed while inside have inevitably informed thinking about this research.

In early 2018, after more than half the fieldwork had been completed and long after I had initially planned to return, I visited the Thracian Society. It was a café with two large tables which could easily cater for 20 people each. The café was a meeting point for descendants of Thracian refugees, albeit not all descendants came, much to the regret

of the lady managing the café, who knew who the Thracian descendants were who chose not to come. I happened to meet some of them during the fieldwork before that too. The café is open every day except Sunday, between 10 am -12 pm. The visitors I encountered were in their late 50s and above, and mostly men. The lady managing the cafe treated me with care and helped me navigate situations. She also gifted me books published by the Thracian Society Institute, as its mission is to educate about their interpretation of the nation and Thracian refugees. At this place, I was not allowed to treat my participants for tea; on the contrary, I was the one treated. Buying gifts and treats for informants is a critical aspect of the research design because it shapes the power dynamics. Usually, a researcher would buy gifts for her informants to solicit participation in 'her' project. In this instance, however, as a producer of knowledge, I was a part of my informant's project: namely, to advance their cause for recognition. Born and raised in a town bordering North Macedonia, I was also warmly welcomed as having a 'Macedonian' identity. I never corrected this perception, although my lack of situated knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977) on the subject positioned me as a 'learner' or a 'young student who studies abroad'. Many visitors in the cafe had families living abroad, so this was not unfamiliar and proved useful when inquiring about 'common' knowledge. Overall, I had a favourable and easily assimilated identity to fit into the Thracian Association. The 'Macedonian' identity speaks to the Thracian Association members because of the very origins of their 'struggle'. The National Union of Thracian Societies (UTSB), founded at the end of the nineteenth century, was formed of Thracians and Macedonians living in Eastern Rumelia, a province in the Ottoman Empire. However, they perceived themselves as Bulgarian and wanted to unify with the Principality of Bulgaria, carved out of the Ottoman Empire in 1878. The Unification took place in 1885. After World War I, the movement focused its efforts on solving the problems of refugees who had settled in Bulgaria, including help with accommodation, property compensation and so on (Filchev 2007, Ganeva-Raycheva, 2012:32, Vukov, 2015).

It was my choice not to take photographs in fieldwork, or at least as few as possible. The aim was to have a less intrusive identity in people's everyday life. After all, people have the right not to be studied. Furthermore, I felt that taking photos would have compromised my identity, making me appear as an intrusive researcher who aims 'to capture' the people I was studying. While 'out', I would scribble some words in a small pocket notepad, which at the end of the day, I developed into 'diary entries' in Word and

MS Office. I analysed my diary entries with the assistance of NVivo software, together with interviews and transcripts of focus groups.

4.4. Interviewing Nationalists and Others

My empirical research included semi-structured interviews. Overall, I conducted 24 tape-recorded interviews, four unrecorded interviews and four recorded focus groups. The in-depth interviews lasted for approximately 1.0 - 2.5 hours. Four of my interlocutors objected to being tape-recorded for confidentiality purposes. Accepting to interview them and only taking notes helped build rapport with these interviewees in the highly politicised context of the border town. In these cases, I took detailed notes of the interview and agreed that I could make meaning of their contributions to the conversation yet without quoting the informant directly. All interviews were fully transcribed.

The themes and motifs emerged from my participant observation. The themes and interview questions evolved as my understanding progressed. The interviews were loosely organised in themes about life in Harmanli, now and during communism, if my interlocutors were older than 30 years old, about Bulgaria and European membership, migration in general and refugeehood. I would begin all interviews by getting acquainted with my interlocutors and discussing aspects of their life they were entirely comfortable with. I would move on to ask them about their life in Harmanli and how they understood Harmanli within Bulgaria and Europe. In moving to the more political aspect of 'refugees', I tried not to define the people. Instead, I used the Registration-reception centre as a focus for the discussion of attitudes.

The discussions were flexible in structure, and often, I would go along with what my interlocutors wanted to share. Depending on their positions and views, each conversation would focus on different themes of the research. In general, my younger interlocutors would talk more about the lack of opportunities in Harmanli and emigration and less often about refugees and asylum seekers. In comparison, the older interlocutors would emphasise life under communism or family traditions and share more perspectives on living together with people seeking asylum.

I would begin the interviews by introducing myself when I would describe the research interest ‘to understand how people live in Harmanli’ and what ‘they have to say about migration’. I sometimes contrasted the research to the media, which was giving superficial reports on the experiences in the town in an effort to build rapport. I would emphasise that ‘it is a European problem to cope with migration’ and that this requires knowing and considering ‘experiences of the people themselves’. Initially, I described my project as investigating the debates about refugees (In Bulgarian: *Debatite otnosno bejantsite v Harmanli*), following the research design. Later on, however, I started describing it as investigating migration in and outside of Harmanli (In Bulgarian: *Migratsiata v i izvyn Harmanli*). The second introduction, clarifying migration broadly rather than refugeehood, opened more conversations and was closer to the experiences of my informants. Many of my informants related to the question of migration due to family members who had migrated from Harmanli. They felt more comfortable discussing migration (rather than refugees). The reformulation of the research as migration ‘in and outside of Harmanli’ thus included their own experiences of migrating. This broader scope was also different from recent media interest on the border, with which Harmanli has been oversaturated, much like other migrant spaces (Papataxiarchis, 2016a). While various national media channels arrived in Harmanli, it was striking how their focus remained on border patrols, vigilantes and protests. Thinking about ‘migration in and out of Harmanli’ thus opened the debate about long-lasting experiences of migration, the background against which the refugee crisis unfolded.

After a few months in fieldwork, I began to include questions about ‘Thracian refugees’, as this reference kept coming up in conversations when we started talking about refugeehood. Most often, I would be reminded, ‘We also have our refugees here’ (Maria Kirkova, Harmanli town hall official, 2018; Martin, retired in his 70s). Findings from conversations about the importance of Thracian refugees in Harmanli, in turn, took me to the Thracian café, where I would go and ‘hang around’ in the mornings. My participant observation made me aware of how the descendants of refugee families from Thrace (from territories now within the borders of Turkey and Greece) had neutral attitudes towards recently-arrived refugees, as a few had hired refugees. I became curious about the perceptions of refugeehood and nationhood among self-identifying ‘descendant of refugees’. Intersubjectively, I expressed my tentative understanding of the shared experiences of refugeehood, that of Thracian refugees and the present Syrian refugees. In

the view of the immigration in Harmanli since 2013, a clear boundary separated the two types of refugees. They have nothing in common because, according to descendants of Thracian refugees, in the early 1900s, the refugees were ‘us, ours’, while since 2013, ‘we’ do not identify with the newcomers. Initially, I hoped to book a room where I could conduct all interviews for my ease and the privacy of my interlocutors. Yet, I soon realised that this would have put the people I was studying in an exposed and disempowering position as I would have been the person comfortably shaping the setting in which the conversation was to be embedded. The interviews were conducted and tape-recorded most often in the domain of the ‘public sphere’, such as coffee places, park benches, or in the Chitalishte (a cultural centre which hosts dancing and music classes and performances) as per the choice of my interlocutors. One interview took place in the private home of one of my interlocutors.

Sample of Interviewees

The research brings perspectives of people who relate to different groupings. My informants included left-wing leaders, right-wing leaders, social workers, townhall advisers, legal advisers, activists, people belonging to diverse ethnic and migration groupings, vigilantes, local employers, public sector workers and pensioners. I tried talking to people from different social backgrounds. I also struck a balance between men and women. The age group of the informants varies between 23 and 81 years old. Of the 24 interviews, four were with organisers of the protests in Harmanli about the European migration crisis. They are recently politicised, without previous ties to far-right parties. Yet, after the protests, this changed, and they befriended far-right leaders or friends of theirs became symbols of the far-right faction formed in response to the European migration crisis, such as the vigilante Dinko Valev who became known as the ‘migrant hunter’. In our conversations, they positioned themselves on a far-right spectrum, constructing ideas about the needs of the nation. The interview technique was to build rapport rather than challenge the sometimes-offensive perspectives.

With semi-structured interviews, I had a printout of my questions and occasionally glanced at them (to see if I left out something), which my interlocutors would notice with an anxious look. In this context, they did not know what the next question might be in comparison to my more freely ‘naturally occurring’ conversations. I tried to mitigate my

power in recorded interviews by giving an overview of the themes of the discussions before we began. Nonetheless, the interview included fewer fragments of thought, interruptions or referrals frequent in conversations. It was easier to grasp more emotional aspects of perspectives or further hear a personal story in an unrecorded conversation. I couldn't help but notice that my informants felt constrained by my list of questions, tape recorder and the awareness that this was 'an interview'. Nevertheless, I was able to reach a broader sample of people with who otherwise I would not be able to 'hang out'. I was also able to discuss questions on a particular topic in depth.

With a conversational approach, which occurred in daily encounters, I was able to relate to interlocutors on a more equal, everyday level. The conversations would start, in fact, most often with the experiences of daily life, such as cooking, seasonal vegetables, feelings, tiredness, illness, family affairs and the progress of the work. It is in these conversations that I learned the answer to 'what being Bulgarian means'.

4.5. Group Conversations about Migration

Because the aim was to understand how people make meaning in a conversation or debate, I designed focus group discussions as part of the fieldwork in Harmanli. Focus groups are 'discussions between small groups of participants guided by a moderator to obtain information about a particular topic of interest to the researcher' (Blee and Taylor, 2002:107). Focus groups are a tool that helps to understand the process of meaning-making for people who are close friends or belong to a loosely defined grouping.

The focus group discussions (Blee and Taylor, 2002; Gamson, 1992; Guba and Lincoln, 1994:112) gave me additional insight into the individual interviews because the technique illuminates how people formulate collective meaning and solidarity. The process of construction of meaning happens with the use of ideas shared with others on often political or consented topics. They allowed the understanding of how interlocutors constructed the meaning of the political issues of the reception of refugees through conversation and the 'element of interaction' in a group (Gamson, 1992; Morgan, 1996). The rationale for using focus groups was that 'sense-making is produced collectively, in the course of social interactions between people' (Wilkinson, 1998:186). The generic category of focus groups contains some variations.

Table 1: List of Focus Groups

Date	Focus Group Interlocutors	Location
17.11.14	Left-wing party members and townhall council advisers	Lefty Cafe
18.01.23	Business Association Harmanli	Pizzeria Verona
18.03.20	Descendants of Thracian refugees	Thracian Society
18.03.21	Descendants of Thracian refugees	Thracian Society
18.03.23	Primary school teachers	Public School

The focus groups differed in size, from three to five, and setting the conversation – the work or social spaces of the respective group. The degree of familiarity in a group was similar. All focus groups were between colleagues, members of the same party, or members of the same Society. I conducted focus groups with teachers in a village school outside Harmanli after they finished a working day, with the Business Association of Harmanli, which took place at one of their meetings in Pizzeria Verona before they began their regular discussion and dining session. I held another focus group with members of the left-wing party BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party), in the lefty cafe, after a council meeting in the municipality. I also held a focus group with descendants of Thracian refugees in the open hours of the cafe of the Thracian Association.

The ways I organised the focus groups reflect my approach to the construction of collective meaning. I chose peer group conversations among naturally occurring groupings rather than strangers. In the research design, I planned to book a venue, have a whiteboard, papers and pencils, a moderator together with me interviewing and a pre-designed list of group members. I realised this would not materialise a few months into fieldwork. I developed the idea of my planned focus group from a workshop designed and delivered by Robert Chambers at the Institute for Development Studies, applied in communities in rural India. I had contemplated whether to use money as an incentive to bring people together. While I had begun to make a modest list of potential participants, I soon realised that this would have been an unreliable approach combined with my ten-

month participant observation. It was changing my identity as a participant too much in the field. I did not want to be known as the ‘cash-giving lady from abroad’, nor to introduce cash payments amongst my already existing and constructive relationships. Leaving out the cash incentive meant that I could not have control over the number of people or the location of the group discussions. This loose organisation and flexibility meant that the number of participants in each focus group varied. Indeed, it would happen that a participant would walk in or out of the group discussion as they saw fit, according to their daily needs. I was thankful for these group discussions I could record. I differentiate the focus group discussions from ethnographic group discussions based on the possibility to tape-record and analyse the discursive interaction in depth. The successful focus groups were those I stumbled upon ‘naturally’ via people who I met after arriving, linking to my becoming an incidental member of group discussions.

My involvement, both as an interviewer and moderator, was minimal. I would usually begin with a question to start the discussion and occasionally answer a question. The length of the recorded discussions is between 25 min and 1 hour. The discussions covered only a few topics, and they were also different in each group discussion. Therefore, I have not analysed the group discussions in comparative terms. Instead, I used frame analysis to understand what ideas and concepts brought together the meaning-making, the agreement, and the solidarity within a group.

Even though the initial research design included several focus groups with people with different self-identifications, I encountered a problem with the recruitment in the town. I arrived in 2017 when the understanding ‘refugee wave’ was already constructed, and Harmanlians had generally felt sensitive to media exposure. I found paranoia where I was expecting to find cooperation; I found resistance where I was expecting to find a greeting, and where I thought I found an informant, I would often find gossip.

4.6. Ethical Dilemmas

One of the particularities of my methodology was the engagement with diversity, people who may identify with different groupings (Brubaker, 2002). One day, I could have lunch with a socialist headmaster, the other has coffee with an informant working inside the Reception centre, then randomly ‘bump into’ one of the organisers of the protests the

European migration crisis. While this ensured a rich and diverse data set, it also meant that I had to balance ethics towards all research interactions. I followed ESRC ethical guidelines to ensure the equal, autonomous, and benevolent treatment of people in the process of gathering data and the research project overall. This approach (Wiles *et al.*, 2008) ensures working with people who hold different power or political positions and relating to them with the same principles. Of course, this was not a straightforward task in a highly politicised topic. It meant that I had to be patient and respectful of people's views even if I disagreed with them.

Anonymity was sometimes challenged during the fieldwork phase of the research, as people knew one another. It would happen that I would be with an interlocutor who would share what they learned about my research from a previous interlocutor. The names of my interlocutors have been changed in this thesis to protect their anonymity. Only when they requested to record their real names have I done so. The nature of the focus groups cannot grant full confidentiality as the researcher does not have control over the contributors after the focus groups (Smith, 1995). Having focus groups with already existing social groups, rather than selected by the interviewer, has meant that the interlocutors already knew each other, the topics for discussion, and each other's political positions. Also, before the group discussion, along with my explanation of the research, I informed them that they could participate only when they felt comfortable.

The design of the research had ethical implications: Were 'refugees' going to be included in the research? Since the Reception Centre is an integral part of the life of Harmanli, as are asylum seekers and refugees, it was only logical to design interview questions for people in the camp. Immigration belonged to the public sphere (Habermas, 1992) I was studying. Yet the participation of a vulnerable group of people, from the perspective of university regulations and ethics committees, was not necessary to answer the research questions. Concerns with re-traumatisation of the person if they participate in research or problems with the exclusion of the perspective from a debate is not new (Jackobsen and Landu, 2003).

To address the dilemma of whether to interview people in the camp, I planned to approach people who either had (or had applied for) 'refugee status'. Specifically, I sought to speak with people who were 'established' in Harmanli rather than people in the Reception centre, where I volunteered. While people seeking refuge are a vulnerable

group of people fleeing war or conflict, they are also settling in the town, living local lives. I approached refugees I encountered in fieldwork as people who were residing in the country and had gone through the process of establishing a position in society. I adopted unstructured interviews with my interlocutors from a migrant background, opening the space for them to choose what they wanted to discuss. After all, ‘national culture’ includes migration. Migrants constitute a ‘vulnerable’ group, yet that group is internally diverse. Also, individuals are at different stages of their settling process, and the people I interviewed were in the process of settling in the country and happy to offer their perspectives.

4.7. Analysing Themes and Perspectives

The following section outlines the tools I used to analyse the qualitative data I collected from ethnography, interviews and focus groups, which was frame analysis. I also discuss news on the European migration crisis in Bulgaria by considering online news outlets in Bulgaria and internationally, to understand broader public discourses. The research has investigated how people of a broad spectrum of social and political backgrounds engage with discourses on migration, post-socialism and nationalism in Bulgaria and how they change or mobilise them. In effect, my research involved a systematic examination of public discourses. There were 28 transcripts in the Bulgarian language from my interviews and focus groups in Harmanli. The transcripts were not translated in English but remained in Bulgarian to stay closer to the meaning conveyed by my interlocutors. I have only translated the extracts used in this thesis. I have used anglicised forms for names of geographical places and people. All translations of my informants’ words or quotes from literature in Bulgarian are mine.

Collective Action Frames

My primary analytical reference has been frame analysis as developed by Robert Gamson (1992) in his book *Talking Politics*, which he developed to study the ways that ‘ordinary people’ make sense of political and contested topics in Boston, USA. Frame analysis is a

type of discourse analysis used to study interactions and communicative acts (Goffman, 1974, 1981; Gamson, 1992; Creed, Langstraat & Scully, 2002). It was applied to analyse the individual and focus group discussions. Within the breadth of differences of frame methods, two broad distinctions can be identified. These relate to the understanding of what a frame is, but more importantly, to the understanding of social agency. Pan and Kosicki outline that frames are understood by frame scholars mainly through two main paradigms: frames as 'schema', 'internal structures of the mind' or frames as 'devices of political discourse'. These two are distinctly interpretations of what a frame is and how it should be studied. The first interpretation, mainly raised by cognitive psychology, suggests that frames are a part of the way all people think and condense knowledge. They would acknowledge that the cognitive process is not purely a work of 'mind' but is also embedded in culture, in the nation, in ideas. The other interpretation- frames as devices of political discourse - suggests the process of using frames for political purposes, such as easily in newspaper titles. Bednarek and Caple (2012) speak about the 'value added' and the techniques used to make newspapers more 'newsworthy' (e.g. using negativity, novelty, superlativeness, etc. see their Table 1 on p.104).

These two approaches exemplify that frames could be understood and utilised in somewhat different ways. While the cognitive approach suggests the applicability of frames to all, the discursive approach proposes that not all have access to frame production, and rather most are subjected to frames through the media or political parties. Therefore, while some argue that frames are a naturalised part of human behaviour and interaction and indeed appear as unconscious or as conditioned by the cultural norms to the person, others argue that they are a constructed tool and part of a presentation of identity. The distinction of the two approaches could be exemplified further in the distinction between 'frame' and 'framing' analysis. While a frame (noun) represents an object, framing (verb) highlights the agency of people to create, mobilise, assemble frames. Goffman himself used both understandings to frame. Social movement scholars, in general, tend to use the framing analysis method as a device for political discourse.

These differences ultimately affect the epistemological position of the researcher, the understanding of ontology and 'the unit of analysis' (Benford, 1997:413), and the understanding of human agency. The second approach, what Pan and Kosicki refer to as 'sociological', assumes the focus of analysis, and ultimately the point of social construction, to take place in points of social interactions through the necessitated need

to narrate one Self and negotiate it within a group of people. In that sense, 'reality' is constructed precisely in this interaction. What is understood to be the case, the problem, the truth, comes out of a negotiation and contestation. This, however, does not assume an ontology of antagonisms (Laclau, 2005) between necessarily opposing realities but suggests that what is understood to be reality (of injustice, of crisis, etc.) is part of talking (or not talking) collectively. Talking and acting collectively has been employed in the context of protests and social movements, including also 'bystanders', 'antagonists', 'protagonists', 'media' and different groups which a researcher may identify. In the constructivist tradition, to which frame analysis belongs, new frames can at any time become another 'unit of analysis'.

Frame analysis has been applied in the study of social movements as it illuminates what holds diverse elements together what draws solidarities (Creed, Langstraat & Scully, 2002:37). Social movements scholars, such as William Gamson, Robert Bedford, and David Snow, have developed the notion of collective action frames for the study of dynamic and collective social relationships where people make collective meaning of solidarity. Collective action frames are a tool for understanding the underlying motivation for people to formulate, express and negotiate a position on political issues or events (Snow and Benford, 1992; Gamson, 1992; Johnson and Noaks, 2005). A frame is 'collective, and a property of the group' as the contributors agree, aim to develop the meaning, invoke memories and different sources of knowledge to write the script of the conversation (Gamson, 1992: 1-4).

Since I studied protesters in Harmanli as well as newly organised volunteering communities formed as a response to the European migration crisis, framing analysis and collective action frames is highly relevant. It was useful to study the solidarity and meaning-making of conversations with descendants of the Thracian Society, specifically those who belonged to the Union of Thracian Societies of Bulgaria. Frame analysis of collective meaning-making allows for the possibility to understand the implicit ideas which organise the conversation in the process of debating political questions (Gamson, 1992:3). This tool enabled me to answer the research question on what discourses justify social mobilisations towards immigration in border regions at the EU external border.

The data on attitudes presented in this chapter is analysed via 'frames'. The concept of the frame was first used by anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1922), who

introduced the idea that frames establish ‘constellations’ or ‘systems of relationships’ between messages. Based on this, the sociologist Erving Goffman (1974) showed how to analyse an event that may produce different frames of reference when various subjects apprehend the same situation. For Goffman, frames organise experience. In his books *Frame Analysis* (1974) and *Forms of Talk* (1981), Goffman argues that meaning is codified in particular ways that are relevant to particular personal and cultural experiences. Frames are these things that condense meaning and are also invoked in socialising or being part of a social context. Goffman used the term frame in both ways – as schemata, codes, scrip on the one hand, and as a device or communication tool on the other and did not differentiate between the two. Framing analysis has since been developed by psychologists and sociologists, lending the concept of the frame to both psychological and sociological interpretations (see Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 56-57). Frames can function as both ‘internal structures of the mind’ and ‘devices embedded in political discourse’ (Kinder & Sanders, 1990: 74 cited in Pan and Kosicki, 1993:57). These two approaches suggest that frames could be understood and utilised in somewhat different ways. While the cognitive approach suggests the applicability of frames to everyone, the discursive approach suggests that not everyone has the power to frame and may instead be subjected to frames through media and political mediums. Frames are a naturalised part of human behaviour and interaction and indeed appear as unconscious or as conditioned by the cultural norms to the person, while they are a constructed tool by those who have the power to frame. The distinction of the two approaches could be exemplified further in two notions of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’ analysis. While a frame (noun) represents an object, framing (verb) highlights the agency of people to create, mobilise, assemble frames. Goffman himself used both understandings to frame. The two conceptualisations of the frame – as a schema and as a political device – however, do not need to be separated, as Pan and Kosicki (1993) argue. Framing analysis is a constructivist approach that helps examine public discourse, which this thesis is concerned with.

Social movement scholars have actively engaged with the concept of the frame, and further developed its analytical value. Snow and Benford (1992: 137) see a frame as an ‘interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’’. The interpretative schema, the frame, is created by and sustained by a collectivity of actors. Frames, then, do not simply represent the world ‘out there’, but are deployed for the purposes of collective advocacy, mobilization, or public policy (Benford and Snow,

2000:614; Creed, Lanstraat, and Scully, 2002:37; Kluknavská, 2014). Protesters, then, are agents who have the power to create frames for the purpose of political mobilizations. The discursive devices they mobilise then can resonate (or not) with the general public if the prognosis that frames make are perceived as ‘real’ indicators (Benford and Snow, 2000:614). As Benson and Snow (2000) contend, collective action frames have three main functions: they are prognostic, diagnostic and prescriptive.

The verb ‘framing’, as Benford and Snow (2000:614) contend, ‘denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction’. A key tenet of this analysis is that an ontological position (be it of structural arrangements, unanticipated events, or existing ideologies) does not straightforwardly produce social movements. Following social movement scholars, the collective action of anti-asylum, pro-asylum activists and descendants of Thracian refugees are ‘signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning’ (Benford and Snow, 2000:613). In other words, frame theory emphasises the intentional ways in which movement activists seek to construct their self-presentations to draw support from others. Pro-asylum, anti-asylum, and refugee descendants’ framing of issues in protests, conversations, news interviews may be gathered.

Frame analysis is particularly useful for several reasons. Firstly, it ‘simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action’ (Snow and Benford, 1988:137). Secondly, it conceptualises the spontaneity and social embeddedness in the formation of collective meaning. Thirdly, new interpretative processes of the social reality, the so-called ‘reframing acts’, can be identified, calling attention to changing identity, agency, and notions of injustice (Johnson and Noaks, 2005:3-6). Finally, the framing analysis was relevant in the context of researching everyday nationalism as. Frame analysis emphasises the intentional ways movement activists construct their self-presentations to draw support in social movements. I relied on Nvivo software, which facilitated the formation of themes (‘nodes’) across the interviews and focuses groups transcripts and fieldwork notes.

I borrow the concept of collective action frames from social movement studies to understand discourses and mobilisations against asylum (Chapter 5), for asylum (Chapter 6), and by the descendants of Thracian refugees (Chapter 7). Collective action frames facilitate knowing what unifies or ‘frames’ each of these publics. In other words, frame

theory emphasises the intentional ways movement activists seek to construct their self-presentation to draw support from others. Thus, the vigilantes' and protestors' framing of issues in protests, conversations, and news interviews were gathered and analysed using framing analysis (see Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, I examine collective action frames of volunteers and helpers, therefore offering a comprehensive analysis of the two distinct and contesting 'framers' of the EU migration crisis: vigilantes and volunteers. In Chapter 7, I explore the Union of Thracian Associations as a remnant from the Thracian national liberation movement in Bulgaria (see Ivanova, 2011). I explore how the Bulgarians who fled Asia Minor and their descendants frame the refugee identity as a strategy to cope with the effects of the trauma of forced displacement (see James, 2011 for similar analysis on the formation of Greek refugee identity). I illustrate how descendants of Thracian refugees have sustained the frames of their refugee heritage in the face of newcomers since 2013 to justify the collective lack of empathy and care. Chapter 8 applies collective action frames to the discourses of people who did not take part in any protests in Harmanli. The bystanders' role in the formation of discourses and action repertoires is analysed as particular for the post-communist migratory context. I conceptualise the bystanders as 'the left behind' from emigration. These are people who have not been to the refugee camp and do not have particular views on refugees in Harmanli but could be seen as a collective following their interpretation of the post-socialist context.

Media and Public Discourses

In addition to the fieldwork, public discourses (including online media policy documents about 'refugees') were included in the analysis to complement my fieldwork research. These were not included as part of the data analysis. Rather they had been implicitly drawn upon in understanding the context the research was focusing on. The research investigated people's attitudes towards immigration. In effect, a systematic examination of public discourses fell out of the investigating focus of the research.

As the research on the evolving 'European migration crisis' is now gradually developing, news outlets had a crucial role in constructing the image of the 'Other' as well as of the European or Bulgarian 'us'. I followed news published online in Bulgaria on the platforms of Novinite, bTV, Bulgarian National Television (BNT), and Sakar News. The first three platforms (Novinite, bTV, and BNT) cover general news in the

country and have less overall coverage on ‘refugees’ than Sakar News. Sakar News is a local newspaper and online news platform published by journalists Ivan Atanasov and Milena Miteva. The news agency covers regional news for the communities in Sakar Mountain. As such, its depiction of ‘refugees’ in Harmanli and their reception by Harmanlians was greater than the nationwide platforms. There are overall ten pages, each with ten individual stories under the label ‘refugees’ (in April 2021). It is interesting to note that under the same label ‘refugees’, which has the function to collect all material on the topic, the news cover newcomers since 2013 and the locals in Harmanli who have refugee background, namely the descendants of Thracian refugees. I have read all the news published by Sakar News on the topic ‘refugees’ and often referred to the accounts in conversations with my interlocutors.

I have also consulted international news written in English The Guardian, British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC), Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle (DW) because they have reported on the refugee crisis in Harmanli. The media analysis was possible with the search terms ‘refugee’, ‘migration crisis’, ‘refugee crisis’ and ‘Bulgaria’. While not collected systematically, along my preparation for research and after, I have been able to retrieve and organise the news articles from international media in a Google search, using Boolean connectors, such as ‘refugees’ AND ‘Bulgaria’ AND ‘The Guardian’. The Guardian has eight publications on the topic, BBC – 11, Al Jazeera – 7, and DW – 24 publications on April 2021. As the number of articles about the refugee reception in Bulgaria in these outlets is limited, I have been able to compare them with media news from Harmanli and discourse analysis of public discussions. Drawn on international news outlets, I mapped the direction of influence of attitudes – from the international towards the local/national or vice versa.

Most often, we think that ‘the media’ constructs a discourse that then penetrates society. On the contrary, I discovered that, because of the proximity to the border and the Registration centre, Harmanlians had considerable power in shaping nationwide and international media discourses. I followed media coverage on immigration both before leaving for fieldwork and after completing the fieldwork.

4.8. Distance as a Tool for Building Rapport

The research took place in a highly politicised context. The context of a ‘crisis’ had coloured the experiences of the border town, bringing Harmanli into the focus of national and international news since 2013. The sharp polarization in the media sphere of pro-and anti- movements further politicised Harmanli’s public sphere. This differentiation into two groups is only artificial as there is a multitude of perspectives.

The crucial importance of the relationship between the researcher and ‘informants’ (in interviews) and ‘interlocutors’ (in ethnography) has been long addressed. When preparing for the fieldwork, I planned to draw on similarities with the locals to build rapport. After all, this was a familiar setting for me, having grown up in a southern Bulgarian border town myself. Thus, it was by surprise I encountered a polarised and politicised context. Indeed, naively perhaps, I had assumed that people would be keen to share their own experience and to be heard. My interlocutors expressed concern about how they will be portrayed in the thesis. Some feared they might sound racist, while others feared they might sound too inviting of the refugee-Other. As Harmanli had become a media attraction, similar to other ‘hotspots’, locals had appeared on news reports and felt misrepresented by the media where they initially entrusted their perspectives.

I employed distance in various ways. In the field, I had to prove in different ways I was not engaged with all the actors in the politics of care for refugees. This was mostly the case for people leading the anti-asylum protests, who sometimes perceived volunteers as traitors or as against the nation. Of course, this was a matter of trust and rapport. Since I was interviewing people from the two movements, I had to be extra careful. I interviewed members of the more anti-asylum movement first. One of my most valuable anti-asylum informants, I interviewed outside of Harmanli.

‘Emigrant’ was my identity in the town, which, despite my efforts, I hardly was able to overcome. The fact that I had left the country to study some ten years ago was one of the conversation starters with locals. This was a familiar reality, allowing them to tell me about relatives of theirs who had left or that they themselves had lived abroad. Regardless of the country, ‘abroad’ (In Bulgarian: *chujbina*) had become a familiar experience infused with emotions that quickly shaped bonds amongst strangers on the street. One way to connect with locals and recruit informants for my focus groups and interviews was by drawing on my identity as a student in the UK. My identity was quickly

perceived as ‘working abroad’ or ‘studying abroad’ and, most importantly, performing this in English. For most of my informants, English was neither a medium of communication nor a language they had studied at all (instead, it was Russian or French). This meant that the interviewer working as a researcher abroad, and writing in English, was unlikely to return and had an impact (read negatively) on their lives. At least not in the same way the media presence in Harmanli had on people's everyday lives. My identity as an ‘other’ shaped me as relatively apolitical or at least without a scope to further politicise migration in Harmanli. Distance, I found, was a tool for building rapport, which I started employing with my interlocutors. By writing in English, the work and my representation of them was less of a threat to my interlocutors. I also relied on a distance away from the field. On a few occasions, I left the fieldwork and went to my hometown or abroad. I adopted this strategy to take care of myself. Yet, it also added to my *laissez-faire* approach within the community over ten months. It contributed to the identity I allowed my interlocutors to construct of me - as ‘an unmarried young woman’ who was travelling ‘back home’.

4.9. Conclusion

In choosing a social constructivist approach to the study of perceptions of topics such as migration, post-socialism and nationalism, this research emphasises the need to understand discourses situated in the context and in conversations. While the dominant approach to the study of public attitudes about immigration is to ‘gather’ evidence for these attitudes via quantitative survey research, this thesis is based on qualitative interpretations of values and beliefs concerning immigration drawn from interviews and from my participant observation in everyday life in Harmanli. Using qualitative research has allowed for a deeper understanding of processes involved in making meaning of new events in everyday life. The data will be presented in the following three empirical chapters (Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) with an analysis offered in Chapter 8.

Chapter 5. Protestors, Vigilantes, and Refugee Hunters

Anti-asylum actions documented in this chapter include protest rallies, border vigilance, everyday bordering, and refugee hunting. While anti-immigration responses are key for far-right politics across Europe, few political parties have been held responsible. A notable exception is the Greek far-right Golden Dawn political party. Known for its violence against migrants (Karamanidou 2016), the political party was prosecuted in 2020 and found guilty of being a criminal organisation under the guise of a political party (Malkopoulou 2022). The prosecution of Golden Dawn leadership was delivered after their involvement in the murder of a Palestinian musician. Sadly, it took the death of a man to question and prosecute far-right violence.

This chapter analyses narratives that justify anti-asylum protests in a border EU region. I am interested in exploring what justifies anti-asylum violence and far-right aggression at large. I explore the framing of the migration crisis from the perspective of border vigilantes and how it resonates with the broader society. Vigilante groups, which led five of the seven protests (2013-2016) in Harmanli, emerged in the context of 'the migration crisis', with new practices of border vigilance, including these protests. Vigilance in southern Bulgaria includes civilian patrols on the Bulgarian-Turkish border, who 'hunt' refugees who cross the mountainous border. In addition to 'being watchful' on the external border, the vigilantes I interviewed also conducted practices that they and I consider public investigations of people seeking asylum. Finally, vigilance has shaped protest rallies demanding public information on state immigration policy. The protest rallies against refugees were entangled with border vigilance, the protection of the national and external European border.

While aware of the history of racism and fascism, anti-asylum activists in Bulgaria claim to stand clear of the accusation of being racist. All of my interlocutors involved in the anti-asylum agency ensured to insert the claim 'I am not racist, but...[insert a racist slur]'. The first part of the claim, 'I am not a racist', acts as a shield to allow racist views to be inserted while claiming anti-racism. The characteristic of racism and fascism is that violence varies in different historical periods. Judging from the past, it takes years or centuries before the discourses and the practices that accompany them become socially

unacceptable. At present, in Europe, the figure of the immigrant is a foe not only in far-right discourses but also in the mainstream. Asylum seekers live in tents, while children receive little or no education and have no psychological support. If not in tents, they live in camps designed to detain them. Border regions become hotspots as lifesaving missions in seas are reduced. At the same time, volunteers who help are criminalised as traffickers, where application procedures are prolonged, regularly often denied due to poor interpreting delivered by untrained staff, and deported to unsafe countries where they risked their lives to flee. In the background of this, Islamophobia and racism inhabit many local social relations. How is all of this possible?

I cannot suggest I have the answer. However, I bring forth the argument that the frame of care is key to the anti-asylum discourse and practices. While anti-asylum discourse has been analysed through the concepts of Islamophobia, racism, and violence, I agree that care is a frame that offers new insights into the persistence of the anti-asylum rhetoric. What has made anti-asylum rhetoric so generally widespread, I suggest, is the appeal to care. Drawing on a discourse of care, the far-right in general and anti-asylum protesters particularly appeal to the general public, such as the local townspeople in Harmanli, which importantly let all the Islamophobia, racism, and violence go undetected and unchecked. Care for the locals, care for tradition, care for the tourists, care for our women are all variations of the frame of care accompanying anti-asylum violence (verbal and physical). Rather than a universal or intrinsically feminine notion, care is political. In the name of care, violence becomes justified. This chapter, therefore, problematises the idea of care and its assumed 'do-good' qualities.

I argue that those who take individual and collective action to enact their opposition to new arrivals have a powerful discursive tool that allows them to disseminate anti-asylum aggression or, at best, neglect. The discourse of care, I suggest, is intrinsic to anti-asylum action repertoires. In this chapter, I illustrate how a discourse of care for the Bulgarian nation is employed to justify civilian border patrols (Section 5.3.) and care for the local community justified the lockdown of the refugee camp (Section 5.4). I document how care for the local spaces, for the parks, for the young Bulgarian women, for the mothers, for the health of the locals is key to anti-asylum actions. This care towards the locals is rarely material; it is political. I argue that politics of care is a tool for anti-immigration practices and discourses. A feminised notion of care for the community is appropriated, which smoke-screens the anti-asylum aggression. These politics of care

enable the resonance of anti-asylum aggression even amongst people who do not belong to far-right groups. In Chapter 8, I document how care for the post-communist experiences of lack and emptiness (missing friends, poor pensioners, depopulation, lack of prospects) justify the neglect of refugee struggles in Bulgaria.

Section 5.6., *Collective Action Frames Over Time*, explores how frames change with new developments - policies and events that invent the EU migration crisis. This section illustrates attitudes as frames shift rather than as static ideas. I highlight four formative events (in four subsections) related to changes in attitudes towards migration. The events are (1) the construction of the camp in Harmanli, (2) the expansion of the tent camp into a state-managed Registration Reception Centre, (3) the lockdown of the Centre due to public pressure, tightly followed by (4) migrant activism framed as 'the riot'. The chapter examines the temporality of opinions, grasping how attitudes are temporality constructed. It alludes to the changes of the collective action frames over time by considering frame alignment and competition. The temporality of opinions highlights the process of shaping and re-shaping collective ideas and critical developments, suggesting possibilities to change nationalistic views on immigration. Collective action frames can change across time in light of 'critical developments' or other events, which shows that people's ideas and attitudes are changeable. The conclusion that people's interpretations of injustice are temporal suggests possible actions to address the European migration crisis.

5.1. Identifying Vigilantes

The identity of 'the refugee hunter', 'the protestor' and the 'vigilant' is a new phenomenon. The roles of 'ordinary' men and women, 'active citizens' becoming vigilantes and the practical and discursive construction of the frame of 'hunting refugees'. As this thesis is concerned with identifying diverse responses to immigration, anti-asylum protesters emerged as a political and social group even before undertaking my fieldwork via media coverage since 2013 of their activities and repertoires. During my fieldwork, Auntie Venera introduced me to the organisers of the five anti-refugee protests in Harmanli, which took place between 2013-2016. I learnt about the protests via online media such as the local newspaper Sakar News (28 February 2015; 2 October 2016; 9 October 2016) and BG NES (20 November 2016).

I was able to have access to vigilantes, people who I would not otherwise have been able to meet. Because discussions about collective identity and immigration are often highly political, they necessitate a certain rapport. I was able to begin the conversation with a level of trust, which my friendship with my gatekeeper offered. In addition to this rapport made possible with participant-observation, unexpected circumstances also helped identify vigilantes in Harmanli. Looking for accommodation in the small border community proved a challenge until a newspaper advertisement took me to a landlord named Svilen, who told me he goes ‘hunting’ with Dinko Valev. The latter came to be a ‘national hero’ for his acts of ‘hunting refugees’. This chapter draws on four interviews with vigilantes in Harmanli in 2017-2018. Three of the interviewed were heterosexual women in their 30s and 40s and heterosexual man, 29 years old. Three of the interviews were recorded, one of which lasted overall four hours over two different days, and one took the form of an unrecorded conversation. In my ethnography in Harmanli, I happened to meet some of them in the town or partake in meetings where one was present. Some insight into vigilantism is also drawn from the Initiative Committee for Harmanli, a ‘voluntary’ organisation developed by two of my interlocutors, to ‘deal with the problems of illegal immigration’ (Slaveya, interviewed by Karbovski, 2016). The Initiative Committee has a social media presence, which allowed me to explore the ideas which are discussed, and the practices initiated. The platform facilitated the recruitment of the anti-refugee protests in Harmanli, which makes it relevant in identifying the vigilante agency.

In this section, I consider who the vigilantes are, specifically offering a profile of the people I interviewed. Vigilantes are self-proclaimed ‘active citizens’ who employ state responsibilities such as law enforcement when they suspect wrongdoings. The practise raises questions of power, democracy, racism, practices of ‘community justice’, and hate crimes. Vigilantes tend to belong to groups rather than be independent individuals. Action repertoires emerged from my ‘close reading’ of all the transcripts on the first stage of coding (Charmaz, 2003) with various verbs – hunting, taking people to the border, searching, watching, organizing a protest, collecting signatures, demanding information. The complex set of issues has been too often simplified as not liking refugees; when I suggest, there have been action repertoires associated with the injustices of the policy developments of the EU reception crisis.

Slaveya identified herself as a nationalist. She is 39 and has a university degree; she is a mother, married, and lived in Harmanli all her life. I met her in early 2018, and she was working in 'state administration'. She is amongst the leaders of the Initiative Committee for Harmanli, which she established in direct response to Bulgaria's 'illegal immigrants.' The Initiative Committee also has a Facebook group with nearly 3000 'followers' in March 2021. The discussions include 'findings' concerning migration in Harmanli, which the Initiative Committee posts. They 'expose' information and discoveries about refugees, Islam, and the Registration Reception Centre. There is a coherence between Slaveya's framing of migration and the discussions in the 3000-people group. In addition to her immediate family and active political life, Slaveya's life narratives included her family of 'about 20 and more people', including a parent, all of whom live and work abroad. She constructs her experience as 'being left behind to support the nation' shared by Bulgarians who did not emigrate after the fall of socialism. Several of the discussion in the Initiative Committee social media discuss 'Bulgarian abroad', as those who left behind Mother Bulgaria. Nikolina was also a member of the Initiative Committee, married, and mother. I interviewed Nikolina twice for about two hours each time. She protests 'illegal immigration' and has undertaken independent investigative missions of asylum seekers. Her 'initiatives' involves the state, particularly State Agency for National Security (SANS), which develops in an ambivalent way. Svilen is 29, married, father of two young children in kindergarten. He described himself as a businessman. I met him as he was subletting a room in Harmanli, and he agreed to be interviewed. He is a friend of Dinko Valev, with whom they go together 'hunting.' Dinko Valev is in his 30s, describes himself as a businessman, trading spare parts for busses. He lives near Harmanli in Yambol who gained national and international prominence since 2013, as a man 'hunting refugees' on the Bulgarian- Turkish border. The BBC declared that in Bulgaria, he was a 'national celebrity' and a 'superhero' (Brunwasser, 2016). His siblings works abroad, in a European country. Yordanka is an intellectual, in her 40s, a mother, married. She was held several positions in local government and cultural life. Her private 'research' mission into the bare life of asylum seekers in the Registration Reception Centre in Harmanli led to changes in state policy on immigration, namely the lockdown of the camp in November 2016. I have drawn on her media interviews and video recordings of her private 'research'.

While none of my interlocutors self-identified as a ‘vigilante’, they framed themselves as ‘concerned’ and as ‘taking things in their hands’. They were mainly motivated by the need to ‘find what is going on’, therefore key elements of their discourse included things such as not having information, not knowing, the need for information, conducting searches for information, demanding explanations. In this discourse, I could identify two main figures – that of the ‘illegal immigrant’ and of the ‘absentee state’, which are elaborated in detail below. It was precisely these two frames that justified vigilant agency, narratives, and identity. While vigilantism has a history in many countries across Europe and North America, the ‘migration crisis’ brought out a new surge in vigilantism (Bjørge & Mareš, 2019), drawing precisely on such frames of crisis, illegality, and absent state to develop new policing tactics.

In the following sections, I first discuss the frame of the ‘illegal immigrant’ who is threatening, followed by the ‘absentee state’ (read as lack of governance). Subsequently, I study the vigilante agency this has justified, such as border patrols, protests, and research missions. Finally, I will explore wider public discourses, pointing to the resonance of vigilantism with Harmanlians, Bulgarians and Europeans more broadly. While these frames have resonated with the wider public, what marks a vigilant identity is the use of the frames to justify border patrols, anti-asylum protests, and individual attacks on people perceived as refugees and volunteers involved in caring for them.

5.2. The Frame of ‘Illegal Refugees’

Social relations in border regions of Europe were reshaped through the emergence of the frame ‘illegal immigration’ since 2013. This frame emphasises illegality, criminality, and radicalisation of asylum-seeking. In this section, I discuss what the frame includes and its relationship with vigilantism. I argue that the frame of ‘illegal immigration’ (and its derivatives) is critical in justifying the existence of vigilantism. This frame is intricately related to politics of care, i.e. caring enough to protect the community from the perceived dangers of immigration.

The frame constructs a problem with legality caused by migration and a problem by the lack of government response. It imagines a legitimate need to seek legality, justice and access to information about immigration. The scope of the frame is broad and ties together a set of ideas. ‘Illegal immigrants’ frame shapes expectations of citizenship, the

fantasy of the good immigrant, and policing of 'immigrant' identities and behaviours. How they behave in the European public spaces, the 'proper' way to be, reinforces ethno-nationalist boundaries, where immigration does not belong. Illegality tests the claims to refugee status, the level of vulnerability (Laugier, 2016), the suffering, which justifies one to make claims to refugeehood. Such questions, I suggest, are guiding border vigilance and constructing the figure of the 'illegal immigrant', trying to cross the border or while in the camp to destroy. This frame itself is not enough to motivate vigilant repertoires, which are made possible by the politics of care towards the community from the so constructed 'illegal immigrant'.

The 'illegal immigrant' frame is a part of anti-immigrant campaigns branding refugees as 'illegal'—the act of seeking asylum 'not done properly' as breaking the law, as a crime. People seeking refuge are thus constructed as criminals. The lack of internationally organised safe passage and a way to reach a safe destination in an organized fashion is missing, and a fertile ground fostered the emergence of human traffickers. Such people take the task of transporting people for profit. People are often transported to the land border checkpoints. However, there were cases in which the border police sent such groups back to Turkey. Others were simply left outside of the border, with instances of deaths (Hristova et al., 2014). The frame of 'illegal refugee' places the responsibility (or rather blame) for the lack of safe passage to the people seeking asylum. Arriving in Bulgaria through human traffickers then adds to the construction of illegality and the associated danger of refugees. They are constructing refugees as illegal justifies power relations of keeping the refugee-Other 'out'.

Another aspect of the illegality and the European migration crisis is corruption and profiteering from refugees. The profiteers are most often seen as the central Bulgarian government, the State Agency for Refugees, police officers and local traffickers. The idea of profiteering from refugees is essentially about exploiting people seeking asylum to provide essential life services, such as shelter, registration, and transportation to safety. Profiteering from immigration has sometimes been confused with asylum seekers having much money or 'being here with a mission' in the structure of organized crime.

The number of asylum applicants has also been included in the frame of 'illegal refugees'. They are interpreting seeking refuge as a 'wave' or 'tsunami', which 'floods' highlights a natural disaster, where the host communities are being 'flooded', thus

victimized. According to Stan Cohen (2011), such metaphors serve to create what he calls a 'moral panic' – a state which exaggerates a problem, obscures its objective truths, and is not drawn in perspective with broader social issues. The theme of the high number of people 'flooding' the border is interpreted as necessitating more border controls because of the alarming possibility that 'not everyone is a refugee'.

People fleeing the war in Syria are generally seen as 'real refugees'. The 'actual' refugee frames include families with children from Syria, some even speaking Russian, and, therefore, able to communicate with Harmanlians. The good, wanted newcomers from Syria are perceived as legitimate. They are further constructed along class lines since the desired refugees were 'doctors, teachers and pharmacists'. It was clear that they had basic needs for 'baby formula, medicines and lawyers'.

The injustice of the EU migration crisis is framed as if people seeking refuge are the problem. The illegality stance challenges reasons for the high number of people seeking refuge by dividing claims coming from 'economic migrants' – people who want to take over from the prosperous economy of Europe, and 'real refugees' – people from Syria, but also only visible as families, rather than individual people. This constructed division is what creates the need to identify a legitimate refugee. While this function is performed by the state institutions, such as Bulgaria's State Agency for Refugees, there appears to be a legitimate need for the national body to know and be involved in the process.

The public's call to access information on immigration is amplified by a fixation on the subjectivity of 'combat units'. These are the undeserving refugees (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014) - single, male nationals of Afghanistan. The alternative to access to information is, therefore, access to radicalized groups. The unjust claims to the economy and cultural wealth of Europe of the 'illegal immigrant' trespassing national borders thus become a permanent threat. The construction of combat units challenges the legitimacy of refugeehood since the refugee is 'seen' as a Muslim male, trained as a terrorist who could cause harm at any instance. Thus, the constructed legitimate threat to the national and European community frames the injustice of the migration crisis. They are constructing claims to refugeehood as illegal relies on a belief that 'they have come here with a plan' (threat).

Illegality is possible because of poor border controls, insufficient border protections, and open borders. The border and the camp, is a crucial object, allowing access to people who not only may not be ‘real refugees’. The perceived open border thus gives access to Other Muslim radicals. The figure of the radical – Muslim, not real refugee, entering with the aim to destroy - is part of the fears from refugeehood. The possibility of a radical terrorist amongst the ‘waves’ of people seeing refuge contaminates the idea of a humanitarian crisis, which volunteers develop (see Chapter 6).

The refugee camp was another significant reference to justifications of border vigilance, mainly policed by women. The period of the transformation of the camp, from tent to caravans included the remaking of the former military barracks into Reception Centre. The new facility which on the State agency for Refugees acquired the name ‘Reception and Registration Centre Harmanli’. The process of making the facility permanent included building a wall to replace barbed wire and training staff to manage it. The camp was open type, and in the process of establishing its functioning, local active citizens took on to investigate who are the people inside, where they came from.

5.3. ‘Hunting Refugees’

Repertoires of ‘hunting’ refugees are from the most violent repertoires of the anti-asylum movement in Bulgaria. It represents a violation of human rights and a hate crime, aligned with the frame of ‘illegal refugees’. A phenomenon that arose in Bulgaria since 2013 has been the hunting of refugees. In the form of border patrols, men gather voluntarily to ‘protect the border’. One emblematic vigilante is Dinko Valev, who proclaimed himself as ‘the migrant hunter’. The agency of refugee vigilantism is representative of the current European context failing to address pertinent questions of collective identity and immigration inclusion (Castle & Parsons, 2019; Gardenier, 2018; Koehler, 2019) and responding to the ‘illegal immigrants’ and that ‘no protection’, was to take matters into his own hands on his own or with a group of friends, carrying out research missions and vigilante patrols on the border.

The refugee-hunter vigilante is a white Christian *rodolyubets* (someone who cares for the people) whose heroes as Vasil Levski – national liberation hero, and Ivan Vazov – national poet. The symbiosis between the vigilante and the state is framed in a ceremony

where the vigilante Dinko Valev receives a national medal from Prime Minister Boyko Borisov for dutiful citizenship – the masculine services in border patrolling. In this ceremony, the state failure (Kennedy & Danks, 2001) to provide stability is protected by the modern hero, the vigilante. The vigilante reproduces the idea of a struggling nation. A power configuration, therefore, exists which brings together the vigilante and the state.

The refugee hunter is the extreme type of vigilante. Most often, he is a man, and a part of a male group, dressed in black or in military clothing. He exhibits machismo either via a hypermasculine body or performances with border patrols on motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). The anti-refugee protester, in its extreme, manifests as a refugee hunter. The frame of the refugee hunter represents gender norms. It aligns with the identity of a victim, constructed in an Us vs Them model of identity politics, whereby the Us is a victim, and the Them is a perpetrator. The Us is bounded by a white, ethnonational Christian community in the European family, while the Them is constructed along the lines of Muslim Other who has come here, pretending to be a refugee, with the sole purpose to either advance himself economically in Our prosperous family or to destroy it as a radicalised individual, either way making Us a victim.

Refugee vigilantism is gendered (Aharoni & Féron, 2020). While border patrols are conducted by men in jeeps, motorbikes or ATVs, the vigilance of the social boundaries in border towns is conducted by women mothers observing social interactions, decency, and what they perceive as anomalies from the norm. The difference between the two types of border vigilance - of the border patrols and ‘watchful’ or protesting within the town – appears to be gender. The agency of the vigilante- both border patrols such as Dinko’s and watchful citizens such as my interlocutors, is facilitated by collective action frames ‘illegal refugees’ (a type of injustice frame from Gamson’s (1992) typology) and a victim identity (a frame which creates a certain ‘we’). The protestors construct themselves as collective victims from the refugee-Other and patrol the border to capture those they see as ‘illegal immigrants’ (in the case of the male vigilantes) or alternatively, they are watchful women of the Harmanli Reception Centre and the European public spaces. The values of the vigilante, such as Nikolina or the popularised ‘refugee hunter’ Dinko Valev align with the values of the state.

The collective identity of vigilantes combines a national feminised victim and its masculinised protector—the masculinised protector patrols the border to protect the

helpless national community. The national community is constructed as victimised by the immigrant-Other and the non-caring state, grappling with the crisis. The national helplessness frame inspires and justifies practices such as border patrols, capturing people on the border, ‘watching’ the behaviour in public spaces, and ‘searching for information’ about asylum seekers in the Harmanli refugee camp. The vigilance performance was projected as masculine protectors who care for the national community. The vigilante subjectivity is imagined as masculine – as a protector of the community and especially its women and children (Castle & Parsons, 2019; Fielitz, 2020; Gardenier, 2018). New power configurations emerged since 2013 in which the vigilante assumed a vital role against the immigrant. Whilst the vigilance emerged as a critique against the lenient state position towards immigration, the vigilante also worked together with the state and has become part of the state apparatus since then. The triangular relationship formed between the state-vigilance-immigration. The chapter will explore the ‘refugee hunter’ identity and make such vigilance possible. The rise of vigilance is entangled with the state institutions, including the refugee camp in Harmanli (constructed in 2013 in the former military barracks). They must care for the national community and protect against the ‘illegal refugee’ figure. The power dynamics with the state allude to the gendered and nationalist function of border vigilance at the European border.

5.4. Everyday Bordering: Searches for Information

The border patrol repertoires to handle the ‘crisis’ is only one expression of the anti-asylum action repertoires. The *border scape* is the everyday sphere (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). While refugee hunters, mostly men, patrol the border to deter people from crossing, activists police the social sphere of border towns, such as Harmanli. Women’s action repertoires in EU border regions ‘search’ for ‘information’, a form of intelligence onto the newcomers. ‘Information’ was gathered on the amount of money which get transferred to Harmanli to newcomers, such as the MoneyGram transfer agency and its employees. ‘Searches’ included driving with her car around town, in the ‘usual areas’, which would be the market, the highway, Hebros hotel – all of which common migration meeting spots on the outskirts of the town. ‘Searches’ repertoires also included going to internet cafes, where newcomers would meet to connect socially, and going on the

websites they visited after they leave. Most notably, Nikolina broke into and ‘checked’ the Facebook profile of a young man after he had left. Other ‘searches’ include inquiries with local human traffickers on the costs of the transfer the number of people who have crossed. They tend to search for the ‘network’ of this ‘organised traffic’, which they seem to perceive as organised ‘from above’ along the lines of conspiracy against the Bulgarian people and for the personal profiteering from the crisis. In addition to this, they take photographs of women in a burqa and ridicule them at its group Initiative Committee for Harmanli (i.e. Islamophobia).

Drawing on Yuval-Davies *et al.* (2019) concept of bordering, the understanding of border vigilance, as illustrated by the identity of the migrant hunter, can be extended. While border vigilance concerns patrols on the physical national borders, bordering addresses vigilance to police social boundaries and thus pose internal social borders to people seeking refuge. This type of border vigilance has not been discussed in the literature. Yuval-Davis *et al.* (2018, 2019) convincingly argue about the various limiting practices that asylum seekers experience, such as job limitations, the duration it takes to receive status, and obstacles to belong. In addition to this institutionalised internal form of bordering, vigilance also restricts liberties and shapes new bordering norms.

The ‘active citizens’ are people who took part in one of the five protests in Harmanli against the European migration crisis. They are people who, in a way, construct themselves as victims of the crisis and thus need protection. Protective acts are most clearly employed by people who organised and took part in protests about the EU refugee crisis. The protesters claim to not belong to a political party while openly professing nationalist views. The protestors’ relationship to nationalist ideology varies. Members of different parties – from left to right – have voiced statements of support with the protestors, a reality illuminated by the interlocutors. Right-wing parties indeed arrived at some protests in Harmanli, yet the leading organisers of the protest, Slaveya and Nikolina, construct themselves as different from those belonging to the far-right parties. In addition to organising the anti-refugee protests, Gergana’s vigilantism could be conceptualised as ‘searching for information’. While vigilantism is actualised in searching for information of terrorists, combat units, radicalised elements, as she explains, this drive appears to have a historical origin. She has started to search for information about Bulgaria as a country, and especially via texts written in other languages online.

My daughter I, who is a student in English philology, started digging quite hard although I don't know English (I know some things in Bulgarian and Russian). What I do know is that Bulgarians are not what they present us for. We were a really great nation. I don't know why everyone hates us, but they have a reason to do so (Nikolina, aged 43).

The following excerpt from my discussion with Nikolina clearly illustrates the perceived need to search for information, not only about the possibility of radicalized refugees but for the true presentation of Bulgarian national identity. 'Everyone' in the English-speaking world, which she and her daughter have now found a way to explore and identify how 'they' – the English speakers, perceive 'us'. In this account, there is an underlying assumption about how 'we', Bulgarians, are perceived – according to her with 'hate'. Her search mission is to identify the strength of Mother

Bulgaria, which must have caused the hate, but is unknown to 'us' – Bulgarians, who 'are not what they present us for' – presumably in Bulgaria and in the Bulgarian language. In this extract, it is also interesting to observe that the offspring of my interlocutor, who studies English (a foreign language), does so, for the purposes to advance the national pride of Bulgarians, by drawing on further sources available in the English language online. Rather than a source to get acquainted with another culture, studying English is imagined supporting the Bulgarian national cause. The search for information becomes an everyday flagging of the nation. The experience of contributing to the national cause through online searches is also apparent in need to know and investigate the people crossing the border, imagined as anonymous and unknown, who act in ways which 'no one knows'.

No one explains to us why these people are here, how they are here. I saw them in warehouses, production workshops, there are no homes even around! So, we go to a pizzeria in Plovdiv – another group. They are combat units. And on the Internet, someone wrote to me: 'It's good that there aren't any in Plovdiv!' And I literally laughed at him: 'How come there aren't!? Well, the combat units are with you too!' And there are [combat units]. And even now there are, and no one knows where they are. There were rumours that there were [training] camps which are organized somewhere along the border. It may be so. (Nikolina, aged 43).

My informant talks about how she was doing her daily chores, driving in her car, or going for a pizza, when she encounters 'a group' of people, which she defines as 'combat units'. In this context, the feeling of injustice is that 'no one explains to us why

these people are here and how they are here' rather than the perceived 'combat units'. There is also an emphasis on waiting for someone 'to explain', which is an ongoing waiting happening 'to this day'. Waiting for answers, being vigilant, discussing rumours appear as practices that people in border regions apprehend as part of the European refugee crisis. My informant also suggests that this is not only a border town issue but that it is an expanding concern where those living further from the border, such as in Plovdiv, should also be vigilant. The feeling that 'no one knows' what is happening, how the European migration crisis is managed, when there are apparent newcomers amplifies uncertainty. The diagnosed uncertainty thus, leaves space for unbounded rumours, each of which 'may be' a possibility in the context of a 'lack of information' and management. Indeed, the fact that she possessed the position of being on the border and having 'seen' what she calls combat units places her in a power position based on knowledge. She is one of the people who have participated in 'anti-asylum' protests in Harmanli. Moreover, my discussion with Slaveya (39, has a parent who works in the UK, organiser of protests) illuminated the relationship between injustice and the lack of public information available to her on who is seeking refuge in Harmanli and Bulgaria:

The struggle to get such information, to extract information that maybe 10% of people in Bulgaria have, is a kind of victory, whoever wants to perceive it as they want. This information is mine, and at some point, it will come into play. It is public; it is in my profile; it is on the Internet. It is a fact that everything I've said has happened. In the sequence in which I said it.

We can also see the corresponding framing of agency to find information, to act and research the European migration crisis. The injustice of a lack of information about a transformative event is described as a 'struggle'. The corresponding agency that this informant has also adopted is to search herself for information on refugee policies and refugee identities. The finding of such rare information is perceived as a 'victory'. The vigilante identity could be understood through a binary of struggle-victory, struggling with defeatism, and achieving victory with her agency.

Interestingly, she also reframes the slogan of a national liberation hero Vasil Levski (1837-1873), into its modern context. The proclaimed national hero's slogan state, 'If I win – I win for all our people, if I lose – I lose only myself'. Slaveya's account of her agency in finding information is described as a 'struggle', with consequences attached (later in the conversation, she confesses the challenges of getting a job in Harmanli

because of her protest actions). While the information is obtained by her efforts, it is also public, on the Internet, on her Facebook profile. 'The information' becomes a central quest in the context of not uncertainty associated with the EU reception crisis. The information which she has struggled to obtain, she contends 'will come into play' and will be useful to all 'at some point'. While the lack of information is constructed as unjust in the context of substantial daily transformations, the people who responded by vigilance to this same extent described are fewer. They will openly describe themselves as nationalist. Nonetheless, the information they claim to have discovered were echoed by my other informants.

Another framing of recent injustice associated with the European migration crisis is corruption and profiteering from the crisis. The profiteers are most often seen as the central Bulgarian government, the State agency for Refugees, police officers or local traffickers of people. The idea of profiteering from refugees is essentially about taking money from people seeking asylum to provide essential life services, such as shelter, registration, and transportation to safety. Profiteering from immigration has sometimes been confused with refugees having a lot of money.

The interpretation of injustice for the protestors is framed as if people seeking refuge are illegal. The 'illegal refugees' frame is further emphasised in discussions about the high number of people seeking refuge. Some claims divide claims coming from 'economic migrants' – people who want to take over from the prosperous economy of Europe, and 'real refugees' – people from Syria, but only visible as families, rather than individual people. This constructed division is what creates the need to know who a legitimate refugee is. While this is a function performed by the state institutions, such as Bulgaria's State Agency for Refugees, there is the framing of legitimate needs for the national body to know.

The public's call for access to information on immigration is amplified by a fixation on the subjectivity of 'combat units'. The alternative to access to information is, therefore, access to radicalised groups. The unjust claims to the economy and cultural wealth of Europe of the 'illegal immigrant' trespassing national borders thus become a permanent threat. The construction of combat units challenges the legitimacy of refugeehood since the refugee is 'seen' as a Muslim male, trained as a terrorist who could cause harm at any instance. Thus the constructed legitimate threat to the national and

European community frames the injustice of the migration crisis: Taliban is how people are described, thus the call to fight them. The crisis is a collective problem, which, in addition to framing injustice, calls for respective action. As Goffman contends, a '[f]rame, however, organises more than meaning; it also organises involvement' (1974:345). The need to act in response to the EU migration crisis is what shapes the agency frame, discussed below. The two competing frames of injustice – the humanitarian crisis and illegal immigrants – organise actions to respectively care or protect. The theme of missing information on who comes in Harmanli could be understood as being a victim of both the unknown newcomer and of the corrupted state apparatus. The latter is seen as not effectively protecting the border and also handled the crisis.

The theme of replacing the dysfunctional care role of the state informs vigilant repertoires. In the case of Nikolina, the previous political economy of socialism is constructed as flourishing: developing culture, social activities, work, full factories, industry and agricultural production. She constructs her life and life in Bulgaria in general under socialism as happy. This nostalgia for socialism (factories, cultural centres, social life) is a common perspective for my interlocutors, as previously theorised (Creed, 2010). Importantly, however, the admiration for socialism is often drawn in combination with constructing post-communism, the period that followed, as degradation. Post-communism is synonymous with democracy, as experienced in Eastern Europe. Post-communism, or democracy, is experienced as a period of 'destruction'. Factories are closed, signalling the destruction of the economy. Cultural centres, social activities, women's clubs – all emblems of socialisation degrade, constructing democratisation as de-moralisation or 'the loss of the spirit of the people'. Agency is one of the critical components for collective action frames to become fully-fledged and fully materialized in practice:

Nikolina: Because this is something that DANS [State agency for National Security] should do, not us. Last time I mentioned to you about the photos that were circulating on the Internet. This is where we got to – that we caught profiles, three profiles, of the same person. I personally carried these same photos in DANS. They did nothing about it!

Interviewer: What do they answer?

Nikolina: Well, they took the pictures, they took the flash drive, and the question was over. We have no information about what happened, but from what we see, we see that nothing happened.

At one point, we even noticed that we were being followed from DANS.

Interviewer: From DANS!?

Nikolina: Yes! They were following us, a few people and they showed up here in the city for no reason. They are not from the city. I know that they work in DANS. They appear in places where we are. Somehow, things can't be so random.

In this extract, Nikolina's account highlights the significance of watching out and searching for information on refugees. My informant narrates how she saw her role as a vigilant member of society, who took on herself to identify people living in the camp. The practices of bordering (Yuval-Davies *et al.*, 2018, 2019; Verstraete, 2003) take her to self-ascribe collaboration with the State Agency for National Security (In Bulgarian: *Dyrjavna Agencia za Natsionalna Sigurnost*, DANS). One of the examples of everyday bordering technology among these individuals is to police the online and offline identity of newcomers in Harmanli. As a protestor, she is 'inspired' to search for different Facebook profiles of people in the Registration Centre. Her role signifies 'public service', drawing borders in the public sphere. She is 'urged' to embody the new positionality, as some photos depict a rifle (weapon).

The agency of the protester is often constructed along the lines of a vigilante. My informant is comfortable laying claiming to her actions, which seem to include personal investigations and reporting to the highest security institution of the country. The paradox of agency is that this invoking of state security, which is amongst the few respected institutions in the country, is only possible because the policing exercised by Nikolina concerns everyday life. Being on Facebook and identifying the people who 'tag' themselves as being 'in Harmanli' is in the realm of possibilities. Yet the use of this power to border out people who are in Harmanli constitutes a new form of agency, contingent on the EU reception crisis. The extent of Nikolina's agency is also illustrated in this interview extract. After taking photos to DANS, which by itself could be characterised as an extreme response, Nikolina's indignation does not end. On the contrary, she then becomes critical of the State Agency for National Security. She reproduces the frame of the injustice of 'not-knowing' and relying only on oneself to interpret the developments: 'We have no information about what happened, but from what we see, we see that nothing happened.' Nikolina is in her 40s, a mother of two and works as a teacher. She is proud of having worked in multi-ethnic schools and being a popular educator among Romani

students. Being vigilant in the context of the EU migration crisis manifests in searching for information. Tracing various profiles on a social platform such as Facebook is an act to protect. It leads her to fantasize about a collaboration, not with the police but with the State Agency for National Security. It represents her belief that she had the right to information. Furthermore, after delivering the three different profiles to this institution, she did not give up.

The vigilante identity appears to be constructed through a gendered lens. There is a need to involve a masculine protector from the onset, which is the status of DANS among the Bulgarian public. The extract interestingly ends with my interlocutor constructing herself as a victim of the previous protector, DANS. The gender lens appears as integral because in each case, with varying involvement of a masculine protector to provide security, the vigilante is constructed as a victim. As the injustice of knowing little, the agency of the vigilante was the least common in the research. However, it is this agency that also motivated protest actions in the town and therefore popularized an extreme response.

In the Bulgarian context, the vigilante could be male or female – the fierce and protective Bulgarian mother who protects her family and her community. In perceiving themselves as a community under threat from ‘refugees’, they occupy a ‘victim’, thus ‘feminine’ subjectivity. In this case, the legitimate protector of the community – the state, perceived as ‘masculine’ – was failing to care. The vigilante was a ‘victim’ both of the immigrant-Other and the non-governing state, grappling with the European migration crisis. The victim frame in the configuration of the vigilante vs the immigrant mobilized women – mothers, wives and children of Bulgaria, who would be sexually assaulted by the male immigrant-Other, who is illegal, thereby someone who breaks the law (‘illegal refugees’ frame). One of the protests in Harmanli was organized by ‘the mothers’ on 1 March 2014 on the streets of Harmanli, evoking the discourse of being a victim from the male immigrant- Other who assaults their ‘feminine’ subjectivity. Their protest action, resonating vigilance claims, projects them as taking a protective position, which the state apparatus (border police, SAR, the government, and the municipality) have vacated.

The state vs vigilante power configuration is also understood via feminised victimhood, as the interview with Nikolina illustrates. Nikolina produces ‘evidence’ of what she considers a breach of security (‘illegal refugees’ frame) – the possibility that

refugees are radicals. Thus, she is protective of the Facebook profiles of men with a rifle. Her search missions, constitutive of bordering vigilance, replace the 'the state that suspects nothing' which has even allowed the refugee-Other into their former military barracks. As clearly the state, the political apparatus, is a victim from the illegal refugees' frame, the policy restrictions which the state imposes on the vigilante, therefore, place the vigilante, the rightfully watchful citizen, in an even further subordinate position. The men with rifles are walking freely amongst Harmanli's city gardens, full of mothers with children. At the same time, the state has housed the criminal in its military building and distrusts the vigilante's manufacture of evidence (victim frame). The victim frame, therefore, creates the vigilante as a feminised victim of both the refugee-Other and the Bulgarian state. The vigilante, therefore, encompasses both a victim and protector position. On the one hand, their part of the community becomes victimized by the refugees and the inactive state apparatus. On the other hand, the vigilantes are the ones that protect the community from the illegal refugees. This co-constitution of radical masculinity and femininity is not unknown to nationalism. Efthymiou (2019: 191-215) discusses how radical far-right parties in Cyprus, after the opening of the internal borders, aim through their masculine performativity to highlight to the community the need to rescue post-conflict Cyprus portrayed as a victim of the Turkish occupation.

The repurposing of the camp, a representation of the once strong national army which protected the national whole, into a shelter for the unknown 'other', changed the local understanding of community, locality, and with it, together with the challenge of the broader self, they came to challenge ideas of security and ontological safety (Giddens, 1991). People would say: 'who knows what is left in the old military building' or 'we, locals, have not been allowed to go on these premises' or 'there may be old weaponry there, at the hands of people who are not our nationals'. As Giddens (1991) points out, making meaning out of one event, such as a crisis, is related to the understanding of the self as intertwined with the social and discursive crisis within which the self exists. In that sense, experiencing events to do with crises leads to making meaning of the social, of the self and experiences processes threatening of the individual's ontological security. The fact that the crisis has a starting point with the construction of a refugee camp out of a previous military camp further enhances the perception of a threat to ontological security. The local military camp was a source of national pride for the community. It was one of the symbols of the collective self. In 2013, the material side of this proud self

was transformed from protection against enemies of Bulgaria to care for foreigners. Thus, the insiders' protection from the outside was transformed into the outsiders' protection, which now seems to threaten the inside. Caring for others in these national politics means that the architecture of a former military camp forms the scaffolding for the politics of care for people seeking refuge. In terms of 'Politics of care', this becomes problematic both for the identity of the ones that are 'care-givers' and 'care-receivers'. The people seeking refuge are spatially penetrated within the site of the national self.

Protestors called for more information on 'who is inside', the people who are being taken care of, within the centre of the nation. This contestation of 'who is inside', framed the migrant as the one who invades the nation. The perception of an 'invasion' was heightened by the fact that the transforming of the military camp into a refugee reception centre had been pre-planned by the national migration management plan (drafted in 2011) but was implemented without the knowledge of local governance (Tanya, in her 60s, businesswoman). This perception exposed the relationship between the centre and periphery within the nation-state.

The construction of 'the refugees as contagious' is one key event relating to the broader attitudes towards refugees. In between the politics of European migration management, state encampment strategies, forced migration from Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, administering care for refugees is placed on the locals who are left to themselves in making meaning and practising care. The investigations of the vigilantes construct refugees as people contagious with 'exotic diseases'. These were discourses emerging in a series of local news videos and the responding need to protect the 'locals'. I focus on the organisation of news reportage, preceded by a collection of data on ill refugees on the street. I propose this is how refugees are framed as ill and Harmanli as needing protection from refugees. The need to care for the town, for the locals, even for the police are discussed. The protection became part of the Bulgarian nationalist project, which dislocated care of the refugees to care of the locals. It had the power to steer social anxiety to the extent that people in the camp were locked up for a week, 'under quarantine'. Ultimately, it reinforced exclusionist politics in the border town and strengthened the idea that the local community needs to be rescued. Because of its position as a border town, constructed as a guardian of the nation against the 'flow' of migration, the attitudes constructed in its locale gain significance in the centre, becoming constructive of the nation-wide politics of care

The vigilance of Yordanka (40s, education sector) is to investigate the health of asylum seekers in the camp due to her suspicion of contagious diseases. The main argument of the section is built on a video part of the local news. It triggered a series of news and new frames of care about the local community. The video is produced by Haskovo TV, a regional TV station. The video discusses the views of medics from Sofia who have arrived in the Harmanli reception centre to address local fears in relation to diseases in the centre. It is vital in illustrating the interaction between the medics and the locals, especially how the locals gain power in the knowledge production of who the refugee is and if he needs care.

The ‘conference’ of the medics takes place on a bench in front of the Registration Reception Centre Harmanli. Grouped in front of the bench are the audience, members of society gathered to hear the verdict about the inmates of the reception centre (camp) behind them. The experts are called in from the public to deliver the verdict to the public. They sit on a wooden bench and in front of them a table is fixed for the conference. The protesting public has demanded an ‘explanation’ of what is going on in the camp, how many infected people are ‘inside’, how dangerous the illness is, and what the cure is. This conference of state officials gathered to deliver an explanation of state conduct is unusual.

The absurdity of the situation was observed on the faces of the two doctors from Sofia Hospital, who presented medical verdicts with calm. ‘We have examined the people inside; there is no reason for concern; there are no illnesses’ is the overall message that comes through. They highlighted a couple of cases that differ, yet which could be expected for a camp hosting thousands of people at the time. However, this verdict about the health of people in the camp was not accepted by the audience. Prior to the arrival of the medics from Sofia to Harmanli, people in the camp were framed as contagious. Diagnoses were developed by the Harmanli public, while the Other was constructed as suffering from ‘exotic diseases’, ones which were supposedly contagious for the Bulgarian people ‘who had no immunity against it’. The disease which Harmanlians ascribed to the camp was skin Leishmaniosis. Yet, how could a disease be diagnosed by society with such precision as that?

This verdict was first prescribed by a local municipal council member (in Bulgarian: *Naroden syvetnik*). Usually, the role of the council-member is to participate in municipal meetings when local politics are discussed and vote. This council-member took

her responsibility ‘seriously’ to care for the health of Harmanlians. From the position that ‘her constituents’ complained to her, they believed that people in the camp are contagious, and Yordanka self-proclaimed herself as a knowledge-maker, which coupled with her power position as a public servant in the municipality granted her the necessary credibility to proclaim that, according to her own research in town, people coming in and out of the camp are in the Harmanli centre were ill with a disease which is not known in the geographic region of Bulgaria. The disease which she diagnosed ‘at least 26 people’ from the camp was skin Leishmaniasis. ‘Not known in our geographic region’ meant that it had no cure for the locals. Besides the fatalist diagnosis which she produced, her claim is significant in the process of becoming able to make such a statement.

Refugees are everywhere. They come in the supermarkets, touch the food, the fruits and vegetables, and then our people touch them too. [...] money is the most widely spread commodity; it passes through anyone (Tanya, 50s, businesswoman).

Yordanka, a local town hall advisor, developed vigilant practices. She stood in front of the centre, stopping refugees and photographing their bodies. She would take photos of their hands or legs; any injury wound or skin irritation was photographed. Yordanka claimed to have photographed some 20 ‘cases’ of Leishmaniosis. Following her diagnosis, Yordanka invited regional media and staged a national care campaign. She was interviewed by a journalist, in front of the refugee centre, in what could be described as a theatre. She exposed her ‘findings’, pointing to the building behind the Registration Reception Centre Harmanli as the place where all illness is contained. This one-woman show developed a new light when a man from the centre happened to exit the open-type camp. Seeing each other--him, the media, and her as the potential threat--both people in the scene dropped their states of enthusiasm. The media report is a caricature of the creation of care politics: the man approached the camera, the Yordanka and the journalist zoomed his arms and legs. There was skin irritation visible, which the eye of the audience can clearly observe but hardly diagnose. The discourse of contagious diseases presented in the regional media of Haskovo came to be ‘common knowledge’, which many of my interlocutors reproduced in 2017, while some were sceptical or ashamed by it.

Experts from Sofia arrived to deliver a public verdict, a diagnosis of the inmates. The questions answered by the experts are what is going on in the camp, how many infected people are there, how dangerous is the illness, is there a cure. Cameras and journalists are there to hear from the three endocrinologists from Sofia. A woman begins

to speak calmly, in contrast to the hectic atmosphere otherwise. She confirms that there has begun a thorough inspection of the refugees for the first time since they have entered the country. She notes that some indeed have Scabies and are taken away for treatment. There is no other identified disease. Her calm tone ends, hands closed in front of her, in what appears that the 'job is done'. Little did the medic know that the politics of care in Harmanli are people's business.

Significant events such as the European migration crisis allow for interpretations of the collective Self to rise to the surface. The values which constitute 'being Bulgarian' penetrate within this context. New patterns of care have emerged in the narration of the crisis, showing how modern-day Bulgarianness is framed *vis-à-vis* care. Describing the crisis has brought out descriptions of illness in society – what ought to be fixed. Illness is perceived through the body, through the interaction with the uncured. Constructing the refugee as contagious, infecting the local community, has translated into the fear of the foreigner towards His body. The body of the refugee is contagious; the body conveys otherness, the body contaminates. The basis of collective fear is the threat to Bulgarianness, henceforth the need to care for the Bulgarianness. I contend that a discourse of care has been equated with protection; to care is to protect, to defend. The context of the small border town plays a role in the particular construction of care. Little political leadership is practised, except occasional public appearances.

5.5. Resonance of Vigilantes' Frames

Working people, the research population of this study, are active in making meaning and produce new action repertoires. Politics of care for the vigilantes include claims and repertoires of care for the community in the context of immigration. For them, charity begins at home. Drawing on everyday bordering, vigilantes repertoires of care are projected for the community. Their repertoires are more complex than violence or aggression, due to the smoke-screen of 'care for Harmanlians'. Similarly to the finding of Grillo (2005), who analyses the anti-asylum protest claims in the UK that 'Saltdean can't cope', the victim position in the context of immigration is turned towards the host population, who is constructed as in need of care. While the vigilantes discussed in the previous section develop repertoires to care for the local community and the Bulgarian

nation, Harmanlians who do not belong to their movement echo some of the vigilantes' frames.

The focus group discussion gives a feeling of how conversations the discursive moment of the permanence of the camp was perceived by Harmanlians with left-wing politics. The discussion illustrates the feelings of injustice of how the camp became permanent and that it did become permanent. The place we met was a café in the town centre of Harmanli. The focus group is of five white adults seated around a table. One of them, female, does not participate in the conversation. A tape recorder rests on the table in their midst. It is 14 November 2017. We had all left a meeting in the town hall, called to address the Council of Europe Representative on Migration's Fact-Finding Mission. Characters: Dora (in her fifties), Lyudmila (in her forties), and Tanya (in her fifties) are Townhall Councillors. Tanya is also a co-founder of an NGO for women. Mr Dimitrov (in his sixties), belongs a left-wing political party.

Mr Dimitrov: Everything else that they said earlier – with the war - before this pressure started was that we would temporarily accommodate them. Then they will return, or we will return them as soon as possible, both war victims and economic immigrants. This is not really happening. [...] So, for me, the problem remains. It has subsided and because we have been lied to a lot here because I was involved at the beginning of the process as... [a mayor]

Lyudmila: ...from day one.

Mr Dimitrov: ... yes, and I remember very well the state institutions, regardless of which political party they were, exactly their words: 'Temporarily here. And so on... So, not to kill them there, we will accommodate them, then when things calm down – we will return them because we have... the preparation, this is our idea...'. Nothing remained of these wishes, on the contrary. Apparently, Merkel is right that she needs ...

Tanya: ... workers.

Mr. Dimitrov: ... workers. But they have the right to choose. And all the other 'chaff', if we can use it metaphorically, right, will remain here in our areas, which are depopulated anyway. We still have problems with the Roma population. Now we are left with the issue of refugees, for which only 3,000 people are enough to turn over...

Dora:... Demographic!

Mr. Dimitrov:... the demographics, the lifestyle, and so on.

Interviewer: And the capacity of the camp ...?

Mr. Dimitrov: Yes. The capacity remains, it is 4000 plus another 1000. So, 5000 people, they discuss in extreme cases. And it was first only for 1000 people and inside tents, temporary, and look what happened.

Tanya: There is nothing more permanent than temporary things!

Mr. Dimitrov: Yes.

This discussion illustrates the temporality of the camp, which was first constructed with tents while Mr Dimitrov was in the political leadership of Harmanli. The sentence ‘[t]here is nothing more permanent than temporary things’ brings the group of people together in the expression of political views. What is interesting to note about this sentence is that it is an apparent contradiction in terms. It suggests that the ‘temporary things’ are illusions or perhaps are used only as a pretext when the hidden intention is to become permanent. The ‘temporary things’ which Tanya talks about are only ‘wishes’ for Mr Dimitrov, as the solutions to the crisis were pre-planned and permanent. The contradiction in terms of temporary-permanent camp is only possible because ‘we have been lied to a lot here’. This sentiment of injustice also feeds into the frame described above about the injustice of information on what is going on with the reception policies for people seeking refuge. What is interesting to note in this conversation is that the permanence of the camp is contrasted with the depopulated rural area of Harmanli. The people living permanently in the camp are arguably conceived as a part of Harmanli's demographics. Something else we notice is that this white man in a power position in the governance of Harmanli felt that the construction of the camp was outside his sphere. The reason for this is not clear from the data, but it may have something to do with the central government in Bulgaria, which manages the Registration reception centre and the EU border management policies. The permanent camp initially promised ‘by the institutions’ as temporary became a continuous fixture on the instructions of Europe. This potentially also has implications on the perceived identity of the region, reinforcing the perspective of Harmanli as a border region at the edge of Europe. The demographic problem is seen as adding to the unjust identity of Harmanli – that of a depopulated town. From the data, it is not clear what problem is assumed with the Roma population, which is brought together with the demographic concerns of the left-wing elite. The worries about ‘the demographics, the lifestyle, and so on’ echoes the concern of considering living with a new collective identity every day, one inclusive of the permanence of migration and minority groups.

In developing his understanding of the problem, this focus group construct a ‘we’ – the members of the group, the Harmanli inhabitants, and the Bulgarian people. ‘We’ are a victim because ‘we have lied a lot here’. It is a reference to Bulgaria’s internal problems, which even Mr. Dimitrov, as a political figure who has been in power, appears unable to not solve. The construction of national identity as a victim is reaffirmed since things did not happen as initially planned (temporary accommodation for refugees). They were lied to again. Even when the group come to the agreement that the newcomers are also workers, thus contributing members of society, Mr Dimitrov again constructs a victim position, where the best workers who ‘have the right to choose’ will leave to northern Europe. The racist undertones in his metaphor accompany the construction of his (and the community’s) victimhood thereby, he is a victim but could be racist towards the people who allegedly victimise him and the Bulgarian community. The racist slur is a marker of toxic masculinity intertwined with constructions of victimhood.

The question of the future of Europe is embedded in the prognosis of the European collective identity. How vigilantes make a prognosis on the future of Europe, diagnose its current problems, and prescribe solutions can be understood via collective action frames (Benford, 1997; Benford & Snow, 2000). In my interviews, I inquired my informants to share their perspectives on the European Union, aiming to understand European collective identity. In addition to grasping the worldview of the vigilantes in relation to what it means to be European, I was also able to understand the extent to which their views resonate with the wider society via my border ethnography and interviews and focus groups with various members of society. The rise of populist movements has been characteristic of the narratives of the migration crisis, making it important to understand the perspectives that support it. The notion of ‘crisis’ is not neutral but an interpretative frame, part of populist politics (Brubaker, 2017:373-379). The purpose of this frame justified the extraordinary measures, such as blocking asylum seekers. It diagnoses urgency and ‘immediacy’ against mediating institutions in extraordinary times. The immediacy, in turn, justifies the use of discrimination and hate to restore an imaginary peaceful time. In relation to the experience of ‘crisis’, Krastev (2020) critiques what he called an ‘ideology of normality’, whereby democracy is assumed as a normal state of existence. European collective identity, following the vigilante’s prescriptions, advocates for the return of the Bulgarian from abroad, closing off the border for immigration and restoring the industrial and cultural glory of the Bulgarian revival period.

5.6. Collective Action Frames Over Time

To be framed and to frame is an ongoing process. Since framing captures a particular ‘context’, a successful frame would need to engage with evolving, new contexts, events, and ideas. A frame is not a perpetual perspective but can ‘break’ or shift its focus. As Butler claims it:

[t]he frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognise, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things (Butler, 2009:4).

In other words, because what we conceive as taking place in the ‘context’ can be reconfigured, and as a frame has its limits, a frame can ‘leak out’ or ‘break’. Frames are political attitudes formed about an event in time, thus can change through time or break completely. The following interview extract is representative of the narrative surrounding the EU migration crisis in Harmanli. It highlights the schemas, which shaped the ideas about what was happening.

Well, I will start again. This is the largest Refugee Centre on the Balkan Peninsula. Its capacity is about 3200 people. Initially, the people of Harmanli were really very broad-minded and very nice people because the initial wave of migrants was from Syrians – families with children. Everyone has done what they can to help. Literally, clothes were collected, *martenitsas* [traditional bracelets of white and red threads] – everything the most, the most humane. But then the big influx happened – 2016. I am telling you about it much faster because this is known literally and from the press and everywhere. [It's] when the riots started [23 November 2016]. By then, the capacity had reached – I don't know exactly officially – about 4,000 people.’ (Maria Kirkova, Mayor of Harmanli, 2015- present)

The ‘initial’ humanitarian frame is where the ‘very nice people’ and ‘the most humane’ of Harmanli saw themselves as ‘everyone’ doing what they can ‘to help’. What broke the frame was the expansion of the camp – where new ideas emerged, such as the ‘capacity’ of the camp. The permanence of the now ‘largest refugee centre’ ensured that refugeehood was always going to be dealt with through containment in rural border areas. That long-term approach ‘leaked out’ from the previous frame of humanitarian towards

the ‘good migrant’ – Syrians – families with children. In addition to ‘capacity’, new discourses occurred, such as ‘waves’ or ‘influx’ of refugees, alluding to catastrophic experiences. This time, however, the national community is in perceived danger. The riot, framed by the Mayor of Harmanli, connects ideas of ‘capacity’. The humanitarian emergency frame breaks because it cannot contain ‘the riot’ together. After the riot, the idea that there was a humanitarian crisis subsided and was replaced with an understanding of people in the camp not only as politics but as radicalised.

In this section on collective action frames over time, I will focus on data on the changing attitudes of Harmanlians towards more anti-immigration, as the camp became a permanent feature of the town. The section is organised into four subsections. Firstly, the arrival of ‘Syrian refugees’ as the first period of interaction between the national Self and the refugee-Other. Secondly, I identify the expansion of the camp as a key event in the formation of the Harmanli public responses to the European migration crisis. Thirdly, formative in the public attitudes to the crisis, is the quarantine of the camp and subsequent ‘riot’. Finally, an event that has shaped the attitudes in the border town is the exit or transiting of refugees. The selection of these events in the following subsections is based on the narratives of the interlocutors.

2013: Syrian Refugees Arrive

In the events of 2013 the humanitarian injustice frame is created for the first time. Aligning with it is a volunteer identity, which for some volunteers existed before the crisis. The agency identifiable in this period are acts of kindness and volunteering and shape the identity of the volunteer.

When they opened the camp [in 2013], it was just scary. It was scary with the tents; there was no water, no electricity, nothing. And we had to go to the shops to beg for bread to provide for them to eat. (Victoria, 40s, social service worker, friend of refugees)

This frame of injustice is ‘scary’ because it describes the lack of essential resources. The conditions Victoria describes are likely perceived as unjust because they refer to the primary living conditions, where there was no food for the people living in tents. The maintenance of bare life in tents was dependent on people like Victoria. They had to beg to provide for some of the necessities of life, such as food. It is not clear from the data how they supplied electricity, heating, and sanitation.

The ‘illegal refugees’ frame does not exist yet. Interpretations of asylum are that ‘no one runs from something good’ or ‘no one chooses to live like that’, characteristic of the construction of humanitarian, and does not allow for doubt or ‘leaks’. Even people who later associated themselves more with the Protestors, took part in providing for the ‘bare life’ of people in the tents. There was an undeniable struggle in the living conditions, which left little space for subjective interpretations. The vivid frame of suffering was not only captured in photos, and it was known that suffering was taking place in the Friendship Neighbourhood of small Harmanli. The humanitarian frame continued as care for the volunteers when I was last in Harmanli.

The issues of illegality, protection, and victimhood started to emerge as the protests from 2013 and 2014 illustrate. With the expansion of the camp, the humanitarian became a fractured frame for the national body. The ‘bare life’ in the tents shifted into a long-term construction, where the emergency of the housing situation moved people from tents to being housed in the former military building. The following subsection discusses the period of the expansion of the camp into a permanent facility for people seeking refuge.

2014-2015: The Camp’s Expansion

The discursive moment of the camp's expansion triggered a series of anti-refugee protests. In 2014, the misery of the tents was made worse not only by the summer sun, but also by the open buildings of the military barracks. The number of people being delivered, mainly by the police, at the door kept increasing, as the administration was slowly beginning to establish its work and to call itself the Harmanli ‘Centre for Temporary Reception’, managed by the State Agency for Refugees. As the number of people crossing the border increased, and the camp became a permanent feature of the town, the illegal refugees frame emerged. It was no longer just Syrians seeking refuge; people coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Algeria, Morocco as well as stateless peoples (Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2021). The frame of protection began to be shaped as well. Both the volunteer identity and humanitarian injustice frames continued, albeit not for the protestors. As the camp became a permanent feature of Harmanli, the vigilantes felt the need to be ‘watchful’ not only at the border, via border patrols, but also in the town, in the everyday interactions. In this period the number of people seeking protection

in Bulgaria increased tenfold. New Centres also opened in Sofia. About twenty or so Harmanlians got new jobs in the administration – as caseworkers, people looking after the reception of refugees and security. Until 2015 the Centre in Harmanli was referred to as a ‘temporary Centre’ in local news. People who had just crossed the border were driven to the camp either by border police or by the new local traffickers, sometimes boys from the local high school, as a teacher of theirs informs me.

For most townspeople, injustice was the new encounters with Others on the streets of Harmanli. The small community where ‘everyone knows everyone’, began to experience the new phenomenon of ‘new people walking on the streets’. There was no explanation from the central or local government about the ‘illegal refugees’ experienced as unjust in the context of changing everyday life in the public spaces in the border town. Indeed, there were ‘promises’ from the government to deport people. The lack of information and knowledge on what was happening in the camp ‘inspired’ the Protestors. The agency of such people was to ‘collect information’ or ‘to research’. Specifically, they investigated who the newcomers were, who placed them there and which part of the border they were coming through. It is critical that searching was associated by the people who conducted the searches as single acts, rather than shared by the broader public. The people I spoke with who were ‘watchful’ interpreted this as dutiful and principled.

One emblematic vigilante is Dinko Valev, who is dubbed as ‘the migrant hunter’. His agency, responding to the lack of information, was to take matters into his own hands on his own or with a group of friends, carrying out research missions and vigilante patrols on the border. In Harmanli, two women in their 40s and 50s with a university education were mainly associated with the research missions. They sought information about who the people in the camp were, where they came from, how they got here and so on. These women were central in the organising of protests in Harmanli in response to the lack of information on the European migration crisis.

My informants all felt that their everyday life changed, yet no one took responsibility for it, nor explained how this had happened and what the parameters of change were. In response to this injustice, which is the lack of government responsibility, being lied to about the temporality or permanence of the crisis, people responded in three main ways.

The period of the transformation of the camp, from tent to caravans and some rooms in the former military barracks, included the Reception Centre offering people a mattress, a fleece blanket, and a pillow. The new facility of the Reception Centre, which on the State agency for Refugees acquired the name 'Reception and Registration Centre Harmanli'. The process of making the facility permanent included building a wall to replace barbed wire and instilling some management into the reception process. Alas, the construction did not cover the whole area, leaving a hole or making the wall appear broken. The broken wall could be interpreted as the symbol of the second stage of the European reception crisis. The broken wall of the former military remained broken for the Harmanlians I spoke with. For Harmanlians, it soon became apparent that there was no one taking responsibility for the wall or for the crisis, respectively. The camp had a wide-open wall, which was one possible reason why Harmanlians felt that newcomers were walking in and out of the Reception Centre. The broken wall appeared to be how they explained to themselves the fact that people were walking around town, day, and night, speaking unknown languages, while no one was taking responsibility for this situation. The wall of the former military barracks was within the broader community in the Friendship Neighbourhood. It separated the former military and present-day Registration reception centre from the Friendship Neighbourhood, a series of socialist era blocks of flats. The camp, together with its wall, was a symbol of pride and national identity. The public perceptions towards the military and military camps has been argued to intersect with nationalist imagination (Efthymiou, 2019). Simultaneously, the camp was also a site of asylum. The organisation of asylum within the old military barracks engendered a contesting political claim. At the same time, the wall separated this national-international sphere from everyday life in the Friendship Neighbourhood. According to the broken windows theory, developed by James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982, a broken window in a building, left unrepaired, will soon lead to more windows broken. The spiralling of damage is as accurate in 'nice' neighbourhoods as in rundown ones (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). The logic underpinning this theory is that having one thing broken and visible to others encourages the belief that there is no governance of the situation. Therefore, if one thing is visibly broken and unrepaired, then everything could become possibly broken. Disruption encourages further deviance from the everyday normality. In the broken wall of the former military, the present-day Registration reception centre, what is broken extends beyond the material to the symbolic. What is broken is the everyday monotony and the national-international relationship. Since the

wall is visibly broken, it could further break the frame of stable and ethnonational Legitimate culture, supported by Protestors.

This second period (2014-2015), could be broadly understood as defined by the permanence of the camp, the lack of information about what was happening within, and the broken wall which allowed entry and exit. This was a distinct difference from the first period, according to all my informants. The muck and the mire conditions in which the tents were placed was the problem of the people seeking asylum. The second period, however, was perceived by many as the start of a problem for Harmanli. Below is an extract from a focus group with left-wing intelligentsia who discuss the impact of the broken wall on life in Harmanli. We could see how the participants in the conversation agree and finish each other's sentences on this topic, suggesting that this is a common belief. The 10 meters of the opening of the broken wall meant that 'there was no wall' and 'no access control' since it allowed the contact of the nation- international within the camp and the everyday life in the neighbourhood and the township. This was a lack of control in the management of the EU migration crisis, which manifested in local human traffickers in the border and increased profits of other unregulated activities, symbolising a decay in the idyll of the everyday.

Mr Dimitrov: At all times, the camp...

Lyudmila: ... is open.

Mr. Dimitrov: ... There was no access control at all. Whether they enter through the official entrance or through the wall, which is 10 meters... there was no wall! Just... They just wandered all day and night. Then came the criminal contingent, then began prostitution, drugs, traffickers. Then...

Tanya: The organised... flourished

Lyudmila: That's why there are so many casinos in Harmanli, because the traffickers with the money, with the turnover from the traffic, go to the casinos! Harmanli didn't have that many casinos. They flourished with that money. And if their presence (of refugees) has a positive effect on some types of business in the town, such as taxi drivers, such as mobile phone shops, fruit and vegetable shops, and other grocery stores, then for the rest of the people in the town, for the rest of the town, it had a negative impact – a lot.

The second period of the EU migration crisis, as it was narrated in this focus group, could be understood more with frames of identity, and the identity of the community. Lack of control in the camp, the unfixed, open wall, is perceived as a lack of control in the town. What is broken is the outlook of the community, re-shaping values, businesses, and the main street in the town. The agency of the informants in this period included the new vigilantes and the continuing volunteering networks and the individual helpers. The feelings of injustice still referred to the people seeking refuge. However, even more, the injustice was felt like the life of the town that was changing in 'strange' deviant ways. In this period, 2014-2015, the dire conditions of the Reception registration centre had become known internationally due to news coverage by international news agencies. At this time, the EU reception crisis was also intensifying in Europe in general as other member states failed to provide an adequate reception structure for people seeking asylum. In academic literature, 2015 came to be known as 'the summer of migration' (e.g. Hess and Kasperek, 2017; Kasperek and Speer, 2015), as people from the border regions of Europe travelled further north and the identity of Europe was more clearly becoming shaped by the EU reception crisis.

2016: The Riot

This subsection will briefly comment on the event in the Registration reception centre in Harmanli from 23 November 2016, framed as 'the riot' and in the way it relates to the frames of injustice, agency and identity. More of this will be discussed in Chapter 6. The understanding of the events as a 'riot' became a dominant discourse, which did not have a counter-discourse. It was supported not only by protestors but by national and international media, political leaders, and people standing by. While people from within the camp had a different and much more nuanced experience of the events, they were not able to construct an alternative frame about it, and their experiences were not visible. Volunteers referred to the events simply challenging the frame of illegitimacy, referring to it as the so-called 'riot' with a sense of irony. In 2016, with the discourse of 'the riot' taking centre stage, the volunteer frame ended for many of my respondents. The victim frame emerged, and both illegitimacy and protect frames became increasingly evident. The humanitarian frame was used with ambivalence and was gradually broken. At the of

Harmanli remembers ‘the first’ period, where humanitarian was about saving lives. In her ‘much faster’, framed account, the Mayor of Harmanli chooses to discuss three key events: the largest Centre, the most humane people, and the riots (on 23 November 2016). What is striking is that the riot is marked as a critical event in the development of the EU reception crisis, alongside the helping public and the largest refugee centre. Her account is perhaps framed in hyperbolic terms: ‘the largest centre’, people being ‘really very broad-minded and very nice people’, ‘the most humane’ and the ‘riot’.

Volunteer identity is challenged by the vigilante, for whom the riot legitimises the need to ‘watch’ who is in the camp, since ‘They’ evidently want to harm the local community, making Harmanli a victim. The volunteer identity frame is also broken for the helpers and people who were ‘at the margins – silent, tired and perplexed’ (Papataxiarchis, 2016:9).

Preceding the riot was another critical event, which emphasised the need for protection of the national body – the possibility that ‘refugees are contagious’. The whole camp was placed ‘under quarantine’, as the national discourse was beginning to frame a substantial need for protection. Competing with this understanding, was the view people in the camp woke up ‘locked up’. No one had told the people in the Reception Centre of the lockdown of the camp on 23 November 2016, nor about their health concerns for them.

For the Bulgarian language speakers, it had become known that a local town council advisor had conducted her ‘private investigation’. Guided by the frame of illegitimacy, as an ordinary person, she embodied bordering practices towards what she saw as contagious diseases of people in the camp. Her methods were taking photographs of people walking outside the camp. The interpretation of this self-appointed expert was that the bodies of her victims were covered with ‘an exotic disease’, which she identified as leishmaniosis. In contrast, the belief of one of the photographed, and accidentally also interviewed on video, was that his body was covered with wounds from a fight in the camp, from which he seemed to be complaining. It sounded like he was looking for help, (humanitarian frame) and assumed the expert was embarking on such a mission to help him. The expert citizen was, however, more concerned about the health of the national community – who according to her, did not have immunity to ‘exotic disease’. It is a theatre of expertise making with daring consequences.

To calm the Harmanli community, while confirming that no such cases of contagious diseases existed, the State Agency for Refugees nonetheless developed the policy to lock down the camp ‘under quarantine’ for a week. The following day, people inside came out in protest. As the police arrived, some also chose to burn mattresses. The evening was framed as the riot. Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov, as well as ‘the migrant hunter’ Dinko Valev came in front of the camp the same evening, making headlines of national and international news. Allegedly 300 people were arrested, while Prime Minister promised mass deportations. In 2018 about 20 males were put on trial for petty hooliganism and the destruction of public property.

‘The riot’, as it is still referred to, was identified as a reason for changing attitudes towards the asylum. Before the riot the frame of humanitarianism mainly shaped the attitudes to asylum. The discursive construction of a ‘riot’ in the camp, however, could not fit within the humanitarian framing, especially for people who adopted a bystander standpoint. People who were not directly involved in the politics of the camp management did not filter the dynamics of the event, which necessitated the mobilisation of the police in front of the camp, as well as the, arrive of political figures such as Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and the ‘refugee-hunter’ Dinko Valev. The discourse of the riot, therefore portrayed the people within the camp as violent, even radical. Therefore, the discourse of the riot fractured the humanitarian lens, and transformed the refugees’ presence into an illegitimacy issue. It became illegitimate to treat people seeking refuge as people who require an excessive police force and protectors for the nation. This is a turning point for setting the frame of illegitimacy, where the identity of the people in the camp, and asylum more broadly, becomes further perceived as radicalised. Arguably, the images produced around this event and circulated in national and international media, depicting the masses of police officers, gendarmerie, tear gas, guiding an iron gate or a group of men throwing rocks from the ground. This question resonated mostly with people who were not directly involved in the refugee politics as well as those volunteers who had intermittently engaged while maintaining their distance.

The riot in November 2016 amplified the illegitimacy frame. It brought out a differentiation between single males and families living in the camp, thereby impacting the identity of the ‘real refugee’. The single men were generally perceived as the ‘unwanted refugees’ while those with families were constructed as the ‘desirable’ or the ‘real’ refugees. This, therefore excluded the so-called ‘singles’ – young males, without a

visible family, who are often seen as men from Afghanistan. They would characteristically often walk with other young males who have oftentimes cited a problem, merely for being in groups. According to the members of the collective action in Harmanli, it was the ‘singles’ who the government should have taken care of to prevent problems such as radicalisation. Some of my informants, however, thought that petty crime from a few people was also something that could be reasonably expected in relation to the number of people transiting through Harmanli.

2017-2018: They Left

After the focus group with the association of business owners, the conversation became more relaxed as the recorder was turned off. I shifted my interest in the topic towards the Greek salad in front of me. One of my interlocutors discussed with his friend a subject he knows I am interested in. It concerned one of his employees, something which the two appeared to have discussed already.

‘Ah, he left a while ago, didn’t he?’

‘He did. And he is now in Germany. And he also got his family with him there.’

Interviewer: He seems happy.

We are friends on Facebook. Let me show you. Here he is.’
[shows Facebook photos on a smartphone]

‘There, in Germany, that’s where they want to go.’

Interviewer: ‘May I see?’ [I glean over the smartphone onto a photo of a prematurely aged man, father of a little girl, who is dressed in pink and holding her father's hand, in front of a fountain on the background of white, clean context, with some flowers on the edges of the photo. It gives out a calm vibe. Something had come together in this photo] ‘He looks happy.’

The owner of the phone moves on to show me other photos from the Facebook wall of his former employee and Facebook friend. There is a sense of sadness as this process takes place – some silences between the sentences. Then, the conversation between the two continues. It is about ‘the first refugees’, that ‘some of them were even doctors or nurses. Educated people, with manners’.

The need for protection stopped in this last period, since ‘they had left now’, as my interlocutors told me when I entered my ‘field’ in the spring of 2017. Victimhood was re-shaped, to include yet another group of people who chose to leave Bulgaria, and the locals ‘behind’. The need to care stopped because ‘it’s is nothing, and it’s just some 200-300 people now’. The exception is the long-term volunteers around whom the frame to care was built. These are Valeria, Harmanli Refugee Camp Play School, the Afghan School, and a non-governmental organisation allowed on the premises of the camp. The illegitimacy frame was no longer referring to asylum. The perception of illegitimacy shifted towards the local traffickers, whose wealth from smuggling people through the border had become visible in the public sphere.

When I arrived in Harmanli, and throughout my 11-month fieldwork, I observed a feeling of sadness for the refugees who left the country, with whom they made friends, and who contributed to the lives of the locals. Conversations took on a nostalgic tone. From a hotspot, Harmanli had gone back to its standard way of life. Only now, something was different. People seeking refuge had passed through there comfortably every day, and these same people chose to leave. Yet again, Harmanlians felt ‘left behind’. They perceived ‘Bulgaria’ as not welcoming enough, as not good enough to keep the refugees. Bulgaria was conceptualised as a transit country. Migration, a process of movement that leads to a change of social relationships, was perceived as similar to the post-socialist change and emigration from the country. Bulgaria was yet again the reason for migrating and in its extreme conceptions was ‘good for nothing’.

A boy from Iraq gave one day to his teachers a red paper heart; it was the last day they saw him at school. ‘We assume it was his last day. Later we realised it was his goodbye card for us’. A heart made of paper, left from a student to his teachers, was perhaps the symbol of this period of the crisis, in which the interviews took place. I informed the curious-looking lady I had just introduced myself as a new arrival in Harmanli that the research looks into debates on refugees in Harmanli’. ‘What refugees? They left!’ was her immediate reply. This was a fascinating finding because it exposed me to a psychological reality I was not expecting. While there was a feeling of a crisis, of management, unmanaged business, locals, in fact, felt attached to people coming into their community, touched by their lives and their struggles. Some felt grateful for what was created by the newcomers. Examples included the new businesses that were created, the new cuisine that developed and new things they learnt.

In summary, in this section, I have looked at five different events which shaped public attitudes towards refugees. I have shown that ‘the attitudes towards refugees’ have changed over time, and these attitudes particularly concerning changes and the evolving crisis, and therefore varied with each stage of the EU migration crisis. They varied in relation to events taking place in the European reception crisis – from the broken wall on the Registration centre, to the emergence of local traffickers of people, to the ‘expert’ views on contagious diseases in the Reception centre, to the protests/ riot against the lockdown of the Centre, to the point where people seeking refuge left the town and are remembered by Facebook photos. These events took place from 2013 and during the fieldwork in 2017/2018. They illustrate the complexity of forming attitudes towards migration. Contrary to ‘public attitudes studies’ relying on quantitative methodology, this sheds light on the variegated responses and reactions to immigration in a migration context.

5.6. Conclusion

The EU migration crisis has shaped diverse grassroots politics from ordinary people responding to perceptions of injustice. A distinct group of people have come to prominence with practices of protesters and border vigilance. This chapter investigated the frames mobilised by distinct groups of ‘framers’, constructing the EU migration crisis on the borders of Europe, the protestors. Then by the anti-asylum movement, I showed the importance of understanding competing and aligning collective action frames in the negotiation of their collective identity amidst the crisis. The framing perspective highlighted the conceptualisations which people have developed as they interact with and construct discourses about Us - the national community, and Them - the refugees. The findings on frames have helped to understand the discourses which justify repertoires such as ‘hunting refugee’, organising rallies, and conducting public investigations.

Border vigilance in southern Bulgaria includes border patrols, hunting refugees who cross the border, everyday investigations the identity of people seeking asylum in the Harmanli refugee camp, and organising protests to demand the right to know who is in the camp. To justify their violence, the collective identity of those the vigilantes combines a collective feminised victim and a masculinised protector; the masculinised

protector patrols the border to protect the victimised national community. The national community is constructed as victimised in need of care. The victim position inspires and justifies anti-asylum repertoires, smoke-screened as care for the community. The performance of vigilance is projected as masculine protectors, politicising the sentiment of care of the community. The EU migration crisis is therefore framed as a tension of competing care needs: protecting the community versus caring for newcomers.

By understanding the European reception crisis as an event (Gergen & Gergen, 2011) that has changed the ways people talk and think of themselves, shaping a new period of history, we can understand the social dynamics in which the event has produced. Furthermore, we can dissect the European reception crisis within a particular context and over time, which allows us to explore how frames interact with new events that occur outside existing frames of understanding the problem. Seeing refugees in the camp as political and rebellious, for example, produced the discourse of ‘the riot’, which, for several of the interlocutors who were helpful on occasion, led to breaking the frame of care and shifting to a search for ‘illegal refugees’.

Several frames of injustice constitute the EU reception crisis, with various responses. Injustice and agency frames, therefore, relate to one another. The injustice frame has been the most widely used frame by all my informants narrating the EU reception crisis. In response to perceived injustices, various frames of agency developed from ordinary people. New nationalist identities emerged in Harmanli, who organised the protesting and vigilant public against refugees. Shaped around the new struggle to protect, vigilantes emerged in the protests in Harmanli, organised Initiative Committee For Harmanli with the ringleader, Slaveya. The vigilance of social boundaries, alongside the protest rallies, exclude Others while reshaping national and European identities.

In this chapter, I illustrated that even the anti-asylum movement and ordinary people who subscribe to it (but not necessarily belong to it) draw on a notion of care to form their politics and practices towards (or against) asylum. The idea of ‘we are good people and we care about real refugees, but...’ was followed by a varied list of care priorities. On the top of their lists were fears, framed as care, namely care for the local community, care for the security and the protection from terrorists, care for ‘our’ Bulgarian pensioners, and for care for the public spaces. New events around the refugee camp in Harmanli shape and re-shape these politics of care. For instance, the response to

the construction of a refugee camp in the former military barracks in 2013 was a catalyst for the need to care for the locals and making it permanent (2014-2015) was conceptualised as another moment of crisis for the locals. The contribution of this chapter is that anti-asylum activists draw on a politics of care, which smoke-screens their racist and Islamophobic positions and practices. While vigilance repertoires emerged since 2013 and resonated with society at large, including political leaders and border police, care networks of volunteers offered alternative discourses and practices.

Chapter 6. Care Repertoires in Harmanli

This chapter focuses on the pro-asylum activists' frames and practices of care. I explore the caring perspectives that offer an alternative to far-right discourses against immigration (Thorleifsson, 2017). In this thesis, the umbrella term of 'pro-asylum activists' incorporates the endeavours of caregivers, volunteers, social workers, and helpers in and around the refugee camp. It is pertinent to comprehend and draw from such care work which informs good practice. The set of responses advocating values of empathy, reception and care also need to be explored, because as Collyer and King (2016) argue the primary challenge to Europe's migration crisis is the 'seeming inability to show solidarity and empathy for the human suffering of others'.

Volunteers who work 'on the edge' (Papataxiarchis, 2016b), such as in European border regions, construct ideas of Self, Other, and Europe drawing on ideas of shared humanity that informs their practices of care. European collective identity ought to be conceptualised together with such pro-asylum activists and their care activities in response to immigration. The chapter draws on my interviews with long-term volunteers, helpers, social workers, and teachers of refugee children and their motivation for caring.

In the context of the humanitarian crisis, these actors developed new care networks. As the tent camp became a detention centre (Registration Reception Center in Harmanli), pro-asylum activists forged stronger links with each other which facilitated the care they provided to asylum seekers and refugees. Those activists who gained access to the detention centre became long-term volunteers. In the following sections, I explore the care provided in the tent camp and the subsequent detention centre.

6.1. Humanitarian Collective Action Frames

The discourse of empathy and humanity was voiced in a new way to support the struggle for refuge in the context of humanitarian collective action frames. Within this, we

witnessed the development of a ‘welcome culture’ (*Willkommen Kultur*) – soup kitchens, multicultural projects, exhibitions that exposed the suffering and hardship. Specific cultures such as Syrian and Kurdish were welcomed into the public sphere in Bulgaria and Europe. In 2015 Germany became a pioneer in this and offered a new vision to Europe. Angela Merkel’s famous quote ‘Wir schaffen das!’ [‘We can do this!’] became often cited by new volunteers in Germany (Glorius, 2017), while ‘Mother Merkel’ became a symbol of welcoming for refugees in Europe. The mobilization of volunteers and helpers included people who were never before involved in supporting immigration (Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017). In Germany, the interest to become a volunteer for refugees increased by 70% (Tsourdi *et al.*, 2016).

In rural Harmanli a few key organisations embodied the welcome culture. The Friends of Refugees group (In Bulgarian: *Priqteli na bezhantsite*) and the Harmanli Play and Learn Refugee School practices care in various ways. Both of these initiatives self-organised in direct response to support asylum seekers as early as 2013. As the temporary tent camp transformed into a permanent Registration and Reception Centre, the connection between the local helpers and newcomers transformed, leaving only long-term volunteers with access to the Centre to labour to care.

The analysis of the chapter is facilitated by collective action frames (similarly to Chapter 5). After ‘close reading’ the interview transcripts, my codes were grouped into action verbs, the repertoires of the pro-asylum movement, ‘speaking’, ‘organising’, ‘driving’, ‘asking’, ‘collecting’, ‘cooking’, ‘bringing’, ‘giving’ (agency) of voluntary activities and initiatives. Key findings discussed in this chapter are that firstly, the volunteers’ framing of the reception of refugees was in competition with the frames of vigilantes, discussed in Chapter 6. While this finding is similar to public opinion surveys on immigration, which suggest varying attitudes (as discussed in Chapter 2), the significance of the finding from Harmanli on competing attitudes is that such opposing frames of immigration compete with one another. This means that often the same events were framed radically differently by different ‘framers’. Sometimes such competition of opinions manifested in personal tensions between volunteers and protesters. In other words, the pro-refugee and anti-refugee views can be rooted in political contestations with one another, making it pertinent to highlight the perspectives of volunteer humanitarians, which are often side-lined in debates on immigration. The most significant difference is the framing of the period itself and the conceptualisation of injustice. For the volunteers,



Figure 2: 'The Children of Harmanli', 2013, UNHCR

Source: Creative Commons,

https://search.creativecommons.org/search?license=&license_type=&categories=&extension=&aspect_ratio=&size=&source=&q=harmanli&searchBy=&mature=

the period was a 'crisis of reception', while for the vigilantes it was framed as 'refugee crisis'. Secondly, the agency of the volunteers took on substantial coordination efforts, and personal sacrifices, shaping unrecognised labour, of care.

The humanitarian frame depicts the lives of people seeking refuge as visible. In the humanitarian setting, the spotlight is on forced fleeing and on experiences of refugeehood as hardship. 'Organising objects' of the humanitarian frame are the image of the tent camp, experiences of 'bare life', and the subjectivities of people – women and children at the forefront. Representations of the crisis are tents, camps, and poor living conditions. Frequently captured on camera or in a news story, the precarity of life of people seeking refuge, calls to solve the humanitarian crisis, as people's bodies remain on the border, to enter the frame of humanitarian aid. The UNHCR in Central Europe, has taken a photograph on 4 November 2013, titled 'The Children of Harmanli' (Image 1 and 2). Their description under this photograph states:

The Harmanli camp was set up to shelter 450 people. But 1,100 people are housed there. They live without hot water, winterized shelter, or proper heating. Food is scarce and the gates are locked (UNHCR, Kashavelov, 2013).



Figure 3: 'The Children of Harmanli Face a Bleak Winter', 2013, UNHCR

Source: Creative Commons,

https://search.creativecommons.org/search?license=&license_type=&categories=&extension=&aspect_ratio=&size=&source=&q=harmanli&searchBy=&mature=

The humanitarian crisis allows for the vulnerability of refugeehood (Chauvin & Garcés- Mascareñas, 2014a) to be visible to the host population. It emphasizes the precarity of the lives of people seeking refuge. As Gergana (60s, business owner) describes people 'left' out: 'Migrants were delivered in Harmanli usually at night and left there in the camp, which had no facilities functioning. It was with green tents'. The high number of people 'in need' justifies the international calls for a humanitarian solution to the problem. The photographs above are also from the beginning of the humanitarian crisis, in 2013. The description is given by the photographer, working for the UNHCR (Kashavelov, 2013) reflects the experiences of the deepening humanitarian crisis as the tent camp remains in the same conditions throughout the first year of its construction. The weather conditions to which the newcomers are entirely subjected changes:

Life might have been bearable in Harmanli if it were summer. But because of Harmanli's lack of resources, many asylum-seekers fear the coming winter and the unknown. Without adequate staff

to provide information what lies ahead is a mystery (UNHCR, Kashavelov, 2014).

The humanitarian frame has historically been deployed in recognition of the status of refugees. It is based on the premise of exclusion or inequality brought about by displacement, which challenges a universal condition of stability. In the *Journal of Migration History*, Tejel and Öztan (2020) discuss in detail the roles of state actors and non-state actors, such as humanitarian organisations, in mobilising humanitarianism to alleviate suffering and advance broader nation-building projects.

A hallmark of the European refugee crisis has been the lack of responsibility by the European Union and state actors, as evidenced by the EU-Turkey deal, and the formation of initiatives ‘on the ground’ or in ‘the grassroots’ (e.g. Dessewffy and Nagy, 2016; Bernát, 2019). The humanitarian crisis necessitates an urgent and comprehensive response, a questioning stance towards the reasons for the crisis. While ‘aid agencies’ have been historically associated with building the humanitarian frame, in the EU refugee crisis, they only one part, amongst volunteers and new initiatives. Elisa Sandri (2018) discusses the development of volunteer humanitarians in the Jungle Camp at Calais, to document precisely such responses, whereby people took on to address the crisis, where no state involvement was present to support the livelihoods of people seeking refuge.

The humanitarian crisis is an undisputed frame to comprehend the emergency. The first period of the EU migration crisis or ‘the first wave’ as the incumbent Mayor of Harmanli refers to it is generally now perceived as a period that was unjust for the people in what was then the tent camp. The ‘first wave’ took place from 2013 to 2014, when the camp began as a tent camp, gradually opening barracks in the abandoned former military in the summer of 2014. Emblematic of this period is the muck and the mire of the tents placed in the football field on the premises of the old military barracks. Living in the makeshift tents was associated by the locals with the ‘bare life’ (Darling, 2009; Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015; Nyers, 1998) shaped by the living conditions as people were delivered in the football fields of the former military barrack in Friendship Neighbourhood. All my informants in Harmanli understood the construction of the tent camp, as unjust because of the dire living conditions. As the extract from the Mayor of Harmanli summaries in our interview ‘the Harmanli people are very broad-minded and friendly because the initial wave of migrants was from Syrians - families with children. Everyone has done what they can to help. Clothes were collected, *martenitsas* - all the most humane.’ (Maria Kirkova,

Mayor of Harmanli) The practices of care, in her account include both necessities such as clothes and cultural symbols, such as the traditional bracelet for Bulgaria worn in the month of March – *martenitsas*⁸.

Because of the undeniably dire conditions of surviving a Bulgarian winter in tents, and lack of state involvement, helpers, and volunteers self-mobilised to offer practices of care. Social services, volunteers and support workers share the first dominant narrative on living conditions and injustice in the camp, which suggest injustice in the living conditions. For example, this extract illustrates the shock of this experience as our conversation continues together with other volunteers:

Say Emmy, the first days, who were on the front line, when the camp was made, who was the first? We. We bought them food. Like the one-time fenced camps. On one side... They had put some vans; there was no electricity and water, there was nothing,...

The interview extract above illustrates the experiences of ‘being on the line’ and ‘being first’ to respond in the context of unjust living conditions. The humanitarian injustices on the line inspired acts of caring. Choosing to go ‘on the line’, which is where emergency responses are needed, is the agency of volunteers and social workers. The injustice is elaborated as ‘the one-time fenced camp’, returning to the one-time, socialism, rather than living in the democratic present. My observation within the camp, four years after the tents, supports this view of unjust living conditions. Instead of doors, some rooms had curtains, and overcrowded people in one place, there were uncleaned areas around the bins where people lived, which was in contrast to the building of the management, which had green plants on the stairs and some decorations on the walls.

The role of the ‘front line’, the periphery, is symbolic in the practices of care. Papataxiarchis argues that on the beaches of the village of Skala Sykamnias, Greece:

Saving lives’ and ‘taking care’ of the immediate needs of the newcomers: this is what primarily takes place on the front line. Ensuring the safe passage of displaced people and the continuation of their journey into Europe comes secondarily. From a volunteer point of view, being on the front line and

⁸ While a part of a pagan tradition, the *martenitsa* and the festivity it is associated with – Grandma Marta – is celebrated by both the Bulgarian and Bulgarian-Romani communities, and less so by the Bulgarian - Turkish community. Part of the festivity is decorating red and white threads on the hands, as a broach, and on animals, too.

offering these services has a special value. It is a mark of distinction. It makes all the difference (2016:6).

Border scapes are places on the front line, and while most often also spaces of transition to the rest of Europe, new practices of care emerge which shape the newcomer-host relationship, what it means to be human, and the experiences of community. The frame of a humanitarian emergency includes no access to basic resources and the refugees as victims. The extract below illustrates how police officers took the initiative to serve food in the tent camp of the former military.

In the early years, it was like that - very difficult. There were no conditions here, no stability... some packages were being handed out to them, there was no kitchen. It was not very easy. There was nowhere to sleep, and there was a tent camp. This tent camp in the winter is something scary. The conditions in 2013 were severe. I was at the police station then, and I ordered police officers from a cauldron to put food in them with a ladle. Can you imagine? Is this the job of a police officer? However, we did it. They came in suddenly, and we were not ready. It is different now. (Ivan, in his 50s, state employee)

Caring because of being human is at the basis of the humanitarian frame. This motivation to offer emergency care is a frame that resonates strongly in the early stages of a crisis (Voutira, 2018; Hyndman and Giles, 2018), but 'once that emergency is over and the subjects are no longer at risk of dying the attention goes, and they cease to be of interest' (Bloch and Donà, 2018: 14). The humanitarian frame can extend into long-term care, whereby the support initiatives become integrated into the daily rhythm of those apprehending themselves as caring inhabitants. The humanitarian frame (injustice frame) aligns with care (agency frame) and volunteers (identity frame). For the long-term volunteers, who continued to offer care, the frame of humanitarian emergency extended beyond basic resources to include the freedom to move.

At that time [in 2013] they were just left there as luggage, without check-in, without anything, without the right to go out. They were locked because they were not registered. They don't have a registration document. They don't have anything until the 2014 administration was established and staff were trained. Some did not get registered until February [2014]. And in fact, at this time [2013-2014], most people were locked inside. Only occasionally with cops, say, a group of 10 people would go out, go to the store, and return. Then pick a few more people to go shopping and come back. In fact, people had no contact at all, and everything was locked (Valeria, 44, long-term volunteer).

The humanitarian discourse often emphasises the vulnerability of asylum seekers and their forced movement (rather than voluntary or economic migration). The frame of humanitarian is sometimes challenged by the political activism of refugees. When refugees are portrayed as political subjectivities, the frame of humanitarian emergency can be challenged or broken, although not for the long-term volunteers. The stability of the humanitarian frame depends on people in general accepting that the state and bureaucratic elites are responsible for what happens to refugees, and thus for constructing refugeehood. Humanitarianism shapes how immigration is arranged in liberal democracies (Fassin, 2011:221). Helping refugees, then is the struggle to establish care for human. In her work 'We Refugees', Arendt proposes that the figure of the refugee precedes the figures of the citizen and the associated with it human rights (Agamben, 1995). The human rights of citizens are constructed only in relation to a nation-state, not before and not in the cases of statelessness. From this understanding, that what is universal is not human rights of the citizen, but of the human.

The Arendtian refugee is used as an example of the universal person, 'the pure man in himself', without a state or a stateless person, without a clear distinction between the two (Agamben, 1995). Refugee rights as the rights of human beings, however, are the problem of nation-states. As Agamben in his analysis of Arendt's work contends: 'The paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man par excellence, the refugee, constitutes the radical crisis of this concept (1995:116) instead. The rights of human beings or human rights then, have become the rights of citizens, not humans. Furthermore, the notion of citizens proves itself inadequate cosmopolitan care (Czobor-Lupp, 2018). Voutira (2018:69) analyses the relationship between newcomers on the island of Lesbos, Greece and the host population and argues that refugees 'deny' the local hospitality as they are not interested in settling in Greece but rather seek 'sanctuary elsewhere in northern Europe'.

6.2. Care Collective Action Frame

The European refugee crisis has mobilised large numbers of volunteers who support short-term and long-term 'welcoming' of refugees (Papataxiarchis, 2016; Mikaba, 2016; Voutira, 2018; Sandri, 2018), which is based on the awareness that some people may want to migrate further North. These pre-existing and new actors have emerged as a response

to the chaos of the crisis while advancing the discourses and practices on immigration. Voutira (2018: 64-65) describes these agents as those ‘who are trying to be useful’, while the motivations underpinning the initiatives and the degree of engagement with the locals vary and produce different identities of the volunteers (Papataxiarchis, 2016; Voutira, 2018). Specific in the context of the hotspots in Greece, Papataxiarchis (2016) identifies six main groups – solidarians, ‘volunteers’, professional humanitarians, e-volunteers, well-wishers and other humanitarian pilgrims, and ordinary people.

The solidarians for Papataxiarchis (2016) are ‘informed by strong ideological imperatives. For the ‘solidarians’, being there is part of a utopian project: making a self-organized collectivity built on ‘solidarity’ and ‘horizontality’ – bringing together people from all different quarters in order to stand by the refugees with ‘dignity’ (ibid:8). These newcomers at the front line- the solidarians in Greece - are often informed by the Occupy movement and fight against the austerity measures, which was particularly hard in Greece. In Bulgaria, while such groups are also formed and in solidarity with refugees, they are mostly in Sofia, and less in Harmanli, at least at the time of my research (2017-2018). Solidarians in Sofia have been active in organising pro-refugee protests, in solidarity with immigration (Gilishev, 2015). In Harmanli, two solidarians have come out to protest with banners against the prosecution of the 21 men arrested and kept in detention in relation to what has been described by Bulgarian media as ‘the riot’ (Harmanli 21, 12 October 2018).

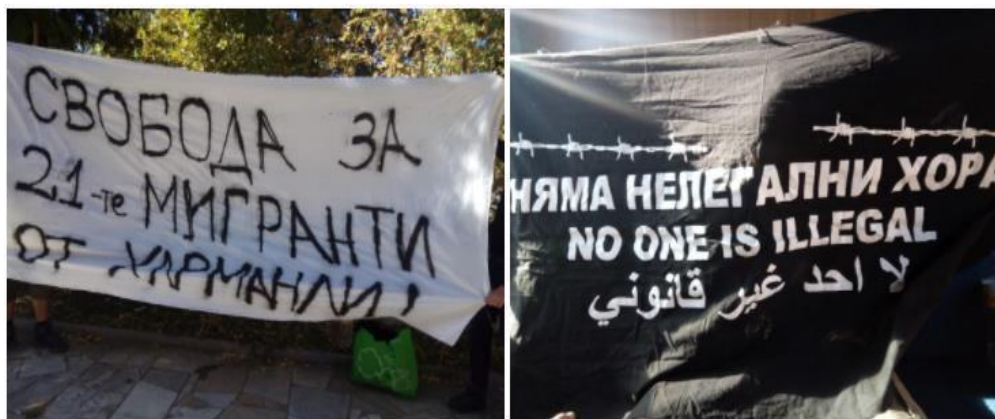


Figure 4: Banners from Solidarians in Harmanli

Source: Harmanli 21, 2018, <https://harmanli21.wordpress.com/>

Their banners (Figure 4) ‘No one is illegal’ and ‘Freedom for the 21 migrants from Harmanli’ resonate with the no border left-wing movement discourse, which existed

prior to the ‘refugee crisis’ (Gill, 2009), yet was not developed at the border community of Harmanli. The solidarians in Harmanli resonating a no border argument have addressed specific concerns with the detention of the men such as the postponing of their trial, the lack of migrant voices as witnesses to the events of ‘the riot’, their containment in a closed facility camp.

For us it is not important if they were really part of the riot or not. We are in solidarity with them because they are used in order to stage another example of the criminalization of migrants resistance. (Harmanli 21, 14 September 2018)

In addition to solidarians, border regions with camps experience another type of relationship of care and corresponding identity – volunteers (Papataxiarchis, 2016:8). The volunteers Papataxiarchis describes in Greece are similar to those in Harmanli. People who want ‘to help’ based on religious motivations underpinned by a belief in the salvation of everyone, or by civic duties urged by a belief that a historical tragedy is unfolding.

‘Help’ may be conceived in a variety of ways: in ‘humanitarian terms’, as a duty of compassion to a suffering fellow ‘human being’ and a response to a ‘need’; in civic terms, as a defining ingredient of civic duty, often inspired by the understanding that this tragedy is also ‘history in the making’; or in strictly religious terms, as a moral imperative informed by a sense of community with Christ and an opportunity to ‘preach the word of God’ (Papataxiarchis, 2016:8).

Some of my interviewees conceived of helping share a religion, such as being Muslim, and speaking Turkish. According to the 2011 Census, nearly 8 % of the population identified as ‘Muslim’ and with native language ‘Turkish’. In recent research 15 % of the population identified as Muslim (Pew Research Centre, 2017:20). Meltem, one of my interlocutors who self-identified as Muslim and Turkish, helped refugees with clothes donations. She did not cite religion or ethnicity as formative of her caring activities, but was aware of friends of hers who did.

Meltem (in her 70s, poet): Yes, and they [a Syrian family] learned a little Turkish in Turkey, in a camp, and somehow they came here, probably not with consent, they just ran away. I know them. Their child had diabetes. Here we have tennis courts, there the person in charge of the tennis courts voluntarily fed this family every day because of the child that he has diabetes, especially with diet food. There were already many Syrians in the military barracks. There may have been others, but this child was special

to him [the tennis court manager] because they knew Turkish and they told him.

Interviewer: So he speaks Turkish?

Meltem: Yes. I happened to be there because we know each other, and I asked him: "They come here" - "No" - he says - "I provide for them to feed them simply because the child has diabetes." There were a lot of good things that happened.

As this extract illustrates, the Turkish language was a medium of communication, a bridge for establishing care. It facilitated the Syrians to ask for help and the Tennis Court manager to offer it. Communicating in Turkish facilitated the care relationship between newcomers and locals. It was not the Muslim identity. The Turkish language was a medium for offering 'simply' what is needed, care. In this case, it was a special food regime for a child with diabetes. As the family was able to explain their need in Turkish to the Tennis Court Manager, he felt 'specially' connected to the struggles of refuge and special needs. In addition to the Turkish language, Russian was also identified by my interlocutors as facilitating caring activities of the host population.

Irina Stavrova: So the old people [studied] in the former Soviet Union, the young people in Russia, and they knew a lot of Russian. And when we were going at the beginning [in the camp] until they arranged to bring them food from Lyubimets or Pastrogor [closed-type refugee camps on the border], I don't know from where they brought them [food] from at the beginning. Then they repaired the kitchen block in the military barracks. We cooked in the high school with products we collected!

Meltem: And clothes, yes.

Irina Stavrova: I asked the once director of the Pioneer Home, for the canteen in the high school. And we started carrying lentils, beans, potatoes, jars of tomatoes... We collected them just here at the club, everyone brings.

Meltem: Yes.

Irina Stavrova: And we went to distribute there [in the camp] with the ladle! And we distributed the bread, and we distributed the soup, there was no administration yet, there was only our local police. And those people who knew Russian cooperated with us. They translated ...everything with them.

This extract is representative of the accounts of interlocutors who believed they could be helpful. What is characteristic about the helper identity is that this role is mainly concerned with the initial period of providing emergency care in the tent camp. The communication was possible in Russian, and the helpers were also Bulgarians speaking

Russian, who studied Russian themselves during communism. Demographically, these people tended to be in their 50s and older. They organized themselves in response to the crisis. Moreover, they also felt supported by the local police. This identity of the helper is associated with acts of sharing goods and supplies with the newcomers. They could be described as short-term helpers until the Registration Reception Centre was established. The people who helped occasionally. Specifically, they did not identify themselves with the 'Friends of Refugees' groups, which principally uses English to communicate with people seeking refuge. The ability to communicate in English, offered possibilities to relate to the diverse groups of people in the Harmanli refugee camp, while also reaching deeper levels of knowing one another.

I was teaching an English course, for a more advanced level, with people who speak. There were people from different countries, and it was very interesting. They are different - the Syrians are different from the Iraqis, the Iranians are different, and so on. We usually read a text, stop, comment on something, the conversation goes somewhere. It was a question of women's rights. They have the idea that we have them, and for a while in Europe. I reply, 'Hm, not really!' They were very surprised, for example, when women started voting. I reply, 'Well, yes, it's not that long ago (Valeria, long-term volunteer).

The identity of the volunteer, in contrast to the helper, resonates with belonging to the Friends of Refugee group, which is a nation-wide group. The volunteer and the social service worker are also close in their activities of support, such as protecting unaccompanied minors. Both volunteer and social services felt alienated from the governing municipality, who were often constructed as those providing obstacles to integration practices. The social service workers, of course, are paid for their work, while the volunteers would mostly take the weekends or after work hours to volunteer and care. It was volunteers who organized fundraising campaigns and individual support for people in the camp. Valeria has been perhaps one of the most active volunteers; others include members of an evangelical church or individual people, who also happen to live outside Harmanli.

In Harmanli, volunteers are brought together by online groups Friends of the Refugees, created in the Summer of 2013. The European Website on Integration notes that volunteers of the Friends of the Refugees group 'discuss all the questions that refer to refugees (housing, health care, education, employment, family reunification,

etc.)'(EWASI Editorial Team, 2016). Volunteers who became a part of this group, such as Valeria, illustrate the motivation to care for refugees in Harmanli.

Valeria: I don't have a car. Pastrogor, [a closed-type refugee camp], is near Svilengrad [130 km]. By the way, I've been following this topic since about 2009.

Interviewer: 2009?

Valeria: There were no waves of refugees then. There were single people who came. What happened to them? The main problem is with those who close them. [...]

Valeria: And we went one time to Pastrogor, to see what was happening, and to make contacts. Already these Friends of Refugees had given us their contacts. So, we started going three of us [female friends] for some more significant activities. In this way we combined with the others. In fact, on Saturdays and Sundays, when the bosses [of the camps] were gone, we distributed various aids. The security guards were okay. They let us distribute donations from the outside. People made lists, they had cards and so on. Still, things were more civilised. While in Harmanli camp – they had no documents. There was some chaos. We didn't have access to there. We were granted access at a later stage. So, we first went from 15 September, something like that, 2013. After about a month they gave us official access to Pastrogor, and in Harmanli they let us go in for the first time on the last day of November.

This extract shows how one becomes a volunteer in the EU migration crisis and highlights the shared themes of injustice with other causes which motivated volunteering activities before the crisis. She brings out the need to 'follow this topic' with other 'main problems'. It highlights the first steps of becoming a volunteer. It appears that it depended on knowing who the other volunteers were and contacting them. The *Friends of Refugees* network of people mainly communicate online and have subgroups for each community in Bulgaria. It appears that being a volunteer is not related to the location but is rather concerned with identifying issues with containment of immigration and the related limited access to provide donations and address the needs of detainees. The first steps described in the extract are to go to Pastrogor, another camp in a border village. Harmanli is characterised as 'chaos' in respect of having access or knowing what is necessary. Valeria contends that she was able to have access as a volunteer, granted by the State Agency for Refugees (in Sofia). Volunteering happened 'on Saturday and Sunday' or with other larger groups at the very beginning. This was a person who has from 'the beginning'-- which she identifies as the first cases of 'problem'--recognised that the

problem was with people being ‘closed’. Closed camps are essentially detention centres, where the detainees are not allowed to exit or have visitors. She identified that as people were being detained, there was no one who could help them or offer support. The ‘Friends of Refugees’ group was an avenue for her to reach people in detention and offer the needed care.

A key distinction between the long-term volunteers, such as Valeria and helpers is the time and labour invested in care. Valeria had started from 2009 and was labouring care, with drives to Harmanli when I interviewed her in 2017. Valeria is one of the people who has continued developing her caring agency throughout the EU reception crisis. Others who have acted in response to the crisis have varying commitment and have shorter involvement in helping. This has, in turn, shaped different identities of the responses vis-à-vis the EU reception crisis, such as helpers and volunteers. Valeria's continuous commitment has shaped her identity, and she identified as ‘a volunteer’. Besides the time invested in the labour of care (Fraser, 2011), long-term volunteers have a different interpretation of the ‘crisis’ than short-term helpers, who mainly cared in 2013-2014. For the helpers, such as Meltem and Irina the cause of injustice was the dire living conditions (no food, no electricity, no clothes, no sanitation). For Valeria, in contrast, ‘the main problem was with those who close them’. Having volunteered by delivering donations to various refugee camps on the border, such as Pastrogor, Lybimets and Harmanli, she identified the different management and encampment as causing the crisis.

Professional humanitarians are those volunteers who continue to be recruited by non-governmental organisations (Papataxiarchis, 2016). Perhaps the closest example in Harmanli would be the Harmanli Refugee Camp Play School, founded in November 2014 by two British volunteers living in Harmanli Refugee Camp. The school provides activities and lessons for up to 300 children. The state agency supports it by providing the room in the camp. Unlike in Greece, however, many of the ‘professional humanitarians’ (Papataxiarchis, 2016:8-9) working in the camp were local people who were not a priori volunteers and did not necessarily construct a moral need to help. These were young people in their twenties and thirties, living in Harmanli or neighbouring villages. Often without education related to the role, they were allegedly the only candidates for these positions, given the context of growing xenophobia in the country and the region. These were people who did not construct the frame of care or volunteering. Their work conditions had placed them in the everyday experience and construction of the discourse

of humanitarian. Papataxiarchis's (2016) category of ordinary people can be partially applied in Harmanli. He points out that those most likely to help in the 'hot spots' are the 'grannies', because it is the normal thing to do.

The State Agency for Refugees has been organising refugeehood in Harmanli since 2014. Entry can only be for a valid reason and requires permission from the headquarters in Sofia, shaping the role of ordinary people as excluded from caring. However, the grannies and other helpers played a key role in the period before the camp transferred the concrete building of the former military, when it was still a tent camp in the football fields of the barracks. Their 'roles' took the form of acts of kindness and donations. In Harmanli, most close to Papataxiarchis's (2016) ordinary people are those staying on the sidelines – 'the majority of the villagers remain at the margins – silent, tired and perplexed'. The first extract is representative of a care frame developed by volunteers and people who resonate with their ideas. These are people who responded with acts of kindness, had their coordination, and took on to provide emergency care.

Volunteers continued with various care labour after the Reception Centre was constructed and the room of the old military barracks opened (2014-2015). The instrumentalization of fleeing people has had different effects on different audiences. Being empathetic emerged as being uncomfortable with what one sees and experiences.

6.3. Care Networks about Refugees in Border Towns

The newly opened centres pose another question about care for people seeking refuge. While the structures of care are not functioning, ordinary people have taken up care networks for providing care. The municipality appears to have not practised care, mainly because it does not have to do so. It is not procedurally obliged, while it is the only unit able to provide that care.

While the decentralisation of responsibilities on the integration of refugees to municipalities appears to be a sensible step forward, the fact that the discharge of such responsibilities is not mandatory but left to the discretion of municipalities has resulted in a complete lack of action by municipalities (Boček, 2018: 3-4).

Municipalities have the power to engage with integration initiatives to make sure the migrants are on the job market, have access to housing, perhaps some support for the

first months of housing. While the latter is actually part of a national fund, there is a lot of missing knowledge about the possibility to apply for housing funds and for those knowing they are trapped by the time constraints in a Bulgarian-only speaking administration, as the report itself raises as an issue. The municipalities are part of local government, they have their own budget and the areas of distribution are voted by the local council. This gives substantial power to the local government to determine its priorities and its needs as well as its overall identity. While I was in Harmanli, the budget included provisions for reproductive support for couples, a day centre for people with disabilities, a water sanitation project, funds for the local history museum and for *Na Harmana* Festival, which upholds the national traditions. No provisions were brought up for integration, even though additional funding for that would have been given from the national government. The additional funds for housing, employment in effect would have filled the pockets of local Harmanlians, yet the monetary incentive was sidestepped by the identity.

In Harmanli we had a very open and frank discussion with the members of the Municipal Council and the Mayor. The Council members explained their concerns about the lack of information regarding the number of migrants and refugees in the city. The contacts between the local population in Harmanli and refugees in RCCs are limited to refugee children attending local schools and the normal exchanges in local shops. The Municipality Council raised concerns about a number of challenges regarding the integration of refugees in the local society, such as those relating to cultural differences, lack of work opportunities in the region and potential difficulties to integrate descendants of refugees in the longer term. However, we felt that there was genuine goodwill to engage in dialogue to overcome these challenges. The Bulgarian Government should engage in dialogue with local authorities not only to promote a positive image and tolerance towards immigration but also to address concerns about the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Without such engagement, the Integration Agreements mentioned above could remain a dead letter (Boček, 2018: 20).

The conditions of the centres are further indicative of the need to care, beyond the lack of involvement of the municipality. The lack of care at all levels of governance, however, has meant that there is a vacuum in the care labour in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, which has been taken up by local networks of care. These can be seen as ‘objective’, practical callings for care. Yet, they are not unanimous and self-explanatory. They are not devoid of politics. Such calls for care were voiced by NGOs and individual

activists. People closely working in the camps also brought up these needs to care as an ongoing ‘objective’ reality. The discourse is explained by ethics of care, the care for the other (Czobor-Lupp, 2018). Care defines ethics to care for the neighbour, for the person who is, by definition in need and a recipient of care (Czobor-Lupp, 2018). For those not directly involved in the care for people seeking refuge, such as NGOs, activists, camp workers, the objectivity of the need to care was contested. The need to care, in these cases, had to be justified.

Care can be understood not only as material practices and meaning-making (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) within one particular institution, such as a hospital or a camp. Instead, care can be a part of a broader social sphere, defining people as ‘selves-in-connection’ (Clark Miller, 2011:396; Czobor-Lupp, 2018). In my fieldwork, the way care was administered for people seeking refuge can be identified as a network, mostly because of the way life in the camp was organised. In contrast to popular views, which suggest that the asylum system in Bulgaria is centralised, the research has highlighted various forms of connections that exist ‘on the ground’. Indeed, while some research on camps proposes that camps are ‘total institutions’, doing research in a migration-concentrated settlement such as Harmanli, I have come to see how camps, and the Registration Reception Centre in Harmanli in particular, areas in fact closely linked, connected to the community within which it is located.

What this means is that the social sphere is composed of a network of people, partly, occasionally, consistently, regularly and intermittently relating. They use different means to sustain the relationships to come into contact, thereby the network of care has different energy and intensity. Care within society, rather than within an institution, relates to networks of people who labour to care. As Leira and Saraceno (p.55) argue:

the analysis of care, and the actors, relationships and contexts involved, is not a linear or additive process’. After all, an individual is vulnerable and a part of an interdependent nexus of human relationships (Tronto, 1993; Engster, 2005; Clark Miller, 2011).

Networks of care are formed by people relating in a way which clusters meaning and practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) of care. The knowledge producers on the local scene become those with the closest point of contact to the reception centre. The workers in the camp or those living around the camp are the bearers of news about what is going on. Knowledge is produced by observing what is close, yet at the same time, there is a

search for knowledge. ‘What is going on’ is snooped or investigated and shared via networks. These are networks existing to provide care. What care is and for who it should be granted varies. Nonetheless, the networks of care build subjectivities of the active modern citizen.

Key people in the network of care are Valeria, social services (Nevena, Maria, Iva), the organisers of Harmanli Refugee Camp Play School, Julia and her mother, mediators employed by Caritas who work in the Registration Reception Centre after receiving their refugee status, the two local journalists (Ivan Atanasov and Milena Miteva), a secondary school headmaster (Irina Stavrova), a lawyer, a leader of a local women’s group (Tanya). These people become key either because of their access to resources of care (legal information, transport, access to interpreters, time). These are people I met personally in the fieldwork, while from them I heard about others who were in contact, engaged with care practices in different capacities. Each contributed to the welfare of people seeking refuge.

Valeria, 44 years old, has been a volunteer (In Bulgarian: *dobrovolets*) in the camp since the start of the crisis. She was able to receive permission from SAR in 2014, while before that would deliver the donations to the security guards of the camp. She is a teacher, married with a child, and adopted an unaccompanied minor. She has been nominated for the award Human of the Year for her voluntary work, awarded by the human rights organisation Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. Her work has been indispensable in the local reception, while her blogposts have illuminated the living conditions of the camp – a perspective missing in the Bulgarian public sphere. Her opinions on immigration (expressed through her blog and FB groups on refugees) refer to legal documents concerning nationality, international human rights, and immigration policy. She holds informed opinions and often takes the position of ‘human rights’ perspective.

Child services in Bulgaria have a long-standing tradition in offering care, in line with institutional scope. They arrived in the fields of the tents and were amongst the first people to organise emergency food collections for asylum seekers, when the state agency for refugees was not functioning on the grounds of the former military camp. The members of staff, working in the communist building in an outskirt of Harmanli, are female, friendly, and well connected with the new Friends of the Refugees group. One of the major challenges they face is caring for unaccompanied minors – children who have

been sent to seek asylum by themselves, as the family was only able to afford the tariff for one, or whose parent may not have survived the journey. In such cases, social services are signalled by the refugee camp's management and social services are tasked with finding a home for the child, ideally in the form of a guardian. Without clear guidance on how to find an appropriate person, and the refusal of municipalities to share the responsibility and receive children across the country (rather than only in the border town social services), children remain in a state of limbo. Of course, it is illegal to detain children, yet with the lack of infrastructure, cooperation in this care – many remain detained in the refugee camp, needing a guardian to care for them.

When we receive information about unaccompanied minors and start looking for a suitable foster family or a cottage for that child when social services in different municipalities hear 'a refugee' they say 'there are no vacancies' because the municipalities are afraid of the refugees' (Social worker, 40).

In our conversation, the social worker later added that 'Because the mayor is afraid, there is such an order not to accept such children. And here's your problem'. Her account illustrated how the question about care necessitates a network of support, in the case of the municipality administration being 'afraid' of refugee children.

Non-governmental organisations and charities such as International Organisation for Migration, UNHCR, Caritas have a space (a room or so) on the premises in the refugee camp and offer care for its inhabitants. The carers there are paid, Bulgarian nationals and also refugees from different nationalities hired as mediators. Ani, for instance, is 28, she studied Social Work in the UK and returned to work in Harmanli. Scare work for the cause of refugees, she tells me is the most prevalent in Bulgaria now. She is not from Harmanli and similarly to me struggled with finding accommodation in the small border town and was able to befriend only people from the camp. Not all staff were as qualified as Ani. Responding to the call for mediators were graduates in Biology and Nursing, who found no other work opportunities in the area.

The qualification of the care staff was not the main factor in determining the quality of care. For Niazi, 29 years old, a dentist by profession, from Aleppo, Syria, being a mediator meant that he could help those who were just arriving in the camp. In this way the struggles he went through would have the meaning to help others. He had received the status of refugee, learnt conversational Bulgarian language, and was bridging the work in the camp with living in town. He knew where to get coffee in town from non-

judgemental staff, who happened to be one of my key gatekeepers, Auntie Venera. His continuous work in the camp had gained him respect amongst the chief staff of the NGOs. His girlfriend and a local friend added to the social life he built in the two years he had been in Harmanli. For Niazi, the poverty of the locals was a sufficient explanation for the general lack of hospitality and distance.

Claire is a woman who came with her mother from Brighton, UK to Harmanli when refugees in Bulgaria increased and international media began publishing comments on the horrible conditions in camps. Sadie George is the founder of 'Harmanli Refugee Camp Play School', which also has a platform on FB. Sadie and her mother organise activities for children of various age groups living in the camp. The Facebook page of the school includes daily posts, illustrating the care work performed in the two rooms in the camp. The posts are related to photos of the children in the camp and activities and do not have political content. She describes herself as a 'Teacher' in the camp. Both she and her mother were nominated as Human of the Year for 2015.

Dimitar G. is a white male, in his 50s, a local journalist who, together with his colleague, publish a local newspaper. Dimitar has built a playground for young boys in the camp to help keep the youth occupied. He also taught his trade, especially photography and filmmaking, to a few interested newcomers. He is a point of contact for international journalists coming to Harmanli, as well as volunteers from around the country. While he is participating in practices of care, he does not publicise it or take a clear 'welcoming' position in his newspaper – after all, he tells me, it needs to reflect on the readership's interests if he wants to stay in business.

All these key actors in the reception of refuge know each other, work together, and volunteer for the same cause. Care work is imagined as an initiative undertaken by the individual (or organisation) on its own accord, via the legitimate means and resources each can have. Yet, their network is developed in privacy. In contrast to the vigilantes, who publicise calls for protests and invite the general public to follow, care-providers' work could be better characterised as a network of key people, who work to cooperate, share responsibilities, start initiatives to address specific needs and concerns. This coordination, then, is private rather than a public enterprise. They are less likely than the vigilantes to rely on the public for advancing their cause, or to be interested in shaping public opinion in their direction.

It is one thing when I offer my perspectives. I am not a person who is trusted in the local community. I am perceived as someone who directs some bad people [laughs] and who presents things the way I please. In my view, it is the media who should offer various perspectives.’ (Valeria, 44, teacher and long-term volunteer).

Looking at the response to immigration, therefore, there emerges a network of care, individuals, organisations, or services, with diverse reasons for participating. This suggests a diversity of actors involved in caring reception practices towards immigration in Europe. In addition to the network type relationship between volunteers, which was necessitated by practices of the encampment and a humanitarian emergency, the discourse and practices of volunteers is in direct relation with vigilantes in Harmanli. The extract below illustrates the views of a long-term volunteer in relation to one of the organisers of protests:

‘Slaveya began to appear in local media, then - national, and so on. In fact, police chiefs came out, who said that there were no crimes committed by these people. On the contrary - the only ones who are connected with them are against them! Let's say one of them had his phone stolen, another - something happened’ (Valeria, 44, long-term volunteer).

In turn, one of the searches for information that vigilantes conduct is into such volunteers as Valeria. Photographs of Valeria in public places were part of the Initiative Committee for Harmanli Facebook group, suggesting success in identifying volunteers as assisting the ‘traffic’ of people through the border and against Mother Bulgaria. To address fears posed by vigilantes in the Initiative Committee, a part of Valeria’s voluntary work has included offering an information meeting to Harmanlians, to share some of her knowledge as an insider in the camp. This suggests that the attitudes towards immigration from two distinct groups of frames – volunteers and vigilantes – have a dialectical relationship – the one could inform the responses and discourses by the other. This is significant as often attitudes against immigration appear as apolitical and independent of the social context in which they originate.

It is interesting to see how the report by Boček relates to the ‘caring deficit’ (Hochschild, 1995), which is a shortage of resources for providing care. On the one hand, Boček examines what care practices have taken place on the local level. On the other hand, Boček is a representative of the EU as a caring structure. He, therefore, is in a position to offer care, to be a caregiver, to the local community, for migration. This was illustrated when the head of the social services, Natalia, asks him, what are social services

doing in other countries with respect to child migrants travelling alone. Natalia is asking for sharing knowledge of the caring practices standard for the EU. In other words, the ‘caring deficit’ is a dynamic which, while it may involve caring practices, such as those developed by social services and Natalia’s colleagues, has not been accomplished within policies or practices of care.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that people care about refugees within a limited scope. It suggests that there are variations as to who cared is for, who needs care, who is worthy of emotional and economic care labour, and who is not. Understanding the politics of care and interpretations of the larger societal values can be grasped. There is little or no coordinated effort from the state and municipality. Using Harmanli as my case study, I have demonstrated that there is a friction between the European, the national and the local when it comes to migration management on the border. EU involvement advocates a humanitarian approach and rational strategies for managing a broad and continuing crisis. The nation-state encamps migration in reception centres which turn into prolonged ‘hot spots’. The local government has all the say in migration integration and offers no cooperation. The population is left with little or no information, and little or no opportunity to manage what is now their daily situation. Political activism emerges in the camp and outside. Populist politics and protests take place in the border regions or the periphery, yet are voiced out in the national and European sphere. It appears that local actors in the periphery (camp security guards, cooks, teachers) with proximity to the encampment and the politics of care have the power to shape migration attitudes throughout Europe. These insights arise from doing intensive fieldwork in a specific refugee-hosting border community. Nonetheless, the case of Harmanli is unlikely to be a unique case, and the dynamics observed there are probably found in many other communities which host refugees (Papataxiarchis, 2016b). These insights are instructive when considering European responses to migration and refugees more broadly.

The networks of care are crucial to understanding the relationship between nationalism and migration. Because there was no understanding of the networks of care in 2013 and after, the networks were ignored by the migration management plans. In other

words, there was no compatibility between what existed locally as networks of care and what caring practices were expected to take place with the construction of the camp in the military base or with the expansion of the camp.

Another finding that surfaces by looking at refugee reception through the prism of care is that care as a concept and as a practice was debated or politicised within the existing local networks of care. This means that the antagonisms and politics of who, how and when to care took place from within the realm of the existing social world. This contradicts the common sense understanding that the arrival of people seeking refuge is the cause for indignation and anti-immigrant politics and policies. I have argued that the networks of people and the power people have within them has remained the dominant framework for defining care. The contestation of who needs care, or the often-presented group conflict between the insiders and outsiders, the local and the migrants, then is one which reproduced 'in-group' dynamics. The contesters are those from within the network of care. The problem of how to integrate people seeking refuge, one which surfaced after 2013, is then not a problem of the 'outsider' or of the 'other'. At least not as is often understood in populist rhetoric or in migration policymaking, the latter focusing on technocratic administration of numbers of admissions, segregation of migration populations based on ethnicity (e.g. Afghan, Syrian, Iraqi, Africans). Looking at the politics of care, we have come to see how existing power dynamics take place in the sphere of 'crisis' management. It is these key actors who played a crucial role in defining the discourse on care and the material conditions for care. Most notable here is a local towns adviser, also a journalist, who takes a power position to define who is a 'refugee'. A 'refugee' is contaminating; therefore, the politics of care are towards the community of the town adviser, to protect from contamination and re-constitute her won position of power.

A further concluding point can be drawn from this chapter for further research and practices of care. To understand local politics of care for people seeking refuge in any context, it is useful to think of the actors who participate in the local social sphere as key actors or as bystanders – acknowledging that knowledge is produced locally and as the material structure unfolds (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), to produce new practices of care and new knowledge on care, local networks of people, power and materiality ought to be considered strategically.

I have tried to explore the motivations for caring for refugees in the border region. I identify that religion is a motivating factor, language, and the settlement of refugees in Bulgaria. Christian refugees, while not present, were identified as preferable, while those Syrians who spoke Russian were able to become closer to the older Harmanlians. English speaking volunteers who tended to be younger developed long-term caring practices, beyond the humanitarian emergency of 2013. Another hospitable trait towards newcomers is for those who settle in Harmanli. Harmanlians perceive well the settlement in flats and the establishment of businesses by refugees, which contributes to them feeling tolerant and accepting. The transiting nature of the border region, and the high number of people passing by but not staying is in general a reason to withdraw care and hospitality. One reason is the fear that they all may one day return, which would outnumber the local population. Another reason is that the transition reaffirms feelings of being 'left behind' in Bulgaria, where it is not good enough to live, a construct of national identity. I have tried to illustrate that the main reason for less care and hospitality in Harmanli is due to the way the camp was transformed as permanent and managed. This created distance between the locals and the newcomers in the camp, which also shifted the call to care: from the networks of care in the town, towards the state management of the Registration Reception Centre. The humanitarian frame ended once the Centre was built as such.

Chapter 7. The Established Refugees: Remembering Thracian refugees in Harmanli

Solidarity was an organising frame for pro-asylum activism from Greece to Germany, to Calais. It was, broadly speaking, based on solidarity as humans. It was solidarity with people who before wars in the Middle East had a good life, many had good education who lost it and found themselves refugees. A type of solidarity of ‘it could have been me’ if I happened to be born there. Some of the solidarians in Germany, developed solidarity because of their own migrant background as *gasterbaiters*, guest workers from Turkey in the 1960 and 1970s who had to start a new life in a foreign country. Solidarity is a powerful act and frame. It has the power to change the living conditions of people in camps, to offer vital services and support. In the context of Europe’s hospitality crisis, arguably it was the solidarity of ordinary people, often those who were not politicised before, to offer acts of kindness and sustained support to people seeking asylum. This makes solidarity an intriguing practice and discourse, which scope I wanted to explore in the context of the southern Bulgarian border. Like many border regions, the town of Harmanli is characterised by having a migration history, and more particularly asylum history. While I was aware of the refugee history of the southern Bulgarian border region, its prominence for the local identity emerged during the fieldwork. As discussed in Chapter 6, solidarity with refugees was formed on the basis of shared humanity and care for the people who were forced to migrate.

Following one of the sub-questions for the thesis, how do different groups of people frame immigration and the reception of refugees in everyday debates in the European border context, I explore the perspectives of the families with refugee backgrounds on the current ‘refugee’ crisis. In this chapter I explore why there was no solidarity formed on the basis of refugeehood, i.e. between families with refugee intergenerational consciousness of refuge and refugees since 2013. I suggest that the descendants of Thracian refugees also draw on the frame of care, similarly to my other interlocutors, as discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6., care for the descendant of Thracian refugees, especially those who have organised within a Union of Thracian

Associations in Bulgaria, means care to preserve their refugee heritage. What this means is that the descendants continue to struggle to have the tragedy their ancestors experienced in the 19th century (their grandparents or great grandparents) recognised. In other words, members of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria do not experience the 19th-century 'refugee' problem as resolved. Within the union, they still care to preserve the memories of refuge and the migration histories of their ancestors. The history of the Thracian refugees emerged as part of the research on the 'refugee' crisis and the importance to care for it, preserving it, recognising it as distinct and catastrophic.

The descendants of Thracian refugees could be conceptualised as a social movement. At present, their collective struggle is for their recognition and compensation of the lost lands and properties of their ancestors. The first mass refugee wave in the Balkans were from 1878 and were 'by-products of the state-building process' (Marrus 1985:49). People from modern day Northern Greece and Turkey were expelled in different waves after the drawing of the southern national border (1878-1895), after the Balkan wars (1912-1913) (Hall 2000: 22-45), and subsequent wars and population exchanges. European states struggled to produce 'national' subject-citizens in the 19th century (Cowan, 2008) from heterogeneous multitudes shaped by language, culture, class, religion into homogenous nation-state entities (Kontogiorgi, 2010). The unification of the lost lands with the Kingdom of Bulgaria and taking care of the faith of Bulgarians who were left outside the southern borderlands was the key mission that led to the establishment of the Internal Macedonian-Edirne Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) in 1893. IMRO, which was the very basis for the present-day Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria was a national liberation movement⁹. Drawing on the social movements literature, protest cycles go through peaks and quiet periods, and at present the centuries-old movement is transformed into sustaining the memory and culture of Thracian refugees.

As Dragostinova (2006) suggests, 250,000 ethnic Bulgarians had to flee territories that the Bulgarian Kingdom lost in its defeats after the Second Balkan War and the First

⁹ From a national liberation movement at its inception, it evolved into a far-right political party after the fall of socialism in 1991 and is currently active in the political sphere (Ratcheva, 2014). As Ratcheva convincingly argues, '[c]onfirming Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta's (2001) contribution to the literature on social movements, there is significant emotional labour in being part of a contentious movement. In VMRO much of that is employed through affective attachment to heroes and national holidays' (2014:225).

World War. This figure includes refugees from Romania and Yugoslavia, as Bulgaria lost territories from all of its neighbours in these wars, which shaped the harsh economic conditions and nationalist discourse. Thracian refugee waves, however, continued also in the 1920s. ‘Due to the Convention for Emigration of Minorities between Greece and Bulgaria of 1919 as well as the Greek-Turkish War of 1921–1922 and the obligatory population exchange is initiated in the period 1922–1924, refugee flows in the Balkans lasted well into the mid-1920s. Hence Bulgarians were on the move throughout 1924 and 1925’ (Dragostinova 2006). The memories of the harsh economic conditions that these refugees faced upon arrival in the Bulgarian Kingdom are still remembered and are a part of many family histories, including for the members of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria. For them, the lack of compensation for their lost homes in the lands outside the Bulgarian borders is a remaining political, social and economic issue. The descendants of refugees from Northern Thrace identify as the injustice of lack of compensations and the lack of care they and their ancestors have received for the struggles of refuge. It is this struggle for recognition towards which they frame care. People seeking refuge in Bulgaria since 2013, one hundred years later, have become implicated within this context. Furthermore, the care they do not receive by descendants of refugees, in general, has been framed as care for the heritage of refuge the locals struggle to be acknowledged and compensated for. In short, to the descendants from the Union, the experience of refugees since 2013 was often constructed as not real in comparison to the experiences of refuge of their ancestors, which justified their lack of solidarity with refugees.

In this chapter, I present data from my research with the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria. I drew on participant observation in the coffee room at the Harmanli branch of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria in 2018. In the first months of 2018, every cold morning between 10 am and 12 pm, I spent in the café. I held interviews, discussions and focus groups with visitors. The argument in this chapter is also developed with the help of rich conversations about Thracian refugees and their descendants outside of the café throughout my fieldwork (2017-2018). I encountered Slaveya, the husband of Lydmila, and the Mayor of Harmanli, who self-identified as being of refugee descent, outside the so-called ‘Thracian café’. Although not visitors to the café, each of them steered my interest to the focal point of the ‘Thracian community’.

While on fieldwork repeated referrals to the ‘Thracian refugees’, when I requested an interview on the topic of refugees, surfaced this topic. I embarked on a mission to understand this category further – where it came from and what it meant for the locals. In doing so, I was also able to understand how it informed understandings about the current wave of refugees. Learning about the category of Thracian refugees brought up mixed feelings for me. I was quickly excited to hear how prominent the memory of Thracian refugees was in the region. Soon, however, I started to question the role of this memory of migration. Why did Harmanlians, who preserved memories of Thracian refugees, not build solidarity with asylum seekers fleeing conflict in the Middle East and North Africa? I found the answer in the café room of Harmanli’s branch of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria.

After a gathering, I took photographs from the interior of the coffee room here. The understandings drawn from the images are accompanied by interviews and focus groups in the Association. Relying on the images would facilitate the analysis of the interior of the Association and, more specifically, the symbols which construct its collective identity. In other words, the framing which I have constructed with the photographs is less important than the symbols captured, representing the inner world of the Thracian Association. The symbols in the photos and their curation, I suggest, convey the identity of ‘Thracian refugees’ in the everyday life of second and third-generation migrants.

Refugeehood is understood as the experience of being a ‘refugee’, including how this experience is remembered through time. In this chapter, I bring together refugees (the category for people) and refugeehood (the category for experience and the memories of the experience). It implicates the broader social and historical processes, the migration memory, and struggles for recognition of the experiences which led to fleeing. While ‘refugees’ is a legal category relating to the process of granting status and citizenship, it tends to exclude the experiences of the journey from fleeing to settling. The concept of ‘people seeking refuge’ (Dunn, 2018), on the other hand, aims to do just that. It is close to the legal category of ‘asylum seekers’, people who are in the process of applying for a ‘refugee’ status, usually already on the territory of a host society. People seeking refuge still rely on the process of seeking a stable livelihood, which has not ended and moves away from the legal category, which is constructed for a bureaucratic purpose within the state apparatus. People seeking refuge started arriving in Harmanli refugee camp in 2013.

They arrive mainly from war-torn countries in the Middle East and North Africa, with varying reasons for seeking a refugee status. When I refer to people seeking refuge, in the present tense, I refer to migration from the Middle East and North Africa since 2013. Refugeehood, on the other hand, explains the heritage of Thracian refugees, such as memories and discourses.

In post-Ottoman states, migration is a part of local histories and memories and such memories shape present interpretations of migration. Memories of refugees on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey have contributed to attitudes towards refuge since 2013. In a manner not recognised in apolitical or ahistorical accounts of attitudes towards migration, the current refugee crisis is situated in the existing heritage of refugeehood along state borders in the Balkans. In the discursive landscape of refugeehood, ‘authenticity’ constructs acceptance of ‘Thracian refugees’ by the national community, while classifying Otherness where the ‘new refugees’ are excluded.

This chapter is organised as follows: First, I show how a Thracian identity is constructed, relying on the curation of the Union of Thracian Associations of Bulgaria in Harmanli. I look at the role of the refugee heritage in shaping a distinct community, ‘the descendants of refugees’. I analyse the descendants at the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria through the concept of memory activism (see Section 2.2.) and explore how they construct their distinct ‘refugee descendant’ cultural repertoires. In the second part of the chapter, I explore how their cultural repertoires intertwine with and shapes responses (or lack thereof) to refugeehood. I argue that the construction of ‘Thracian refugees’ shapes discourses about people seeking refuge as Others. I present a comparison of the two categorisations of Us vs Them. The main argument of the chapter is that the refugee crisis has brought out the new discourse of refugees as ‘new refugees’ or ‘current refugees’.

7.1. The Construction of ‘Us’: ‘Descendants of Thracian refugees’ in Harmanli

‘Locals’ are often assumed to be sedentary populations. These typically do not migrate but are composed of a stable population which shape its identity into a local identity. The idea of the local is linked with the idea of the nation and ethnicity, whereby one community of people who share similar customs, identity symbols and beliefs come

together or create an image of national communion. This research develops a critical stance towards the idea of the local community, which is composed not only of diversity but also of mobility. Those who are local to a place could migrate and still feel connected to the local place, or it could be the case that people who have recently arrived feel connected to the local place, making the local space dynamic and interactive. The ‘locals’ in Harmanli are entangled with memories of refugeehood, and their understanding of locality is shaped by refugee migration, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries. Based on data from my participant observation at the coffee room, I discuss refugee heritage as preserved by the descendants of Thracian refugees.

Since the birth of the modern Bulgarian nation, refugeehood has been a part of local and national identity (Geneva-Raycheva, 2012; Elchinova, 2012; Detrez, 2015; Vukov, 2015). The making of national borders on the Balkan Peninsula with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan Wars and the first and second world wars is intertwined with the exodus of Thracian refugees. The early 1900s was a period of waves of refugee settlements in the Balkans. Population exchanges were ‘generally considered to be an appropriate way to ethnically homogenise a population, to eliminate problems of minorities, and to avoid territorial conflicts’ (Detrez, 2012:48). The refugees from various regions of Thrace¹⁰ (those parts then controlled by Ottoman Turkey or Greece) and parts of Macedonia settled in Bulgaria, with the view that this would be a temporary solution until a re-distribution of the Ottoman territories in South-Eastern Europe occurred (Detrez, 2012; Gergova, 2012). Therefore, initially, many refugees hoped they would return home, to their birthplaces. Refugees from 1913 settled in present-day Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Macedonia. While estimations vary, in Bulgaria, it can be said that refugees were around 350 000 - 400 000 people (STDB, 2020, known either as Bulgarian refugees or Thracian refugees. The latter name refers to the geographic region of Thrace, which is sub-divided into Eastern Thrace (now Turkey) and Western Thrace (now Greece). What happened to refugees from the interwar years, and how are they relevant to the current migration crisis and the formation of attitudes towards refugeehood?

¹⁰ Thrace is a geographical and historical area in the South-Eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula of about 42,000 sq. km (Filchev 2007: 9). Geographically, this is the region delimited by the Sredna Gora mountain in the North, the Maritsa river in the West, the Aegean Sea in the South, the Black Sea in the East, and the Sea of Marmara in the South East. Nowadays it belongs to the territories of three states. About a fourth of Thrace, known as Eastern Thrace, is in European Turkey, about a tenth of it, identifiable as Western Thrace is in Greece, in the north-eastern corner, and the rest of it is in Bulgaria, in the south-eastern part of the country (Geneva-Raycheva, 2012:30).

Harmanlians lived with refugees in the birth of the modern Bulgarian nation-state. In the locality of Harmanli, refugee stories are a part of Harmanli's daily life. Their children and grandchildren became second and third-generation migrants, otherwise known as descendants of refugees, making up a significant part of 'the locals' in the border regions, as in the case of Harmanli. While there are no current statistics on the number of descendants of Thracian refugees, according to the Union of Thracian Societies of Bulgaria (STDB),

if you count the families and their descendants, they are about 1,200,000 - 1,500,000 in Bulgaria. In Harmanli and surrounding villages they are about five to six thousand people. This number is a dynamic category and is not related to the settlement criterion.

This chapter aims to sketch out a broad investigation into the collective identity of 'Thracian refugees', how it intertwines with national memory, and with the perceptions of refugeehood, how it shapes vis-à-vis the European migration crisis after 2013. I look at the repertoires that the descendants construct to sustain their collective identity through the 'injustice' and 'sacrifice' of having family members refugees (Geneva-Raycheva, 2012: 37). Thracian refugees are represented in local and in Bulgarian national identity (Ratcheva, 2013). This construction of Thracian refugees affects not only those who ascribe to that identity, namely descendants of Thracian refugees. It has an impact on both national memory and interpretations of refuge. Thracian refugees' traditions and memories are well documented in historical accounts, ethnographic notes, memoirs, and politico-legal research (see the edited volume of Geneva-Raycheva and Elchinova, 2012). Such accounts have been developed within the ethos of remembering the Thracian refugees and resolving the so-called 'Refugee Problem', by claims of their descendants taking the issue further and sustaining the political struggle for the identity of Thracian refugees. The Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria is a memory activist in preserving memory and for crafting Thracian identity. The Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria is 'an independent, non-partisan and non-governmental, patriotic organization with a long history' (Ivanova, STAB, 2020). It is an heir of the Internal Macedonian Edirne Revolutionary Organisation, which was established in 1896 to unite the lands and people in Thrace and Macedonia with Bulgaria, amid the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

The memory of Thracian refugees is sustained through the repertoires of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria. The memory activism of the 'Thracian

refugees' is mainly via archival work in its scientific centre in Sofia, national social events and pilgrimages across the border to the 'birthplace of our forefathers' (Geneva-Raycheva, 2012). The distinct 'Thracian' identity, is characterised as a trans-border regional identity (Zlatkova, 2012). Their repertoires include trans-border gatherings and commemorations, the role of Orthodox churches in the border regions of Turkey, and other symbolic rituals which construct a bridge between different experiences across the Bulgarian-Turkish border (Geneva-Raycheva, 2012; Zlatkova, 2012). To advance the claims for recognition of Thracian identity, the Union has branches around the country, a scientific institute based in Sofia, and a newspaper published by the Union.

The interior of the Thracian Association shows us 'material-that-matter', that is materials that people notice, care about and regard as significant (Wagner, 2011). '[T]he relationship of culture, materiality, and visibility implicate ideas about how people live, what they care about, who they are, what they see, and how they look' (Wagner, 2011:72). The artefacts with which people creatively decorate their environment indicates the combination of intentional and unintentional frames of thought. Therefore, the photographs depicting images, paintings, maps, calendars and slogans on the wall of the Thracian Association in Harmanli, suggest who the Thracians are, how they are remembered and how they construct their collective identity and values. The interior space of the Association in Harmanli could be conceptualised as a frame of a picture on its own. The photographs I took of the images, maps and artefacts decorating the interior of the Association illustrate the construction of the Thracian identity by the descendants of Thracian refugees. This to grasp the objects included, their centrality, symbolic meaning, and relationships with one another. The framing of the Union of Thracian Associations in Harmanli is shaped by both conscious and unconscious drives, constructing a holistic sense of Self. The objects were consciously chosen and organised in their form, size, and place. At the same time, an affective drive towards them illustrates the unconscious predisposition in the construction of this interior. Photographs are objects of memory. They construct the memory even for those who were not directly a part of the events depicted (Edwards, 1999). The photographs can create false memories of a shared experience. These artefacts and the values they represent are a part of the daily encounters as the visitors take sips of coffee inside the Association building. The photographs represent the struggles of the descendants of Thracian refugees, which is felt as shared by

people who were born and raised in Harmanli and identified themselves as descendants of Thracian refugees.

Bulgarian National Identity and Thracian Refugees

The symbols depicted in the photographs are particularly interesting. The visitors engage with the symbols of the interior, which has already been constructed. The nation is being ‘flagged’ as the visitors choose to visit this café, thus via their everyday choices reproduce the identity of the descendants of Thracian refugees. The descendants of Thracian



Figure 5: At the Thracian cafe: Flags and Heroes

refugees choose to have their morning coffee, and engage in collective meaning-making about identity, ancestors, and refugees. The discourse of Thracian refugees, while not necessarily a part of their everyday conversation constructions, is still performed by the consumption choices in the setting of the Union.



Figure 6: Union of Thracian Association in Harmanli and its Visitors

Figures 5 and 6 frame the visitors of the ‘Thracian café’. The frame shows three mature men who arrive in the Association for their affordable morning coffee or tea. Two long tables, placed along the walls, stretching from the entrance (the lighted area at the background of the photo), up to the far wall of the Association. The tables and chairs around them form a welcoming stance encouraging descendants of Thracian refugees to come together. While not a coffee place per se, the one-room serves the function of catering for its visitors, while containing the identity and memory of Thracian refugees. Discussions curious observers may overhear range from topics about gardening, politics, last night’s news, tips for making better pickles or *rakia*, a plum liquor. Although the visitors arrive at their times in the mornings, they would sit on the same table and quickly be able to pick up a conversation involving everyone present. Two focus groups in the



Figure 7: Descendants of Thracian refugees at the 'Thracian cafe'

Association recorded naturally occurring conversations such as these, interrupted only by my clarifying questions, which will be discussed in the following section.

The Thracian identity depicted on various artefacts on the walls of the café is what coats the ritual of the morning coffee. The identity is constructed with images of the past, which the following subsections will discuss in detail. The past, thus, becomes entangled with the visitors' morning rituals. The Union is a specific discursive field. While other coffee places

exist in Harmanli, with a modern interior (Modero), with a left-wing interior (Verona), and local corner cafes (like Valya's), the Union is where those visitors choose to interact (agency). It is interesting to observe the seating arrangements in the two pictures of the Thracian café's patrons. The long wooden tables with green covers resemble the seating of a gathering where all members know each other sitting collectively. This type of arrangement is common in communal gatherings for townships known as *sybori*, where people from different parts of the country or different households come together to celebrate. What is symbolically significant here is the idea of celebration, which is organised to be a part of the daily coffee routine. Another is the idea of coming together, from various places, households, without knowing who strictly would come, yet everyone from the community is welcome in this arrangement.

What is also striking in the experience of the Thracian Association is the affordable morning drinks. For the cost of half of a lev (25p), one can get a coffee and for thirty stotinki (12p), select a cup of tea. In the context of Bulgaria, this is from two to five times less than the market price in other coffee places. The affordable beverages indicate

a different welcoming environment for the visitors, which aims to facilitate coming together, rather than make a profit. It suggests for a horizontal capital structure within the management of the Union, which reflects on the ideals of a collective identity.

As I enter, I would see the group of people sitting at the tables with a green tablecloth in front of me. They are mostly men, pensioners, except for the hostess named Valya, who is a woman in her fifties and manages the Association. A welcoming person, she encourages me to come early in the mornings and meet the visitors. There are two tables in front of me: one long, followed by a round one round near the end of the Association, where the women, including the hostess, would sit. A third table is on the left-hand side (captured in picture 3 below), followed by a table with books, a bookshelf, the fridge for soft drinks and the counter where Valya makes coffee or tea, the beverages on offer for the morning guests. The role of Valya is complex to identify. She is the barista, herself a descendant of Thracian refugees. After she makes and serves the drinks, however, she does not stay behind the bar, but sits at the table for her morning routine. She looks after the visitors and me, and she also updates the online group presence of the Harmanli branch. Her role suggests a more horizontal structure of the local branch, where the ‘organisers’ of Thracian identity in the local branch are also visitors. The flexible roles within the local branch suggest a more horizontal power structure, not-for-profit entity, and values of collectively rather than individualism.

The Thracian Café and the Heritage of Thracian refugees

Billig’s (1995) flagging of the nation argument, can be clearly illustrated with the interior of the café decorated as if ready to mobilise. The walls surrounding the visitors in the Association are perhaps of most interest to the newcomer. All four walls are decorated using representations of the identity of the Thracian Association. The images of the social movement of the Internal-Macedonian Edirne Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) are still part of the paintings, even though the name of the Association has changed to its present Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria. Other accompanying symbols are the Bulgarian flag, the Orthodox church, and depictions of the Liberation on 3rd March 1878, as well as of Thrace. The freedom fighter Captain Petko Voyvoda (1844-1900) is reflected in several images and paintings. The Thrace slogan ‘do not forget, but do not take revenge’ hangs on the wall, illustrating the memory work of the Association. Together with the separate Thracian identity, there is a symbiotic coexistence with the

Bulgarian national identity, represented by the tricolour Bulgarian flag, the National day of Liberation on 3rd March.

The everyday nationalism depicted in the interior of the Harmanli's branch of the Union brings up Thracian identity. After reviewing all the photographs as well as ethnographic notes, it emerges that the content of the visual artefacts significant for Thracian identity is represented in realist form, rather than metaphorical. The image of independent Thracian identity is depicted most frequently, followed by broader Bulgarian national symbols, 'flagged' in the café. Representations of Thracian identity include the slogan of Thrace, the map of Bulgaria with Thrace, as well as Thracian-Bulgarian Chieftan Petko Voyvoda. Symbols of the Bulgarian identity are the Bulgarian flag, present as an artefact and a symbol on the map of Bulgaria with Thrace and the 3rd March poster. A further analysis helps grasp meanings ascribed to the visual artefacts 'flagging' the Thracian Association for the visitors. The image of Chieftan Petko Voyvoda, for example, on three images curated around the map of Bulgaria with Thrace and the slogan of Thrace, is one where he is still, a naturalist depiction of his upper body (2 pictures); and standing in a field (1 picture). He is represented as calm and in control. Furthermore, the image of him on the top of the map is in the smallest size, a framed photo, which conveys the message of closeness, reminiscent perhaps of a family member's photo.

Thracian identity, as 'flagged' on this collage in the corner with books, is still from the national revival, post-Ottoman period. People sit surrounded by pictures of freedom fighter Captain Petko Voyvoda (1844 – 1900) and revolutionaries who fought for the liberation of southern Bulgaria, the areas of present-day Harmanli, the Edirne Vallate during the Ottoman empire. The freedom fighter Captain Petko Voyvoda is depicted with realist images and drawings. On one of the drawings (above), he is standing, dressed in a black folk costume (*chernodreshna*) made of chemise, breeches (*poturi*), and girdle, red belt and a top garment (*elek*), and jacket with sleeves (*aba*, *anteriya*) made of black woollen frieze. The Bulgarian folk costume, for both men and women, was little influenced by Western fashion until the end of the 19th century, as the outfit commemorating Chieftan Petko Voyvoda attests. In the consciousness of the members of the Thracian Association, he remains as 'a Bulgarian national hero and a major historical figure, raised to the highest ideal of freedom, independence of Bulgaria and peace in the Balkans' (Interview with Ivanova, STDB).

Calendars and Memory

The protest cycle for the Thracian cause is constructed as continuing through calendars hanging on the wall. Figure 8. depicts calendars titled 'Thrace' from the 1970s, hanging on a wall. The framed calendars represent the continuation of the Thracian identity over time, thus a memory action repertoire. As part of the calendars, there are images of what is constructed as Thracian. These are traditional dances (*hora*), revolutionaries, images of groups of people on their journey. These are all symbols constituting Thracian identity that have sustained through time, in one temporality. The calendars date back from different years during the political structure of Bulgarian communism. The socialist regime worked to integrate Thracian refugees because of their lower economic status in society, as people devoid of means who had to start building their lives anew. The struggles of refugees aligned with the proletarian values of the socialist party in power. Indeed, several descendants of Thracian refugees were given responsible positions as directors of local factories in subsequent years of the regime. The socialist period facilitates the integration of refugees and their descendants into the Bulgarian society. The current political orientation of the Union, however, does not ascribe to left-wing ideology.



Figure 8: Calendars and the Identity of Thracian Refugees

Photographs sustain the momentum of the intergenerational repertoires. These calendars, if hung at the time of their issue, were the repertoires of the Thracian refugees,

which their descendants continue. Photographs sustain memory, even for those who did not take part in the events depicted in the photographs (Edwards, 1999). The photographs on the calendars of the Association are of traditional dances and ensembles, yet what they symbolise is Thracian identity. Being combined with calendars, which have no functional purpose, further strengthens the experience of Thracian identity continuing through time for the visitors of the café, even when they did not take place in the dance ensembles or the construction of the Thracian identity. Therefore, the photographs depicting images and calendars on the wall of the Thracian Association in Harmanli, suggest who the Thracians are. Specifically, they are remembered from the socialist period, as this is when the calendars date from, and as cultural symbols of dance. These calendars and the values of togetherness, collective dance, and their expression during communism represent the field of daily encounters of the descendants of Thracian refugees.

The calendars, all framed in a row on the wall, symbolise the continuation of the memory of Thracian identity. The time marked on the calendars adds another dimension to the construction of Thracian identity. Calendars dating back from communism, being displayed in 2018, suggest that time has stopped or that experiences of the past are relevant and present today. The struggle to keep the memory of Thracian identity together is to link it backwards, to the time that has passed. While practically unnecessary, the yearly counts displayed on the wall signify the counting of time as an aspect of what it means to be a descendant of Thracian refugees. Similarly, it suggests a limbo of the unresolved Refugee Problem, where the situation which occurred 100 years ago is still waiting to be resolved. Further along the wall, after the section with calendars on display, is a composition of five artefacts.

The form of the composition is a circle shape – bringing together the corners of each of the artefacts, a circle would emerge. There is no one object which is in the centre. The largest of the artefacts is a framed map of Bulgaria. The five artefacts are three portraits of Captain Petko Voyvoda (Captain Petko the Chieftan), one map and one banner. The map depicts a claim on collective Bulgarian identity beyond its present-day southern border. The map includes the region of Thrace as Bulgarian territory, thereby including the present-day sovereign European Turkey, Northern Greece and North Macedonia. The contours of Bulgaria, which visitors of the café engage with as ‘Bulgaria on three seas’, is a map representing 1989 Bulgarian territory.



Figure 9: Symbols of the identity of Thracian refugees and their descendants

The title of the map is ‘Historical Map of Great and United Bulgaria’. The notion of Great Bulgaria is a concept which is associated with the San Stefano Peace Treaty signed on 3rd March 1878. To the extent that the representation on the map is endorsed, Thracian refugees and their descendants make a claim on the whole of the Thracian region, including those parts now belonging to Turkey and Greece.

While the 3rd of March is a national holiday, this map of Bulgaria declared with the signatures between Russia and the Ottoman Empire only existed for a few months, until the Berlin Treaty from June-July the same year, where the map of Great Bulgaria was reduced. While not a visitor of the café, a Irina Stavrova, a retired headmaster with a Bulgarian-Greek heritage, narrates her personal history, entangled with the trans-national Thrace region.

Irina Stavrova: ... between the rivers Mesta and Maritsa. Tundzha, Arda and Maritsa, do you know where they gather? They gather on Turkish territory, just below the Edirne station the three rivers meet.

Interviewer: Edirne was the capital, the centre of this region, right?

Irina Stavrova: Yes, the Thracian part, the European part of Turkey. And these villages there, there is a survey of Carnegie, who studied the population. So, somewhere around 40-50%, in some villages up to 80% are Bulgarians. The other 20-30% are Greeks, Armenians and very few Turks. These villages were like that -- they were predominantly Bulgarian. And here between the rivers Maritsa and Mesta, that Mesta flows into the Aegean Sea just below... Keramoti's the name, a port, a resort village...

Out of a composition of five artefacts, the only one that is not framed is a slogan. Located between two images of the revolutionary hero Kaptain Petko Voyvoda, stands a poster that reads 'Do not forget, but do not take revenge'. This slogan unifies Thracian identity. It refers to not forgetting that Thrace belonged to Bulgaria for these few months, and that it was acknowledged that the population was 'Bulgarian', before it was unjustly given up. The 'not forgetting' is a call for remembering the collective Thracian identity. The 'do not revenge' part is acknowledging the continuing identity ties with the region and the attitudes of the kinships across borders. Not revenging refers to knowing that it has been unjust to live across borders, to be refugees, and that while this collective experience should not be forgotten, this is not a reason to take revenge for the injustice. Not revenging also symbolises the transition of the revolutionary organisation towards an association whose aim is to produce writings, exhibitions and scientific work of remembering the history, without acting on the injustice of refugeehood. Efthymiou (2019) discusses a similar discourse; 'do not forget and struggle', in divided Cyprus. The discourse he suggests mobilises national memory for 'struggle' against the Turkish aggressor, which prevents the resolution of the Cyprus conflict, urging Greek Cypriots to be a nation ready to fight. In the case of Thracian refugees, the discourse of 'not forgetting' is for an ethnicity that has parts divided in other countries (Greece and Turkey), yet, in contrast to Cyprus, should not be fought militarily. The call to not revenging but keeping the shared memories of the Thracian region acknowledges a regional perspective on European identity.

The slogan re-affirms the revolutionary roots of Thracian identity, as shaped in its early formation at the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Thracian identity is thus shaped as one still protesting. The revolutionary position from the early 19th century, advocating for the Thracian cause, is now transformed into 'not forgetting' Thracian identity. The protest position is then, in maintaining the memory of Thracian refugees, the lands they left behind, their struggles of the journey, and destitution which up to the present day constitute one of Bulgaria's 'national problems' – the Refugee Question. The call to 'not

forget' is linked with the display of calendars of past years, which showcases the memory preserved over time, as the position which descendants of Thracian refugees ought to take. Not forgetting is an identity claim on preserving the memory of Thracian refugees. The second part of the slogan, 'do not take revenge', links to the transborder aspect of Thracian identity. Part of being of Thracian descent means acknowledging the homes, relatives, and heritage outside the borders of Bulgaria in neighbouring Turkey and Greece. Not taking revenge also describes the repertoire of the descendants as inactive in terms of revenge (fighting), but active towards remembering.

Thracian identity shapes a migration identity, more so than an ethnic identity or a minority identity. Thracian identity links the fleeing of refugees from their homeland towards the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria. They were leaving behind their homes and life, being persecuted and chased out, and not being compensated for the genocide of Thracian Bulgarians. Therefore, 'not taking revenge upon' the states of Turkey and Greece constitutes remembering links with Thracian heritage. Not revenging stance reflects multi-sited experiences of identity, which, while cut off by border divides and unacknowledged historical suffering, should remain friendly and collaborative.

In sum, the memory of Thracian refugees reconstructs revolutionary heroes, symbolic dates, traditional songs, dances, clothing or food. Captain Petko Voyvoda is an important symbol of Thracian identity and thereby of Thracian refugees. He is a revolutionary who fought for the liberation of the region from the Ottoman empire. Therefore for the protection of the rights and freedoms of the Thracian refugees. Another marker of Thracian identity is the date of the 3rd of March as well as the 26th of March. The former is the Liberation of Bulgaria with the San Stefano treaty, with the Bulgarian parliament acknowledging the latter as the Day of Thrace. The Thracian Association, which identifies itself as a non-party, nationalist and patriotic organisation, also organises annual gatherings (*sybori*), where people dance traditional dances (*hora*), where guests eat specific food (*Kurban*), and often observe live music with ensembles dressed in traditional clothes (*nosia*). In other words, the identity of Thrace is not only unified as specific (Elchinova, 2016); Thracian identity also has one nation-like character.

Despite the different periods of the arrival of refugees from Turkey to Bulgaria, different places of arrival, and their different directions, the identity of 'the descendants' is often categorised as one (Vukov, 2015). Even refugees from Greece or the Ottoman

empire all fall into the broader category of Thracian refugees, bounded by the symbols on the wall of the Association – the heroes, the maps, the struggle of the journey. Some distinctions can be made, however, for example, based on the year of migration, with two migration years – 1913 and 1924 – particularly well-defined. Another distinction is found in the naming of refugees. While all are Thracian, there are two distinct groups: *maloaziatci* – those who came from Asia Minor and Turkey, and *grykomani* from Greece.

She's supposed to be Greek. I don't know how much Greek she is. Because my mother remembered her, her mother-in-law's, and says: 'She didn't know a word of Bulgarian'. They spoke to each other only in Greek. 'When her sister came and her brother came, they kept speaking in Greek'. And here I remember, I was already a big girl, I remember when the Greek grandmothers gathered. There were two or three grandmothers in Harmanli, they called them 'Greeks': the Greek Slava, the Greek... they called my grandmother 'Vashilko', and she was 'Vasiliko'. But when she got a Bulgarian passport, she is named 'Vasilka' because 'Vasiliko' is a Greek name. And the grandmothers would get together, make coffee and talk in Greek. Just like that, they had this need to communicate with each other in Greek. (Irina Stavrova, a retired headmaster, has a 'Greek' grandmother).

Educational Repertoires

The 'flagging' of national identity (Billig, 1005) for descendants of Thracian refugees is through educational action repertoires. The Union is dedicated to publishing and displaying books, notes, and reports, as Figures 9 and 10 illustrate. The café serves as a library for the Thracian refugees as a site for the preservation of memory. It offers the continuing daily engagement with literature, research and maps concentrating on the Refugee Problem. The literature included in the interior of the café politicises the daily experience of coffee in the local branch. The revolutionary stance, infused with feelings

of indignation, injustice, things which need to be accomplished, is preserved on the pages of the books and the shelves of a coffee place.



Figure 9: Memory work at the Thracian Association

The bookshelf is curated next to the image of the revolutionary Kaptain Petko Voyvoda. His portrait is displayed on the same wall as a drawing. Realist, yet constructed by hand, the drawing is a work of art and a claim on reality. The ontology of the portrait is a revolutionary man, while its epistemology is an artistic and factual representation of a real historical figure. The fact it is displayed next to the books is by no means random. The written work, while constructed by people, is positioned to be a factual and real representation of reality the books capture – the destitution of Thracian refugees. For the descendants, becoming a part of the EU has meant that their regional identity would be better acknowledged. Mainly through the easy travel, such as between Bulgaria and northern Greece, or cooperation initiatives between municipalities under various EU projects, regional identity was made possible in the ‘Europe of regions’.



Figure 10: Symbols of Thracian identity

European identity for the descendants of Thracian refugees has meant the possibility to embrace their regional Thracian identity. For them, regional identity, of Thrace and as Thracians, is perhaps stronger than the Bulgarian national identity and was made possible as part of the EU membership. According to Outhwaite (2021: 4)

transregional coordination of planning policy within and between states and regions is an early aspect of what has become the EU itself, though it is only in the last decade that it has become an explicit and prominent part of the EU's activity.

European collective identity takes a particular form for the descendants of Thracian refugees. Considering their longstanding claim on land, houses, and resources in territories outside Bulgaria, collective identity is more clearly expressed than a single Bulgarian national identity. While Greece has honoured its economic claims towards the descendants, thereby acknowledging the transregional identity of the descendants, claims to Turkey have remained unresolved so far, making the question of the shared heritage of the descendants still part of their everyday politics. Current EU-Turkey agreements and politics thereby inevitably bring up the questions of the acknowledgement of the struggles of the descendants of Thracian refugees. The EU-Turkey summit on the Black Sea in

Varna, Bulgaria, 26 March 2018, was one such example. Erdogan's meeting with Borisov on the Black Sea, emphasised the regional cooperation of the Bulgaria-Turkey cross-border region.

The hand-drawn map on the figure above traces the journeys of Thracian refugees from one settlement to another. It is from the archives of the library of the Thracian Association of Harmanli. It is hand-drawn, as remembered by the stories and accounts of the refugees themselves and their descendants. The arrows indicate the direction of the movement from one settlement to another. The photo of the map belongs to a report, printed, and bound in a plastic folder, standing on a pile of several similar folders. The reports do not have an author, they are either collectively brought together, as Valya tells me, from 'us'. The reports contain graphs, maps, or accounts of the movement of various families. The kinship of the families is traced in cities and villages in Bulgaria, such as the families of refugees who are in the village of Madjarovo, with families' movements between villages also recorded. The folders were kept on a table close to the books, and it was not possible to take any of them, except to read and to make copies. To the descendants of Thracian refugees, these were valuable documents.

The journey was a crucial part of the construction of Thracian refugees. One photo frames the movements of refugees from one settlement to another across the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, Edirne, and Bulgarian settlements. The memory of where ancestors moved from was kept alive as Valya would ask to get some clarification if she missed the settlement of a visitor's family in the journey narrative. The journey is remembered as incredibly tragic – people travelled with nothing, as the Head of the Thracian Association assures me. As Dr Ivanova informs me,

they [Thracian Bulgarians] arrived in Mother Bulgaria after serious moral and material damage, and their movable and immovable property was confiscated from Turkey (Ivanova, STDB).

sustaining the memory include transborder visits to the home places of their ancestors, organising nation-wide social gatherings (*sybori*), which are characterised with revivalist clothing and dances. Their commemoration work is illustrated through having a special national holiday, publication work, website maintenance, and daily distribution of materials through the table stand and bookshelf in the café. The care for the memory of their refugee ancestors was demonstrated through maps of Bulgaria, inclusive of their homes, maps of their journeys, and timeless calendars hanging on the wall. Slogans of social movements, which frame the protesting public, is clearly indicating the action repertoires of the Association, ‘do not forget, but do not take revenge.’

7.2. Us vs Them: Thracian Refugees from 1900s vs Illegal Refugees from 2013

Looking at these descendants of Thracian refugees (from Asia Minor and Northern Greece), I demonstrate that the local migration history in the border town, includes the history of refugeehood from the drawing and re-drawing of the southern national border. In the context of the migration crisis at Europe’s borders, the local Thracian identity is juxtaposed to that of ‘current refugees’. A key aspect of Thracian identity is perhaps a sense of shared fate during and after the expulsion of Thracian refugees (Vukov, 2015). A part of this is also the community’s distinctiveness both from the local Bulgarian population and other refugee groups in Bulgaria and the shared awareness of the unresolved issues of their status as refugees (Vukov, 2015). The construction of Us vs Them is a common marker of identity politics (Wodak 2008), and the case of the construction of Thracian refugees is not different. The Thracian identity and the associated with-it Thracian refugees and descendants of Thracian refugees is bound by a struggle for recognition. Within its main facets are the recognition of the genocide of Thracian Bulgarians and their expulsion from their homes in a few waves in the 1900s.

Interviewer: Could you briefly describe the journey of Thracian refugees to Bulgaria?

Dr Vanya Ivanova: It is not a journey. They fled, driven by fire and sword from their native homes in Thrace and were forced to seek salvation in free Bulgaria. For Thracians the book of the academic Lubomir Miletic ‘The Ruin of the Thracian Bulgarians in 1913’ is a bible about the Thracian pogrom, which, in the words of the author himself, has ‘no equal in our new history of

martyrdom'. However, the devastation was accompanied by extermination, i.e., with de facto destruction. [...] The Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria believes that the events of 1913, which led to the ruin of the Thracian Bulgarians and their transformation into refugees, should be called by their real name - genocide.

Descendants of Thracian refugees preserve the memory of kinship. Their pilgrimages to Turkey and Greece are a symbol of the two nations coming together. In addition to the traditional cross-border trips, also Facebook pages, the Thrace newspaper and website shape the identity of the descendants and how they see refugeehood. The victimhood of Thracian refugees is developed to legitimise claims based on genocide that took place and property appropriation. The understanding of Thracian refugees as victims of genocide has developed recently, and previously it has been mainly described as 'destruction', pogrom, or exodus.

Struggles for recognition of Thracian refugees and their descendants have also become 'national' symbols, thus important for Bulgarians who may not identify as Thracian Bulgarians. Descendants of Thracian refugees, thus, and the local community in Harmanli, construct together a particular 'Us' and 'Them' in the current context of the migration crisis. As the interview extract below illustrates, the consciousness of Thracian refugees remains and in the context of the current refugee crisis is coupled with that of the locals, in constructing the local spaces as experienced receiving refugees.

There have been many refugees here since historical times. Most of Harmanli are refugees from the region. We know what it is. You went to the Thracian Union, didn't you? Also, the Turks, who, after all, left the country in one way or another... No one wants to run away from the good, undoubtedly! You cannot leave from this area with your children and come here. We know this! (Maria Kirkova, Mayor of Harmanli).

In 1913 after the Balkan Wars the borders were drawn in southern Bulgaria. Narratives, such as the extract from Maria Kirkova, and photos in the Thracian refugees depict families crossing over the border between present-day Bulgaria and Turkey. The families of Thracian refugees established themselves northwest in what were empty houses, left from the Turkish families who went further south from the Bulgarian border. At the same time, going towards Turkey was another 'stream' of people vacating their houses in Bulgaria. Refugees from Moesia and Thrace became established in Bulgaria. Some of them stayed in the border region, while others continued further north in Bulgaria.

I spoke with descendants of the refugees, established around Harmanli, on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey.

The ‘descendants of refugees’ feel empathy for present-day refugees coming from the Middle East and North Africa, with distinct limits. Their solidarity is not drawn based on refugeehood. An empathy drawn on shared memories of the experiences of refuge was not at play and did not act as a motivational factor for solidarity. The groupness of the established descendants of Thracian refugees is based more on national sentiment than the heritage of refugeehood with which they identify and with which they relate to the broader Bulgarian national identity. There is also no official or public discourse linking the refugee experience of 1913 with 2013, except as in the account by the Mayor Kirkova. Stating that ‘We know this!’, was a guard against the lack of care for refugees.

Existing discourses about refugeehood from the 19th century are strongly expressed in southern Bulgaria, both by a descendant of refugees and the broader border community. Refugees from the 19th century are linked with Bulgarian national identity, constructed as genocide from the Ottoman Empire and subsequent images of destruction (In Bulgarian: *pogrom*) and poverty. Such images of destruction compete with the present-day imaginations of what a refugee is and deny that people crossing the Turkish-Bulgarian border since 2013 are refugees. The identity construction of ‘our refugees’, victims of genocide, suggests that locals (descendants of refugees or not) have experienced the integration of refugees. Such consciousness of historical practices of hospitality by the locals at the turn of the century was often evoked to claim empathy (rather than lack of) with the refugee experience of present-day refugees, which diverts the current responsibility of reception. ‘Real refugees’ are claimed to be the old refugees (from the 19th century). Descendants of Bulgarian refugees (Thracian refugees) do not acknowledge ‘the current situation as a problem for refugees, because they are not refugees’.

The analysis of Thracian refugees and the discourse on ‘our refugees’ emerges with the refugee crisis in a particular way. While there is a clear memory of refugeehood preserved by the Thracian Association, the ‘migration crisis’ allows for the re-imagination of the refugee identity of the Thracians and the local community at large. The making of the ethnicity of Thracian refugees could be experienced clearly with the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria, whose role is to construct and maintain the

collective identity of Thrace (Ganeva-Raycheva & Zlatkova, 2012; Zlatkova, 2014). Intertwined with this collective identity is refugeehood – people who lived in Thrace before it became divided by borders and had to migrate to found the Union, which at its inception was created precisely to take care of the people left behind Bulgarian national borders. Refugeehood, in this context, is mostly preserved as historical memory. Moreover, it is intertwined with political struggles of recognition. The pre-existing ‘Thracian refugees’ discourse intertwines with the making of the southern Bulgarian national border, Liberation from the external threat (the Ottoman Empire), and symbols of national heroes who led to the liberation of the southern lands. The discourse about Thracian refugees is visible in traditional folk songs and dances developed by the locals. It is supported with practices and information from the Union of Thracian Associations. The Union has a knowledge-production function, mainly focused on its Sofia-based research institute. It is moreover involved in corporeal production of memory, exemplified by the walks ‘back in the steps of our forefathers’. The discourse of ‘our refugees’ emerged *vis-a-vis* the category of ‘new refugees’. The narrative about the presence or livelihood of ‘new refugees’ is a contingent on the discussion of ‘our refugees’. The attitudes to refuge since 2013 come to be shaped by memories of ‘our refugees’. The connection between the migration flows, from the 1900s and 2013, is made by the Head of Municipal Council in Harmanli. ‘We have a history with refugees, who have come and stayed here, these are refugees from the past, but who have remained here, they are our refugees’. The Head of Municipal Council, in a meeting, organised to host Tomáš Boček, (Boček, 2018) Special Representative on Migration and Refugees for the Council of Europe, 2018.

An identity of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ was created where ‘our refugees’ were exemplified and honoured, whereas the ‘new refugees’ are not welcomed to the national community. However, this configuration between ‘old’, from the past, and ‘new’, at present, created an identity relief as Bulgarians adhere to humanitarian principles for Thracian refugees. Because of the separation of the two categories of refugees, it would appear that the experience of forced migration has been narrated throughout history with particular values and attachments. Given that there is a local history of refugeehood, seen through the discourse of ‘our refugees’, the reception of people seeking refuge becomes perceived as additional, unnecessary, and limited. Engaging with the suffering of ‘our refugees’ shapes a local identity of caring, while also denying the entry of ‘new refugees’.

Table 2: *Us vs Them: Thracian refugees vs Present refugees*

	Us	Them
<i>Temporal divide</i>	Migrants from the past	Present migrants
<i>Identity divide</i>	Our (Bulgarian) refugees	New (Other) refugees
<i>Identity construction</i>	Migration history, family history, memories	News, observations
<i>Destination</i>	Settled in Bulgaria	Transiting refugees
<i>Class divide</i>	Poor refugees	Affluent refugees
<i>Gender divide</i>	Whole families	Single males, unaccompanied children, families
<i>Push- factors</i>	World wars, genocide	Regional conflicts, famine, climate change
<i>Journey characteristics</i>	Travel with donkeys, arranged ships	Travel with smugglers
<i>Reception agreements</i>	Settlement arranged by the League of Nations	No settlement arrangement, except quotas, for Syrian refugees
<i>Ethnic divide</i>	Bulgaria	Unknown, mixed (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq)
<i>Religious divide</i>	Orthodox Christian	Muslim

In the discursive landscape ‘authenticity’ of refuge is constructed to illustrate the acceptance of refugees by the national community but also provides a classification of otherness where the ‘new refugees’ specifically are not wanted.

While the discourse of the ‘new refugees’ is constructed against the ‘old refugees’ to alleviate protectionist policies in the EU migration crisis, the composition also creates differences in

terms of experiences. The refuge of ‘our refugees’ seems to be authentic or ‘real’. In the summer of 1913 in Turkey or Eastern Thrace, ethnic Bulgarians fled to come to the recently formed Bulgarian Kingdom, as they were being persecuted – events which are often discussed as genocide. Described mostly as the ‘destruction’ of the Bulgarians in Thrace, the context which forced people to flee Eastern Thrace has also been described as a genocide, mainly by the descendants of Thracian refugees, most vocally by far-right parties. The debate about the historical period and the violence towards Bulgarians in the region is ongoing. However, there is a question of what it takes for one to become an

authentic refugee, a real refugee and the answer which incorporates the historical interpretation of refugees crossing the border between Bulgaria and Turkey as genocide, the systematic annihilation of peoples. While such acts are extreme and push people to flee, 'our refugees' shape a moral landscape that limits the experience of refuge to one strictly defined reason to flee.

The identity of the locals, constructed as families of Thracian descent, is juxtaposed to the 'new migrants', alongside gender, ethnic, and class divides. The figure of the New Migrant, at its most vivid descriptions, is that of a male, single, of unknown ethnicity, Muslim, illegal migrant, and not poor. The New Migrant is contrasted to the Old Migrant, who are both men and women in families, of regional (Thracian) ethnicity, Christian, displaced people, destitute. As Stuart Hall writes, 'identity is partly the relationship between you and the other. Only when there is another can you know who you are' (Hall, 1992: 344). We could apply this understanding to the identity politics about refugees. By sketching out the 'new refugees' as 'other', the 'us' becomes inclusive of the 'old refugees' and strongly defined in the face of the new 'other'. As Kennedy and Danks (2001:3) indicate, all identity construction requires the summoning of difference; thus, the relativisation of the Self against the 'other', then through the construction of a shared 'other'. The consolidation of the discourse of 'new refugees' solidarity is established within the Bulgarian national community that has long lived with Thracian refugees and their descendants. The collectively understood Bulgarian Self becomes consolidated as well. Thus, the making of national 'others' shared by different ethnic groups in Bulgaria allows for interiorised feelings of group belonging, which facilitates and guides collective action against the 'new refugees'.

In summary, I argued that there are typologies of Us vs Them, which are discursive and implicate people seeking refuge in Bulgaria in what is known as the European refugee crisis. The section provided evidence on the formation of these narratives, and the lines along which the divisions are shaped. I argued that the data about attitudes towards refuge since 2013 in Harmanli should be understood in relation to the heritage of Thracian refugees. The dichotomy composition of Us vs Them promote Thracian refugee identity, deeply linked with national identity, as truer, thereby denying the struggles of refuge since 2013.

7.3. Conclusion

The understanding of ‘Thracian identity’ in this chapter is developed by ethnography in the Association of Thracian Unions in Bulgaria in its branch in Harmanli, semi-structured interviews with its visitors, and structured interviews with the Association’s leadership in Sofia, via email. I have also relied on the Thrace collection of newspapers, which are deposited on the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria, available online. I specifically rely on photographs I took inside the Association’s Harmanli’s branch and the representations of portraits, maps, people, and celebrations they depict. Relying on an analysis of the selection of artefacts to construct the interior of the Association, gave me a sense of the self-understanding of Thracian refugees’ descendants, as advocated by the Association. Memory symbols used on the wall- calendars, maps, and images - are indicative of their essential values and continuing memory activism. While I cannot suggest that this is the interior of every single branch of the Association within Bulgaria (which also have individual directors, managing bodies, and members), the symbols discussed in this section are nonetheless widely represented in the newspaper Thrace, published in Sofia and delivered to each branch in Bulgaria, as well as in Facebook groups where the Association documents collective experiences ‘in search of Thracian heritage’, such as cross-border trips, social gatherings (In Bulgarian: *sybori*) and veneration of national heroes and saints.

The theme of ‘Thracian refugees’ came out in the fieldwork by people who suggested that the ‘significant inflow of refugees crossing the border’ is not a new occurrence. The discourse of ‘our refugees’, from the past emerged *vis-a-vis* the category of ‘new refugees’. An identity of ‘us’ vs ‘them’ was created where ‘our refugees’ were exemplified as real refugees, whereas the ‘new refugees’ are not welcomed to the national community, as they are seen as ‘not real’. The discourse of ‘our refugees’ is voiced by people with a refugee kinship, such as second or third generation refugees (Zlatkova, 2014). Importantly, townspeople in general construct the category ‘our refugees’, thus self-identifying with Thracian refugees. Indeed, the suffering of Thracian refugees and the territories which they left behind are a part of Bulgaria’s politics and remaining national questions. The injustices towards Thracian refugees in 1913 and 1924 have been brought to European Union policy-makers and the recognition of their struggles are a condition for Turkey’s membership in the Union. By looking specifically at how

descendants of Thracian refugees' construct migration memory, as intertwined with national identity, suffering (Vukov, 2015), and unresolved struggle for recognition, the chapter illustrated how ideas of nationhood and refugeehood are intertwined in the self-identification for Thracian refugees and how this affects the reception of the new refugees. I have also emphasised how a new discourse emerged on Thracian refugees as 'our refugees', mobilised to respond to the current EU migration crisis, vis-à-vis the so-constructed 'new refugees', which reconstructed the significance of Thracian refugees in public discourses. In turn, this re-framed refugee identification has been adapted to draw differences with the current migration crisis. In this way, refugee struggles from 1913 and 2013 have come to compete discursively. I therefore show that refugeehood has a temporal dimension in the Balkans, where refugee movements are constructed with and compared to the memory of the refugee settlements from the early 1900s.

By relying on ethnography at the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria, interviews and focus groups with members and visitors at the local branch of the Association in Harmanli, I studied the locals' relationship with 'Thracian refugees' memories and how they self-identified with 'our refugees'. The identification of the locals, as a community co-habiting with families of Thracian descent, is juxtaposed to the 'new migrants' alongside gender, ethnic, and class divides. The figure of the 'new refugee', at its most vivid descriptions, is that of a male, single, of unknown ethnicity, Muslim, illegal migrant, and not poor. The 'new refugee' is contrasted to 'our refugees' from the past - who are both men and women in families, of regional (Thracian) ethnicity, Christian, forced migrants, destitute. What is at stake with the construction of the locals as 'our refugees' in relation to the 'new refugees' (since 2013), is the development of a measuring stick of ethnicity, migration, class and gender, that crystallises the self-determination struggles of the interwar years of the early 1900s.

The new discourse of 'our refugees' reifies a group of people who crossed the southern Bulgarian border more than 100 years ago, none of whom are alive. The discourse emerged after 2013 and developed against the 'new refugees', to prioritise the struggles of 'our refugees'. It advocates for 'our' to be included in the calculus of care politics and suffering. While the discourse of 'our', Thracian refugees is mostly remembered and performed within the discursive field of Union of Thracian Association (Zlatkova, 2014; Vukov, 2015), which puts forward the politics for recognition, the new categorisation of 'our refugees' is narrated by the broader social body. Nationalist

attitudes are thus broadly formed, as Thracian refugees are strongly linked to the birth of the modern Bulgarian nation, when border towns received people seeking refuge.

The measuring stick was applied to migration since 2013, the European refugee crisis, with a perceived justified nationalism precisely because of the accommodation of the 'our refugees' into the community of Us. Thus, the identification of 'our refugees' vs 'the new refugees' (since 2013) established a divisive role within the new border communities. The 'old refugees' serve as a platform for asserting an identity of righteousness and community determination, whereas the 'new refugees' are seen as an inferior intruders to the national community.

Nation-states in eastern Europe thus begin their modern national identity with the view of injustice done upon them, in the process of 'ethnic unmixing' after the fall of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires (Dragostinova, 2008; Law *et al.*, 2014). For Bulgaria, collective memory is sustained by the Refugee Question, as illustrated by the demand placed on Turkey in 2008 to acknowledge the atrocities towards Thracian refugees and compensate their descendants as part of its EU membership condition. National memory is intertwined with migration memory. Refugees, as the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria describes, are destitute, fleeing 'fire and sword', travelling with nothing. Thracian refugee heritage links with Bulgarian national identity, shaping the perception of refugees and national identity.

The EU migration crisis has been unfolding on the Balkan peninsula since 2013, one hundred years after the flows of 'Thracian refugees'. People crossing are identified as being affluent, able to travel (beyond merely crossing the next state border), owning smartphones distinguishing them from the poverty-ridden Thracian refugees at the turn of the 19th century. The chapter has demonstrated that the people seeking refuge were conceptualised as 'the new refugees' vis-à-vis the alive memory of refugees from 1913, who became constructed as 'our refugees'. This juxtaposition created a distance between 'our refugees' and the 'new refugees', whereby 'our refugees' were more authentic, poorer, subjected to genocide, and 'ours', while people seeking refuge since 2013 were perceived as the Other in terms of refugeehood, thus denying the epistemic possibility to construct the experience of border crossing as seeking asylum and refuge. The discourse of 'our refugees' strengthened the national identification further whereby the empathy with one group of refugees, 'our refugees', aligned with European values and a coherent

moral standing. It constructed the protesting anti-asylum public as caring for (our) refugees while denying reception (only) to people seeking refuge since 2013. Drawing on their migrant background, securitising people seeking refuge took shape. While the protester was not formed by people members of the Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria, they drew on 'Thracian refugees', as developed by the Association. Member of the Association, while not amongst the key organisers of the anti-asylum protests in Harmanli maintain a stance that 'since 2013 not all are refugees', and that they are 'using the situation to seek a better life in more developed Western countries, passing through Bulgaria' (Ivanova, STDB, 2020). The distinction between 'our refugees' and the 'new refugees' emerged recently (after 2013) in the Harmanli community. There was a 'national' justification for accepting the first category of refugees ('our' refugees), which was the memory of Great Bulgaria, extending on territories that lay beyond its borders. The national connection to the now 'our refugees' was not accepted initially at the local level, yet one hundred years later, in the context of the 'refugee crisis,' it was accepted as a fact. The distinction between 'our refugees' and the 'new refugees' is often emphasised by locals, who do not belong to either group, drawing on this difference with the aim to construct hospitality in the border region, which has been granted in the past, thereby distancing from the moral duty to rescue the 'new refugees'. Through the construct Us vs Them, the chapter illustrated how identity divisions were created, which impacted the lack of care responses from descendants of refugees towards the new coming refugees. The general local population also drew on the Thracian refugee history to explain how they already care for refugees. Drawing on social movements literature, it was possible to conceptualise the Thracian Association as a movement, which is at its low peak in terms of protests, but sustains their repertoires as maintaining the memory of Thracian refugees and 'flagging' (Billig, 1995) Thracian national identity.

Chapter 8. Analysing Migration, Post-socialism, and Nationalism

This thesis has outlined various repertoires around migration that constitute the current EU migration crisis. It is important to bring together these arguments and discuss them in the structural context they emerged.

There have been three main movements around refugees in Harmanli. Two main groups characterise the anti-refugee movement. The one is mainly composed of men with ‘hunting’ and border patrols repertoires, publicised online or social media. The other includes the Initiative Committee for Harmanli, which is organised around searches for information and public reporting repertoires. The anti-asylum movement constructs various border vigilance repertoires as care for the border, the locals, the community.

The second movement around refugees is the pro-asylum movement. This movement is the first that emerged in Harmanli in response to the developing humanitarian crisis ‘in the tents of 2013’. While often conceptualised as volunteers or humanitarians, their repertoires could be characterised as a social movement organised in a network of people providing care.

The third movement is for the rights of the descendants of Thracian refugees. The descendants’ cultural repertoires include the preservation of the memories of their refugee ancestors and performing their distinct identity shaped by this refuge. While not at a peak, this movement continues with commemorative repertoires through yearly celebrations, cross-border visits, and daily encounters in the ‘Thracian café’.

The three groups develop distinct repertoires and discourses that justify them. The first two, the pro-asylum and the anti-asylum activists, emerged in response to the ‘migration crisis’. The repertoires of the descendants remained comparatively the same as before the crisis, which, however, justified the lack of solidarity with new coming asylum seekers. Their narratives and mobilisations can be conceptualised as addressing competing needs or politics of care embedded in the country context.

The post-socialist context determines all interlocutors' inherited social, cultural, economic, and political capital and their responses to the 'new' border. The period since 1989 was, in general, perceived by my interlocutors as a period of struggle. When inquiring about life 'in Bulgaria', the typical response was 'you know how it is here'. Struggle in everyday life, in general, was expressed in interviews about the European migration crisis. In several cases, my interlocutors preferred to focus on their everyday lives rather than the 'migration crisis'.

The following section explores how people did not mobilise around refugees. In response to my questions about Harmanli and the border (see Appendix 3), they chose to talk about their personal experiences. The interviews presented in this chapter further illuminated daily struggle, emptiness (Dzenovska, 2018), and distrust in the government. I briefly explore how they understand everyday life 'here' (Billig, 2004). Their accounts of the structural conditions they live in offer insights into the context of all my interlocutors. Drawing on the understanding of the structural context, then in Section 8.2., I finally analyse the local movements and their repertoires in Section 8.3. I discuss how the three local movements are framed by competing care needs.

8.1. The Left-Behind: Everyday Structural Conditions

Structural experiences of everyday life intertwine with emigration dynamics after the fall of the 'old' socialist border. My interlocutors perceived emigration from Bulgaria as living things empty 'here'. 'Bulgaria' was often described via empty public spaces, emigrated friends and family members, empty apartment blocks, or ruined symbols of socialism (such as factories, good health care, monuments, and culture in general). As we strolled on the main street of Harmanli (2017-2018), my interlocutors would direct my attention to such emptiness (Dzenovska, 2018). The interpretations of 'now' very often included a comparative reference with the socialist period. The 'new' border had shaped a new temporal dimension 'now vs before'— intertwined with emigration dynamics. Struggle in everyday life, in general, was expressed in interviews about the European migration crisis. In such cases, my interlocutors preferred to focus on their own everyday life rather than the 'migration crisis'.

I worked and earned a pension. However, my retirement is not enough, and I have continued to work for the last 19 years!

Otherwise, with this money, so much money spent on medicines in a month ...it is not enough.

[...]

They [medics] write a clinical path [for receiving state medical care] 'six days'. Pneumonia cannot be cured in six days! People say that at *that time* [during communism], they were hospitalised for 21 days with pneumonia. Now, in six days, 'move on, leave!' 'Move on', but I am not well. ('Grandpa' Goshu, pensioner and wine producer, in his 70s)

The perspectives of people who have lived through communism illustrate the contrast of experiences. This account was most typical amongst older interlocutors. This extract is an instance of the general feeling of injustice in Bulgaria. It suggests the difficulty of everyday life, which intertwines with the rise of nationalism. As we can see, the informant distrusts the system entrusted with his care. Furthermore, he compares it to what it was during communism, 'at that time'. A dissatisfied life cycle, which makes it mandatory for a pensioner like Grandpa Goshu to continue working, constitutes injustice. These struggles begin with insufficient care 'now' in the post-socialist period.

Another aspect of the post-socialist experience of injustice is the lack of work. The abandonment of full employment is intertwined with poverty. The lack of good work is associated with the misery that defines 'Bulgaria'. This excerpt below illustrates this point, which was made by interlocutors across age groups, genders, ethnic and religious identifications:

There is a factory between Haskovo and Dimitrovgrad, and they take people in, but the people are not satisfied. When they are not satisfied, they leave work; others take it. They cannot keep people. Much work, three shifts: first, second, night. Non-stop, and 600 leva. Of course, people give up; they cannot stand it. They do not give money, and they want much work. Funny thing. We do a lot of work! (Sasho, 50, grandfather, state employee, Bulgarian Romani identification)

There is also a general feeling of injustice in a perceived change of morals after the fall of communism. These are broadly summarised as lack of discipline, lack of structure, lack of a social system of support, degradation of traditions.

Just hope...hope, what can one hope? In recent years, it has somehow crushed us that values are already in the background. The daily routine is: at work, going home, taking care of the children, cooking, eating and going to bed. I do not know if it is because we do not have the means, which is not a lie; we are just

on edge. We are cut from everywhere. Although we have these beautiful mountains there, the seas and all the treasures that our Bulgarian nature provides us, we do not have the opportunities and means to visit them. It is a big minus. (Tsvetelina, teacher, seasonal migrant to the UK, 32).

The narrative of Tsvetelina also resonates with everyday nationalism. In her everyday life, the experience of nationality is expressed by the picturesque nature of Bulgaria and weekend tours to national sites (Hutchinson, 2004:115). However, she feels unable to take part in commemorating the nation. Moving away from the romantic interpretation of the nation, such as promoted by revivalists as Father Paisii in Bulgaria, or drawing on ‘sacred’ aspects (Smith, 2000) such as the national liberation from ‘Ottoman yoke’, everyday nationalism can draw on mundane practices (Hutchinson, 2004:115). Interestingly, even in this form of nationalism, the nation is still constructed as unattainable, impossible to enjoy ‘in recent years’. While there is a sense of pride because ‘we’ have beautiful nature, provided by ‘Bulgaria’, a defeatist narrative emerges because ‘we’ cannot enjoy it. Billig (2004:94) contends that ‘nationalism is all too easily bracketed off as something extreme and irrational’ when national identity becomes sustained through conversations, practices, and assumptions about the world in everyday life. As Billig (2004:94) argues, ‘[t]he crucial words of banal nationalism are often the smallest: “we”, “this” and “here”, which are the words of linguistic “deixis”’. In the discussion of Tsvetelina, ‘we’ are assumed as people without opportunities to enjoy everyday life and enjoy the nation. ‘We’ are on edge, not geographically but rather economically, socially, and culturally. This perspective is illustrated further in the focus group with three men good acquaintances, who happened to come to the sandwich caravan in the centre of Harmanli and agreed to tell me about their lives as locals.

Ivan: Everyone runs away from here. There is no state; there is nothing. When people talk; a nice word one will not hear. Everyone is so negative. No young people are left; everyone runs away – for England, Germany. Whoever comes runs away to somewhere. Nobody stays here to work for 600 leva.

Interviewer: There are young people.

Ivan: This is nothing. Everyone is running somewhere. The city was full here [points to the city centre]. Of all my friends, 20 people, only three are left here.

Stephen: I work across the street in the billiard club...

Ivan: The work is very little!

'Here', which signifies a reference to national identity Billig (2004), is imagined as a place without a state, without people and with nothing. Those who are 'left here', Ivan assumed as negative. The injustice of lack of work is perceived as coupled with the inequity of emigration. The lack of work and development prospects is associated with people leaving Harmanli (to work in bigger cities or abroad) and hence the de-population of town. The de-population of the town is experienced as injustice. This excerpt from a focus group above illustrates that a perceived degradation of the country is linked to the weak post-socialist state. People are negatively predisposed about their prospects and to excessive emigration. Injustice was, by far, most often linked to the economic degradation of the country after communism, which in turn led to emigration. Interlocutors across age groups, genders, and socio-economic groups all discussed how the injustice of employment is intertwined with emigration, leading to the town's depopulation. This was also reflected in interlocutors' accounts about the future:

Interviewer: As a final question, what would you like to see in Harmanli in the future?

Tsvetelina: Well, I want to see new jobs most of all. People have somewhere to work, so families don't need to become separated to work abroad. (Tsvetelina, teacher, seasonal migrant to the UK, 32)

The country's context and emigration from Eastern Europe shape perceived – degradation, poverty, unemployment, emigration. The feelings of injustice referred to the rural areas in post-socialism, which are associated with poverty, unemployment, and emigration of young people (mainly abroad). In addition to the three narratives of injustice related to the post-socialist context and emigration from Bulgaria, other discourses see injustice specifically with the new events of the European migration crisis, leading to new grievances.

Discourses about immigration in Bulgaria intertwine with emigration. Refugeehood is often compared with emigration from Bulgaria. Migration, both emigration and immigration, from the perspective of those left behind, is constructed as an 'enemy'. An interpretation of net migration is constructed where the number of people leaving minus the number of people coming into a country creates a threat. Instead of counting the number of people coming towards the country's population, the discourse about refugeehood is that the newcomers further changed the demographic picture away from Bulgarianness.

Emigration has also meant that family and friends are perceived as leaving the community. That migration has an impact on social relationships has been proven by research (Bastia *et al.*, 2020). Research on transnational family migration also focused on the well-being of those staying behind (Haagsman and Mazzucato, 2020). Specific examples are the elderly, whose children are young parents working abroad, which has meant that the grandparents often bring up grandchildren who stayed behind. The feeling of being 'left behind' is perhaps related to such migration dynamics shaped by economic conditions. In other words, migration becomes intersected (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992) with low incomes to shape the feeling of being left behind.

The experience of crisis after 1989 was inevitable. It came to dominate the understanding of national identity in the post-Soviet space. Shevchenko (2009) documents the coping strategies of ordinary people in Moscow. Her ethnography shows people's hardship after the fall of communism in Moscow during the 90s. The change of the political system necessitated lifestyle changes in the means of subsistence from all-planned to individual centred. Besides the shift in norms and values, as described by my interlocutors, there was a period in which the political and economic changes took place in the early 1990s across Eastern Europe, which left a lasting impact on the social fabric. The transformation is often associated with a degradation of values and corruption, which manifests in public property sales into private. Therefore, the post-socialist is not only a reference to the past of the socialist regime but to society grappling with the aftermath of substantial change and the new symbols that came to shape national identity. Thugs and rubbish are some of the signs, together with disorganisation and chaos, which characterised the early 90s period and the crisis of the collective identity (Shevchenko, 2009).

An increasing coping strategy developed by many has been emigration (Manolova, 2019). Since the 1990s, emigration from Eastern Europe emerged as a possibility. The first few years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the primary type of emigration was asylum seeking in the context of open borders. There were continuous asylum applications from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. As Van Mol and de Valk (2016) discuss, between 1989 and 1992, the applications from countries in Eastern Europe increased 'from 320,000 to 695,000, to decline to 455,000 by the end of the decade (Hansen 2003) and increase again to 471,000 in 2001 (Castles *et al.* 2014)'. With EU membership, asylum applications decreased, while Western European policies attracted economic migration,

seasonal migrations, and student migration (Markova, 2010). On the one hand, emigration was possible for the first time after the fall of the Iron Curtain, which protected the Soviet republics and Soviet satellites, such as Bulgaria and Romania. Emigration was an opportunity to see the world outside or escape persecution and stigma in the new power configuration. Bulgaria ranked fourth amongst the top 10 countries of origins of migrants in the EU, after Romania, Poland, and Morocco (SOPEMI, 2006 cited in Markova, 2010: 9). In the scope of two years from 1992 to 2001, the population in Bulgaria decreased by half a million (Markova, 2010:13).

In Bulgaria, the experience of crisis deepened in 1996 as an economic crisis shattered the success of the democratically elected Socialist government. This period is characterised by increased criminality, increased football hooliganism and a feeling of not belonging (Dzhekova *et al.*, 2018). While the period indicated as ‘transition’ from communism to capitalism has been much examined by economists, politicians and sociologists, the end of this period is less discussed. The end of transition is perhaps primarily associated with joining the European Union, symbolising unity and equality. The process of joining, and the associated conditionalities specifically developed for Bulgaria and Romania, illustrated the last steps of the transition ladder. Emigration numbers from post-socialist countries increased further within the European Union as members gradually joined. Since 2007, when Bulgaria joined together with Romania, emigration has been growing.

The turning point of the transition from communism, from the promise of capitalist democracy, crises, conditionalities and finally EU membership, then manifests with increased choices to emigrate from the country. While the option to migrate would be expected to increase when fewer or no travel, residence, and work restrictions apply, many commentators have also interpreted the number of people leaving as a symptom of the post-socialist human condition. The promise of capitalist democracy was implementing human rights, transparent institutions, opportunities for businesses and growth. This promise, however, is interpreted as a lie, a trick, a false promise, beyond the collective disappointment of the unrealised promise, which manifests in interpretations of a failed state, or forgotten people (*provalen narod*). Within this context, the perceptions of a fallen people, that emigration from Bulgaria occurs, rather than from the position of enjoying the right to travel. The choice of emigration is understood both by people who choose (‘emigrants’) (Manolova, 2018) and by the people left behind. Recent research by

Manolova (2018), for example, studies why people emigrate from Bulgaria to the UK and identifies that Bulgarians imagined the UK as superior, with opportunities not present in Bulgaria and their movement as one directed towards success.

Emigration is the symbolic destination of EU membership. The culmination of development for Eastern European states has been associated with the possibility to emigrate, and thus, to choose a lifestyle outside of the post-socialist world. Emigration from the East to the West is not the subject of my argument instead of that neo-liberal development in post-socialist states came to be identified with emptiness in the region and people feeling left behind. The emptiness in Eastern Europe pushes people to move in search of better opportunities for life, and this tendency is shaping the attitudes of those people 'left behind' towards migration. The people who are 'left behind', as many would construct themselves, and who are the research object of this thesis, had formed opinions about migration before the European refugee crisis began to take hold in the policymaking and practice spheres.

Economic migration for the purpose of better opportunities is interpreted as a choice of Bulgarians to emigrate that has shaped the demography of the country. Thus, emigration is interpreted not by the people who have left and are not in the country anymore, but more in terms of what their emigration has meant for society in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian national identity in particular. Refugeehood is understood through interpretations of emigration and its impact on those who did not emigrate, i.e. those 'left behind'.

These findings have implications for the construct of Us vs Them. They suggest an 'outside' European identity and an integrative 'move' towards its direction in spatial and ideational terms. The literature on European integration suggests that being European is understood by people as one coherent entity ('the Other'). This shapes a particular Self-Other idealised relationship (Said, 2003; Todorova, 2006) which leaves out the question of how people at the local level relate to diversity differently. The idealisation of European membership, rather than being shaped by internal collective cohesion, is understood as 'fixing' the perceived 'backwardness' within the states through the disciplining logic of conditionalities (Raik, 2004).

The need to 'fix' the Bulgarian state is iterated in various ways also by the various movement activists, pro-asylum, anti-asylum, and descendants of refugees. Pro-asylum

activists assume the welfare and care responsibilities of the state, especially in 2014 which was ‘zero integration year’ as no integration policy or funding was administered (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2015). Anti-asylum activists assume state roles to take care of the ‘Bulgarian’ public and the ‘new’ open border. Descendants are cultural activists taking care of ‘not forgetting’ unresolved international politics between Turkey and Bulgaria, the recognition of the ‘destruction’ of Thracian Bulgarians. The following section analyses these social movements around immigration. The various mobilisations and hierarchies of care are contextualised in the post-socialist period in Bulgaria.

8.2. Social Movements around Immigration

Social movement action emerged in Bulgaria to protect the rights of asylum seekers since 2013. It focuses on care provision repertoires which are coordinated in local networks. Rather than seeing such acts as hospitality or humanitarianism, they are part of a global movement for the rights of asylum seekers (Della Porta, 2018b; Tazreiter, 2010) and includes civil society groups, religious groups, NGOs, and people with no previous volunteering or activism experience. In Bulgaria, these activists self-organise via Friends of the Refugees group. The members of the pro-asylum movement vary in age, social class, gender, religious identification.

Social movements initiatives fluctuate and vary (Kiess et al., 2018), which explains the short-term helpers’ repertoires. Activists who lived outside Harmanli travelled to the camp to offer care. Within this movement, there have been calls to end deportations from the Harmanli 21 faction of the movement. The Friends of the Refugees group has sustained the movement from its inception and across various repertoires. Most notable tactical and cultural repertoires include creating a school for the children inside the camp, supporting translation, transport to public services, collecting donations, language classes, information campaigns, intercultural exchange. For the pro-asylum movement this care work is clearly linked to the deprivation of newcomers, the lack of adequate living conditions which encamp people into bare life. For them care repertoires are daily. The so-called ‘riot’ in the Harmanli camp, could also be understood as part of the pro-asylum movement, organised by asylum-seekers. The tactical repertoires of

disobedience by throwing rocks and burning mattresses, include the means available to the activists. Rather than being focused around ethnic politics as is the case of Australia (Tazreiter, 2010), the pro-asylum movement is organised around care repertoires. Similar to other pro-asylum movements, it aims to respond to the detention of people, as the repertoires of Harmanli 21 and Friends of Refugees' visits in detention centres illustrate. The motifs and beliefs that explain the pro-asylum activism include the awareness of a humanitarian emergency and the lack of state support, which their proximity to the camp informs.

The local anti-asylum movement draw on various action repertoires. Similarly to protests in Harmanli, many towns in Bulgaria and Europe (Grill, 2005) condemn immigration due to perceived issues such as lack of space, lack of resources and the national state's poverty. In the EU border region, two distinct group of activist emerge within this movement – the refugee hunters and the Initiative Committee for Harmanli. Both groups try to involve the state for recognition of their work to care for the border and the local community, while also feel abandoned by it in caring enough to perform these duties. The two groups operate separately because of the different tactical repertoires they have access to. The male refugee hunters organise around Dinko Valev who works in a garage and has access to the All-Terrain-Vehicles to patrol the mountainous region of the border between Bulgaria and Turkey. The members of the Initiative Committee for Harmanli, as locals in Harmanli have relatively easy access to knowledge and the dynamics of the public sphere. They draw on acquaintances, eyewitnesses who work in the town centre, in cafés, shops, or inside the camp, who facilitate their everyday bordering repertoires.

To justify their repertoires anti-asylum activists construct 'refugees' as illegal and radicalised individuals. Because the refugee is identified as a 'possibly radicalised male', the opportunities for life of people seeking refuge, male and female, are limited and shaped by such stereotypes. The 'radicalised refugee' is an utmost threat for the anti-asylum activists. Anti-refugee movement most often construct the figure of the refugee as male, young, single. This construct allows for fear to surface and is justified, as from a masculine perpetrator. The 'illegal immigrant' is illegal by virtue of crossing the border and by being male – someone imagined as a terrorist, barbarian, sexually interested in the females of the nation. The word 'singles' came to represent the gendered discourse of the EU migration crisis. It has a direct translation from English, adapted directly into

Bulgarian the singles (in Bulgarian: *singalite*) were groups of men, who were separated into independent housing in the refugee camp, they were mainly from Afghanistan, in the camp, while in town, the singles were all men who could be identified as having come from the refugee camp.

Second and third-generation migrants form the present movement of descendants of Thracian refugees. They organise around struggles with the recognition of the refugee identity. Their cultural repertoires include educational activities and regular trips ‘in the steps of our [Thracian refugee] ancestors’. Their memory activism refers to preserving their refugee heritage and the transgenerational memories of 19th century ‘destruction’ of Thracian Bulgarians. Their movement is based on the intergenerational memories of feeling one’s home. The recent ‘refugee crisis’ for them reiterated their movement identity. The memories of struggles of their ancestors increased as it was compared with the perceived easier experiences of asylum seekers from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, and other places from the Global South. The descendant’s repertoires for recognition of the genocide of their ancestors interjected solidarities with newcomers. Thus the descendants, by identifying through an intergenerational refugee identity, continue to demand care for their rights, lost lands and properties. Comparing and contrasting migratory experiences is undertaken by people ‘at the frontline’ (Papataxiarchis, 2016b) and whose caring acts are vital to people seeking refuge. While conceptually the comparisons of migration experiences might be a cognitive function, it implicates the bare life of encamped people.

The emphasis to understand these diverse responses as movements is the sustained character they have, the network of people they include, various symbols and discourses they mobilise, with the aim to change the structural context in which they find themselves. It emphasises the collective nature of the local responses. The contribution of this study is the interpretation of unjust social structure from various social movements. It sheds light on the values and diverse local perspectives around immigration, such as the fluctuation of protest initiatives across time.

This thesis studies the care discourses developed to justify various action repertoires around immigration. Anti-asylum protestors used the sentiment of care for the community to justify their political positions and repertoires of refugee hunting and border vigilance. Alongside the prominent anti-asylum protests, care networks developed

in border regions and around refugee camps and form the pro-asylum movement. Pro-asylum activist caring repertoires were directed towards those feeling wars and famine, while anti-asylum protestors' care was projected towards the local community. The frame of care thus emerged as mobilising for distinct groups of people in the context of immigration. Descendants of Thracian refugees (second and third-generation migrants from the interwar period of 1919-1925) in the European border care to preserve the distinct memory of refuge of their ancestors. By caring for their refugee heritage, many denied the present experiences of asylum-seeking at their doorsteps. For pro-asylum, anti-asylum, and refugee memory action repertoires suggests that care justifies distinct responses across the political spectrum and migration consciousness.

8.3. Politics of Care around Immigration

For pro-asylum activist care materialises in repertoires. For anti-asylum activists, care politics are discourses of care for the self and care for the family in the context of the 'migration crisis'. Masculinity for the anti-asylum activists is invoked to replace the lenient state in 'managing migrants'. Male vigilantes care to defending the nation, which is in need of defence, since others do not do their job and the state is failing (Ratcheva, 2014). In this sense, masculinity is paired with policing and border control. The traditional everyday man, Bay Ganyo who travels to Europe, is replaced by the new national hero Dinko Valev, saves Europe's borders. A small business owner in his 30s, he embodies the national protector in the neo-liberal post-socialism.

A woman's role is not in border patrols, but to care for the everyday life in the town. Women, who were the main organisers of all local protests are watchful of the everyday sphere. The 'female protector' surveys the European public space, cares for public health of the Bulgarian community. These politics of care justify public reporting and everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Women also construct a fear of the everyday life in Harmanli, doing the shopping or walking freely in town. They extend civic duty, as the men, to that of the community in which they develop activism. Thus this is a gendered anti-asylum activism justified by politics of care. Politics of care is developed on the basis of gendered fears; they also see themselves from the position of women, whose role is shopping, taking the kids to the park, and at the same time observing if 'contagious refugees' stroll in the streets and shop in 'their' supermarkets. While women also agree with the problem of cross border refugees, it is men who assume

this task, while women make sure of the peace of the everyday (home, square, shop). Men also agree that seeing the refugee daily is too much but are not concerned.

For the anti-asylum movement, care for the community is needed to protect them from the male refugee. The refugee other is imagined from Afghanistan. He is from the caves. He has grown up knowing how to hold a gun. He carries diseases which are unknown in our lands – so we need to protect ourselves from him. He receives money from unknown sources and places. He has been involved in the Paris attacks, and had passed through Harmanli. He has been radicalised, and we let him in our homes, he could have killed us all. He had the potential to create the tragedy in Harmanli, which took place in Paris. Since we are all EU family, we are also all possible targets. Women feel the need to pursue the steps and interactions of males in the camp. For the men, the role of the protector is played out at two levels. The first is the national one, where they protect 'Mother Bulgaria'. The refugee is male trespassing their border, so they go and stop him from passing on their territory—masculinity competing. The second is that they feel that they protect 'their women' vis-à-vis the refugee. They feel that the women are subjected, to the refugee, so the men must stop the male refugee. The construction of the male refugee, then justifies the border vigilance and everyday bordering. The refugee is constructed as male, militarised and Muslim. The idea of the refugee as such constructed, all three combined, shapes the construct of refugees as radicalised. Being Muslim is not an issue of concern for the community bordering Turkey, where many of the inhabitants are of dual nationality and cohabit with people practising Islam since the formation of the township. The threat of the refugees is thus their perceived radicalisation. Instead, the radicalised refugee's masculinity is perceived as militarised. He knows how to use combat weapons, has been trained in military warfare, and is on the side of the Muslims entering a Christian state. This phenomenon is instigated by radical right activists who call on state authorities to police the Other, who crosses the border, is illegal, and is a threat to society. It concerns that the citizens employ by themselves vigilance, patrol the border, and call the police to report on 'suspicious behaviour' or asylum seekers. Such frames of illegality and radicalisation justify the politics of care for the community, in the context of a migration crisis. The so constructed politics of care, then, inform vigilant and everyday bordering repertoires.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

9.1. A Summary of the Research

This thesis sought to answer the research question: What frames different local narratives and mobilisations towards immigration in EU external border areas, and what do these frames and action repertoires construct, negotiate and contest? This question is significant as it deals with the problem of tolerance and inclusion and the role of local communities in shaping the right to asylum. Furthermore, I aimed to address a gap in the literature borne by the recent events described by scholars as to the ‘European migration crisis’ (Collyer & King, 2016; Lee & Nerghes, 2018; Mendelsohn, 2017; Squire, 2017). The research implies problems on European collective identity, inclusive of refugeehood. To understand the topic of reception, I reviewed existing research and organised it as follows. Firstly, I considered up-to-date research on responses to the European migration crisis, which maps practices and discourses across Europe. Secondly, I reviewed the literature on action repertoires around immigration and asylum. The third strand of literature reviewed was on national identity from the angle of Us versus Them, to explore the variations of these configurations for 21st Bulgarian national identity. I then explored the concepts of everyday nationalism and everyday bordering. Finally, I reviewed the literature on care and hospitality. Overall, the thesis considered action repertoires to the current EU migration crisis.

Before moving to explore the repertoires at the local level, I contextualised them in policies of containment and encampment in border regions (see Section 3.1.). The Dublin III Regulation structured stranding people in border scapes in Greece, Italy, Malta, Bulgaria, Cyprus. However, the nationalist protests took place before the ‘EU immigration crisis’ peaked in 2015. The context of the crisis itself cannot explain the anti-asylum protesting public because the same event generated pro-asylum movements. Another aspect of the background is national borders and their role in national identity. In the case of Bulgaria, the southern border was drawn by a series of treaties in the 19th century, and the quest to ‘bring back what was ours’ is entangled to the present day with national identity beyond the present-day southern border. The present European migration crisis intertwines with historical border-making in national identity. This background would help us understand the role in which borders and national identity play in the protesting Bulgarian public.

To answer what are the repertoires around immigration and the discourses that justify them, as discussed in Chapter 4, I conducted fieldwork in the border town Harmanli for the duration of 11 months between 2017-2018. My data collection methods were semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and ethnography. With prominent organisers of protests in Harmanli, I conducted in-depth interviews, which often lasted longer than with other interviewees. In rapport in these cases was a delicate matter that inquired an investment in time. As throughout my fieldwork, it emerged that the immigration reception extends beyond the protests, I studied broader discourses about refugees in Harmanli. In doing so, I interviewed people involved in the local networks of care. These included the Mayor, elected council advisers, social services, the refugee camp officials and volunteers, teachers in a local multi-ethnic village schooling children who live in the refugee camp, local employers. In addressing my question, I aimed to grasp a representation of diverse perspectives and standpoints. In doing so, I sought to interview people who belong to minority ethnic groupings such as Bulgarian Roma, Bulgarian Turkish self-identifications, and social groups especially sensitive towards immigration issues, such as descendants of Bulgarian refugees and people with family members abroad. I sought interviews with people of different age groups and genders. I also conducted four focus groups. In these cases, I found that the focus group gave more power and comfort to take the debate further, as it took place in already established groups, such as the local library employees. Moreover, ethnography was a method that allowed us to see the extent to which debates about refugees are indeed a part of the everyday life of Harmanlians and which other themes concern the issue of enquiry. Eleven months in 2017-2018 exposed a variety of topics of the everyday life of Harmanlians to understand the extent to which the public identified with the protests. To answer the research question on what frames distinct local narratives and mobilisations towards immigration in EU external border areas, I draw on constructivist epistemology. Constructivism allows us to understand how various people construct meaning about national identity and the refugee-Other.

In answer to the main research question, the frame of *care* emerges as a shared mobilising frame across different groups of people. Pro-asylum volunteers, anti-asylum protesters, and descendants of Thracian refugees in Bulgaria develop a variation of the frame of care in their responses and action repertoires towards asylum in Europe. The

differences in the frame of care are significant and shape what I have termed as *politics of care* – the competing narratives of care.

Chapter 5 considers the repertoires of vigilantes and how care for the community justifies their violence. The figure of the vigilante, which emerged alongside the protests, is perhaps the culmination of protest cycle. Vigilantes are men and women who practice bordering. Border patrols are how vigilantes enforce new social norms of violence. The other new practice is bordering refugees out by being ‘watchful’ of the public sphere. The second results in attempts to collect information, police, discipline, diagnose and treat people in the refugee camp. Vigilantes gain public endorsements because of adhering to a victim's identity. This specific collective victim identity focuses on migration outside Bulgaria, where they are left behind to uphold the draining nation. They are also victims of post-socialism, as the change of norms and everyday practices requires them to adapt to a new way of life. The victim identity, however, does not transform into healing but into protection. Protection is practised with border patrols, observing social order, social policing of refugees. The organisers of the protests are two of the vigilantes who collect documents and ‘data’ to restore public order.

Therefore, the protests against refugees have very little or nothing to do with people in the Harmanli refugee camp. They represent a wish for imagined order, stability, and norms. The organisers of the protests themselves contend that ‘it is not the people in the camp we protest. No one runs if they had a decent life. We are against the government’s handling of the crisis.’ While they have not requested better living conditions in the camp, in fact to fewer refugees in the border areas where they live. Integral to their accounts was ‘I am not a racist’ claim and ‘my children have Gypsy friends’ or ‘all my students are Gypsies’, suggesting that they deny racist motivations for protests and vigilance. However, intolerance, nationalism, and racism can be mapped on a long continuum, with varying sentiments, excuses, justifications, and denial. As literature has suggested, these feelings are rarely shaped by the interaction of the object of violence. The care for the self is perceived as care for the national body. The concerns for the bodies of the Bulgarians, from contagious and exotic diseases, create an Other (Said, 2003) and further encamp people seeking refuge.

There is a variety of repertoires, and while an alarming part of them are protests and vigilance, new caring networks also emerged. The care practices are associated with

emergency care and long-term care, repertoires that fluctuate but nonetheless sustain a collective body of activists. The pro-asylum activists draw collective action frames of humanitarian emergency which motivate them to join the cause. The local movements that emerged across the southern European borders are part of a broader movement for refugee rights and their support for refugees can also be interpreted as acts of citizenship (Della Porta & Parks, 2018).

The work of the Union of Thracian Associations has been theorised as memory activism. While in contrast to the other two activist repertoires, the Union has a long history fighting for the rights of the descendants of Thracian refugees. This history of refugeehood in Harmanli connects with the current asylum politics and negatively impacts reception and empathy. The Union of Thracian Associations in Bulgaria has not interfered with protests or vigilance but has also not drawn solidarities and was used by people who did not belong to the Association to claim their hospitality to refugees already (i.e. their resources of care have now depleted). Historical definitions of who is a refugee shape contemporary perspective towards people in the Refugee Reception Centre. This is discussed in Chapter 7, which examines what constitutes refugeehood from the perspective of ‘locals’. Existing discourses about refugeehood from the 19th, strongly expressed in southern Bulgaria, inform these definitions. Refugees from the 19th century are linked with genocide and with images of poverty, which sustain national identity. These images compete with present-day imaginations of who is a refugee. Such imaginations of asylum deny the grievability of life of people crossing the Turkish-Bulgarian border since 2013 as ‘real refugees’. There is Us vs Them constructs that shape the ‘our refugees’ vs ‘the new refugees’. This identity construction, in turn, suggests that locals (descendants of refugees or not) have a claim on refugeehood, which diverts the current responsibility of reception. ‘Real refugees’ are claimed to be refugees from the 19th century, whose descendants still experienced unresolved problems. The descendants of the Thracian refugees see their struggle as graver and more grievable than ‘the present’, which are not seen as real refugees. They do not acknowledge the current situation as a problem for refugees ‘because they are not refugees’.

The repertoires of the pro-asylum, anti-asylum and the descendants of refugees are embedded in the structural conditions of Bulgaria and represent various forms of dissent and contention with the establishment. Exploring these three movements together has enriched the understanding of local contentious politics around migration. The

collective aspect of each of the three distinct groups all frame a discourse of care that just motivates their collective action. Care, rather than a universal notion is political. The care work of the pro-asylum movement contributes to the struggles for citizenship. The frame of care for the community, which becomes advocated concerning migration smoke-screens the aggression of the anti-asylum repertoires such as ‘hunting’ refugees or public reporting which led to a lockdown and turned the Registration Reception Centre for men, women and children into detention.

9.2. Contributions to the Field on Everyday Nationalism

This research contributes to everyday nationalism (Billig, 1995; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Skey, 2008, 2009). As Fox contends, very little is known about what people do with their nation in their day-to-day lives (van Efferink, 2011). This study developed the study of everyday nationalism in Bulgaria by illustrating those everyday practices of border people in Bulgaria, which ‘flag’ the nation (Billig, 1995), including watching ‘their’ parks, ‘their’ shops, and more generally ‘their’ public spaces from the threat of the ‘Other’ into what constitutes the everyday articulations of Bulgarian nationhood. The research in the Thracian cafe also illustrated how everyday nationalism implicates border regions in Bulgaria through how both transborder and national Thracian identity is flagged with artefacts of drawings and images of Bulgarian national heroes calendars projecting the continuity of this identity, and festivals depicted on them. As the everyday context of the research was a border region, the thesis brought together literatures on everyday nationalism and everyday bordering to illustrate the cycles between ‘hot’ nationalism and the ‘banal’ searches for information and public reporting. The two concepts, everyday nationalism and everyday bordering, were further explored from the perspective of local activists.

9.3. The ‘Left Behind’ Bulgarian Post-Socialist Identity

While the research investigated everyday nationalism rather than nationalism promoted by revivalists (Todorova, 1995), there are interesting similarities between the two in the

Bulgarian context. The Bulgarian revival was associated with figures such as Father Paisii (in Bulgarian: Sveti Paisii Hilendarski), and the first history book on ‘Bulgaria’ or Ivan Vazov, among other poets, have constructed Bulgarian national identity as defeatist (Todotova, 1995), which has sustained in nationalist discourses amongst nationalists, who construct the nation as ill (Ratcheva, 2014). The case of everyday nationalism has illuminated that Bulgaria, ‘here’, remained imagined as having a beautiful nature (mountains and sea), while after the fall of socialism, the people have left (emigrated). This post-communist assertion of national identity, as this thesis has thoroughly illustrated, is one of victimhood. ‘Nothing is left here’, is an expression widely used in everyday Bulgaria, equating ‘nothing’ with the empty space left behind by people’s emigration because of the lack of life opportunities. The annihilation of the national identity is not a critique of nationalism or a proclamation of cosmopolitan identity. The national identity of ‘left behind’ appears as a unifying assumption in everyday life, habitual routines, and conversations amongst Bulgarians.

One strand of the responses to the ‘migration crisis’ was a banal discourse of national identity (Billig, 1995). This notion of national identity as ‘left behind’ has become reinforced with constructions of ‘crisis’ since 2013. The words that were uttered by many of my interlocutors expressed similar thoughts about the ‘left behind. The ‘left behind’ national identity is perceived with little economic resources, human capital (to borrow from the economic jargon) that has left the country, no opportunities, no time to enjoy, and no state to offer support. While often not narrated in xenophobic sentiments, the attitude of those against immigration in Bulgaria reaffirmed a banal, familiar form of nationalism drawing on ‘lack’ and the defeatist perspective of those ‘left behind’.

The campaigners and protesters played the ‘patriotic card’ (Billig, 2004:99-103) against immigration. Several of the organisers of the protests, who identified themselves as nationalists, developed a rhetoric of Harmanli as the mythical place of a poem by Slaveykov, The Spring of the White Footed. One interlocutor, Yordanka (white, aged 40, works in the public sector, politics and education), for instance, took on an initiative to restore the degrading stone monument of the mythical Gergana with white feet placed at the entrance of the town. Another cultural revival, in the context of and after the ‘migration crisis’, was the initiation of the festival ‘At the Threshing Floor’ (In Bulgarian: *Na Harmana*) by the business association in Harmanli.

Other national initiatives included the protests against refugees and the collection of photographs of the alleged ill-health of refugees. The Bulgarian nationalism from below, which such patriotic Christian white middle-class protesters in towns initiated since 2013, was allied to vigilante practices of border patrols and refugee hunting. They expressed dissatisfaction with the border protection, with the responsibility to contain immigration and being 'left alone' even by the Bulgarian state to fortress the region. This research concludes that everyday nationalism reinforces some overarching national identity carried over from the post-Ottoman period, which Todorova (1995) identified as defeatist. The perception of a lack of economic resources and opportunities is coupled with depopulation, reinforcing this same defeatist national identity narrative, albeit in new rhetoric in the current context.

9.4. Competing Narratives of Refugeehood: 'Old Refugees' and 'New Refugees'

The study of border regions has illuminated the interrelated histories and narratives of migration. While the attitudes towards immigration are often concerned with economic or cultural 'wars', the history of migration or, in other words, of being an Other further implicated how immigration is received and discussed. The case of border regions is fascinating as these are places of mixed cultures and histories, like the Thracian refugees and their descendants illustrate. This historical lens into generational consciousness about migration movements has much to offer into the rights of the migrant communities and any future migration movements. The unresolved experiences of refuge, defined by the Thracian Association as genocide, have been carried over through generations, shaping continuing claims to recognition. While such historical experiences are not politically and culturally addressed, they carry the danger to remain 'zones of conflict' (Hutchinson, 2005). Alternatively, the amelioration of the consciousness of struggle, inherent in the claims to recognise the Thracian identity and heritage across the Bulgarian national border, can bridge future migration movements. In the sense of forced expulsion, becoming a refugee is a global trend, supported by conflicts and climate change, which is here to stay. Rather than being a crisis, or a rupture to normality, refugee movements ought to be conceptualised as part of being human. In such a conceptualisation, the consciousness of refuge could come to offer support and experience rather than Othering.

The argument in Chapter 7 was that the unresolved claims to Thracian identity had contributed negatively to the discourses on refugees since 2013, drawing comparisons between ‘us’ – Thracian identity, forced refugees, victims of genocide, and ‘them’ – present-day economic migrants. Thus, the ‘left behind’ prism in Bulgaria applies to the descendants of Thracian refugees. Unlike left-behind by emigration or economic hardship, the descendants feel left behind to be recognised as a cultural trans-border entity.

The study adds a country case to studies on refugees from the 19th century, shaped by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent wars on the Balkans. The chapter on the descendants of Thracian refugees adds not only to the literature on descendants in Bulgaria (Ganeva-Raycheva & Zlatkova, 2012; Zlatkova, 2014) but also to cases of descendants in Greece (Voutira, 2018) and Macedonia (Cowan, 2008). The research would assist in broader understandings of refugeehood in the region.

The study also adds to research on integration practices in rural border areas. By relying on the centre-periphery relationship, the ethnography in a border region in Europe develops new interpretations about changing dynamics between positions in the centre and positions in the periphery. Bulgaria has historically adopted a periphery position within the EU due to its location and its identity directed ‘towards’ Europe. Since 2013, this position has arguably changed. Similarly to other border regions, such as Greece, Italy, Malta, Cyprus, Bulgaria has experienced pressure to contain migration out. There are empirical and theoretical contributions developed in this research, which stem from this new power position that border regions of Europe have concerning immigration. The developed power position by protestors and the general public is exemplified, for instance, with the newly emerged noun *dinkovtsi*. The word, deriving from the name of the refugee hunter Dinko, proclaimed as a modern Bulgarian hero, suggests Bulgarians are like the refugee hunter – vigilant even if not on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey, in their everyday life. The new Bulgarian identity of *dinkovsti* suggests the penetration of the bordering practices in everyday life, as an act of self-reliance, or taking state matters of border policing into citizen’s hands in everyday practices, such as being vigilant of social boundaries in the park or the town centre. The new bordering mission of the *dinkovsti* in Bulgaria is emphasised by the perception of the need to defend Europe’s borders in the context of missing the Common European Asylum System.

The terms used to describe the period concerning newcomers' arrival have been 'refugee crisis' or 'humanitarian crisis'. Studying everyday nationalism at the local level, new concepts and understandings emerged to contextualise 'the crisis' in the sphere of national contestations. This has assisted in understanding the period through the prism of contentious politics, rather than as depoliticised occurrences (Berry *et al.*, 2016). It provided empirically informed understandings of anti-immigrant protesters, which 'leftist' social movement scholars refer to as 'ugly protests' (Gillan and Pickerill, 2015:1). Critical understandings of the newly emerging anti-asylum social mobilisations with empirical knowledge to the scarce research on refugees in Bulgaria and studies of immigration in Bulgaria. Qualitative-informed critique to the studies on public attitudes towards immigration identified that the anti-asylum sentiments have evolved and manifest in vigilance practices.

This thesis adds to the epistemological argument of social constructionist theorisations through empirically based analysis. While some scholars critique constructionism from the position that it implies a wholly constructed society with no 'real' basis from which to begin constructing (see Hacking, 1999), the study of focus groups would highlight the construction of meaning through conversations.

The reception of migrants has received various repertoires. The searches of information, policing, and encampment draw on a frame of 'illegal immigration'. This frame is critical in constituting such new political and policy practices and inspiring anti-refugee movements in Europe. The frame of 'illegal immigration' has acted as a justification for 'protection'; what could otherwise be described as violence. This frame not only curtails migrant rights but also bypasses the moral obligation to rescue someone in need (Betts and Collier, 2017). The phenomenon of border vigilance, with its gendered variations, has been productive of a new type of national identity. While vigilantism was normalised, a new mode of seeing 'us' emerged. It was to assume the everyday protection of national identity with 'bare hands'. The normalised vigilantism has produced a national identity where 'we' are like the vigilante Dinko Valev, *dinkovtsi*. Perhaps, representative of perceived Bulgarian national identity, this new cultural phenomenon has broader implications. It is a response to the perceived lack of protection at the borders of Europe.

The criminalisation of migration is on par with the degradation of empathy, replacing the moral duty of rescue with an economic calculus model of who has,

obscuring the power the political elites and ordinary people create solutions and work together. Reinforces the notion of national identity as limited in scope and space. Rather than accepting the hybridity and fluidity that binds human relationships every day, the persistent adherence to a 'sacred' national space, which ought to be protected in an imagined conflict, has shaped European responses to immigration. There have been various responses to immigration. Immigration has come to mean a shared life of us all, referring to our consciousness of migration. 'We are all migrants' have been some chants that emerged in support of the migration crisis, drawing on the human experience of mobility and history of migration.

Returning to the key question of why people protest and the variation of European responses to immigration, there are a few frames that predominated the discursive constructions in conversations, namely the 'illegal immigrant' – and its variation the 'illegal refugee'. This frame was coupled with the injustice of a frame of 'crisis'. The crisis was perceived via a notion of illegal immigration – a wave of unidentified people, without passports, who do not appear poor, and are without families ('where are their families?' was a common rhetorical question). They thus did not qualify into a framing of deservingness and empathy (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2014b). The imagination of the illegal immigration was often coupled with the construction of terrorism, overtaking of the depopulated region, and an imagined occupation (In Bulgarian: *zavzemane*) by Others. The frame of illegal immigration thus produced the figure of the illegal immigrant – a young, Arab male, having grown up in terror-growing countries such as Afghanistan, part of a combat unit together with his other male compatriots. The construct of illegal immigration in such terms had a profound impact on Bulgarian society. The main knowledge-producers of such understandings of 'illegal immigration' and the 'migration crisis' were people involved in the protests against refugees. While such protests were televised, vigilantes' perspectives were normalised and became 'common sense' for many of my interlocutors. Dinko Valev became a public figure overnight, proclaimed as a 'refugee hunter' and national hero simultaneously. As his hunting missions were reported uncritically by national media, noting the compliments by border police and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov, the national identity of the 'left behind' intertwined with that of *dinkovtsi* - people like Dinko – who goes with his bare hands to hunt 'them'. The empathy, humanity or care in the vigilant Bulgarian national identity are absent. The national identity, protected by the masculine 'national hero', is

imagined as a 'left behind' victim of the post-socialist period, characterised by destruction and departure, and under threat by combat units crossing the Bulgarian border with Turkey. The revivalist Bulgarian national identity thus becomes reaffirmed by border vigilance. Rather than constructing the 'migration crisis' as born by the comparatively small number of newcomers crossing the border, I have illustrated that the experience of crisis is evident in the sentiments of a 'left behind' victim national identity. What was experienced as a crisis is precisely this national identity construction of being 'left behind' victim. The context of the depopulated border regions, the co-constructed experience of 'lack' by those 'left behind in Bulgaria after the fall of socialism, came at the forefront of the debate on immigration. With national identity perceived as decline, departure or destruction was at the core of over masculine border protection and vigilance. The female vigilantes I interviewed were eager to share their perspectives of the decline of values that were flourishing during socialism.

Generally, from my interviews with Harmanlians, except those long-term volunteers, such as Valeria, who developed the discourse of care, the refugee-Other was described as different from 'us' – constructed as clean, decent, and cultured people. Drawing on racist jokes, national identity was revived, reimagined better than another that of the refugees. The new refugee-Other quickly replaced the previous suspect, the Bulgarian Roma, in conversations with Bulgarian Roma or white Christian interlocutors. The vulnerability associated with immigration was differently interpreted in the field. In the case of the 'left behind' victim national identity, such vulnerabilities, if acknowledged, served to insert a claim on self-righteousness and progress vis-à-vis the poor, backward savages. Dinko Valev, the refugee hunter, remains a political and cultural figure, an aspiration for many and a norm for others. Such racist and gendered border vigilance, drawing popular support, is also present across Europe, under the guise of responses to the 'migration crisis. While vigilantes claim emergence as responses to migration, perhaps it is best to see them as new political and cultural formations across Europe because of the impact they produce. They draw on issues of revivalist nationalism, history, and the community's positioning within Europe. While the 'migration crisis' is perceived as having ended now, the new initiative committees established across Bulgaria remain intact. Their narratives continue to invoke a 'left behind' victim national identity, perhaps only searching for another gendered prey. The fears which emerged during my interviews with vigilantes, after the crisis had ended in 2017-2018, constructed a returning army of

people from Europe to the border regions – the same refugee-Others now being sent back by ‘Europe’ where they first registered. In this continuing interplay of gender and nationalism in both banal and hot nationalism, alternative voices emerge which colour the debate on migration. The ethnographic research on the border allowed me to grasp variations of responses to immigration and, together with it, alternative visions of national identity.

9.4. Limitations of the Study

This section focuses on the limitations of this research project and what lessons can be learnt. The section concludes by outlining where future research in this area should be conducted. As discussed in Chapter 4, there were difficulties with recruiting participants in a highly politicised situation. One of my first observations when in the field was that ordinary people’s ordinariness was challenged by media and the politicisation of their experiences. I assumed that the experiences of crisis would predispose potential participants to share their grievances. However, the role of the media had contributed to a sense of misrepresentation of people’s grievances. Several reported that the local and national media misrepresented their welcoming or protesting in news coverages. Some people wanted to take part in the research only to discuss how news coverages misrepresented their views. Many felt that participating in the research would be used against them in some way. Others felt that even recording the interview could be used to ‘twist words’ they said. Even though potential interlocutors were aware that the recruitment was to support my PhD thesis, there was a general distrust in the new and increased interest in the community. To differentiate from reporters and become a ‘local’ in the field, I extended by five months the fieldwork period to almost double than initially planned.

On reflection, this is a finding of the research rather than simply a setback. It highlights the concerns experienced by change, such as a change of being perceived as politicised. The role of the media in shaping public attitudes has been discussed in the literature. The research project identified a strong distrust in the media and in being associated with the media, especially experienced by those interviewed for news coverages. Another benefit to emerge from this fieldwork experience is the new methods adapted to data collection. Participant observation took a more prominent space, and as I

invited my partner as a guest, we both became closer with several participants. For example, it allowed me to conduct participant observation in the masculine context of a barber's shop close to the Reception Registration Camp. We were also invited as a couple to a few dinners, which opened new ways of thinking about everyday politics, post-socialism, and migration. If the recruitment had not proven as challenging and prolonged and my partner had not come to visit, I would not have been entirely accepted into the more intimate everyday culture of Harmanlians.

There are three recommendations for future empirical research. First, addressing a methodological limitation of the study, there is a need to grasp the extent to which the context shapes decisions to protest or volunteer. This is not about determining pro or anti-refugee beliefs but concerns the significance of migration history and migration memory in positionalities on reception. As discussed in Chapter 6, this was an important factor determining a negative predisposition to migration in border regions. Only with a comparative perspective of several contexts of pre-existing migration discourses and responses to the refuge can we understand the scope of this relationship.

Second, an interesting reality that emerged from the data was about the female vigilantes and their practices of tracing backgrounds and watching for suspicious activity. The data set could be used for a journal article to document the new phenomenon of vigilance and its relationship with gender. This is not just about the nationalist frames of vigilantes but more generally about life histories, choices, and compromises.

The third recommendation for future research concerns the established newcomers and their role in shaping migration memory and claims for recognition. As discussed, there is a relationship between unresolved claims for recognition, migration memory and heritage, and reception. Since the European migration crisis has brought uneven experiences and injustices in various forms, future research would assist in understanding how this is remembered by the newly established. It is strongly believed that migration memory shapes the experiences of those who moved from one place to another and their offspring and communities.

9.5. Policy Implications

This section outlines the implications for practitioners involved with the reception of people seeking refuge. Specifically, the partnership with the state is highlighted. Within the empirical chapters on framing the European migration crisis (Chapter 5) and The politics of care (Chapter 7), there was an in-depth conversation about the role of local networks in shaping practices and discourses to refuge. These findings could be used in policy and practice, as currently, immigration is a pertinent and developing issue in Europe.

Misplaced care practices or little care for refugees and migration communities are linked to political protests. In the case of a protracted situation of a crisis, further government support would provide leadership. More care practices from the government were identified as the main finding to address a general feeling of emergency and insecurity associated with a crisis. While this would be a complex process with many difficulties, leadership linked with local networks is necessary to address the current refugee crisis and future ones. To address the feeling of a ‘European crisis’, there needs to be a conversation between the state and local grassroots networks.

Instead of perceiving the issue as a ‘refugee crisis’, there need to be broader initiatives to address social cohesion. As Betts and Collyer found in their collaboration with local knowledge, there are housing initiatives that have remained unused for various reasons. In the case of Lebanon, a whole business complex was left empty due to the war nearby in Syria. In the case of post-socialist spaces, which has been described as ‘emptiness’ (Dzenovska, 2018), the empty factory buildings, empty blocks of flats, could be renovated and offered for housing and new workspaces. Such initiatives would build bridges with places deemed forgotten or left behind while securing housing and life opportunities and overall moving away from the construction of a crisis.

The data was clear that the crisis needs to be primarily countered from the grassroots level. One issue presented in Chapter 8 was perceived injustice because of lack of work opportunities and lack of young people in the rural areas. Instead of the state focusing on building walls to secure what is impossible to secure, change, and movement, the relationships between the government and grassroots volunteers, need to be strengthened towards working with people ‘on the ground’ and re-directing budgets—

directing the debate on immigration towards policies and collaborations which create a hospitable environment.

As outlined in the empirical chapters, there are two main groups on the ground, volunteers and vigilantes. Their discourses and practices intertwine with one another and compete. Nonetheless, they have also attempted to communicate amongst themselves to demystify the care work which volunteers conduct.

As the Council of Europe's representative visit in Harmanli indicates, there is has been a need for their 'fact-finding-mission' across the Balkan routes and border regions of Europe. Such missions are one step for institutions to grasp the local dynamics for asylum. The governmental bodies involved in the management of asylum follow this initiative and collaborate to identify paths for work. Their work would be strengthened by including grassroots groups such as Friends of refugees to coordinate the efforts. This coordination would illustrate the leadership of the government and satisfy vigilantes who develop their bordering practices due to the passive role of the government in addressing the situation.

The state has already illustrated the willingness and possibility to respond to the demands of grassroots groupings, such as those calling for the lockdown of the refugee camp due to a perceived health crisis. This, however, led to further issues and was unproductive for everyone involved. In order to ensure that constructive dialogue takes place and reforming policies are adopted, wider communities and networks need to be heard and represented. Importantly, this includes the voices of people seeing refuge on the territory and people involved directly in care work. Instead of conceiving this as a one-off policy decision, a dialogue would need to be sustained. While this will not be easy and unprecedented, the state could draw on initiatives such as the Council of Europe's fact-finding mission and the previous work of civil society organisations.

The State Agency for Refugees, which already collaborates with the UNHCR and International Organisation for Migration, amongst other organisations such as Caritas in their Registration Reception Centres, could work further to re-model their ethos. As the Agency for Refugees, it has the scope to rely more on the discourse of care, rather than security, which would instil a more calm perspective amongst the general public in the face of a feeling of a crisis, as well as develop the work it has the administration to achieve. While it has developed a new policy in allowing refugees with a status to remain on the

premises of the agency, which serves only for temporary accommodation for the duration of the application process, it has the scope to initiate collaborations with local governments to secure housing and work opportunities for asylum seekers. Having a more transparent and active role in public life would thus serve to open the closed space of the camp towards ‘concerned citizens’, and most importantly, would act as a protector, thus nullifying the need for vigilance to protect the border and local populations.

Immigration is often imagined as a problem in Europe, especially through political campaigns such as Brexit. Newcomers arriving for numerous reasons in different locales in Europe are put to the test of whether ‘they’ are as good as ‘us’, motivations for arrival, and scrutinised into their Other livelihood within the so-constructed unit of the host community. Build upon competing and contesting frames of stability and chaos, national identity and immigration, traditions and change, immigration is too often constructed as the enemy, the Other, who threatens imagined national and European values. The migrant consciousness developed in families with second or third-generation refugees in Bulgaria (the descendants of Thracian refugees) or as part of having family members abroad is often mobilised as a reason to deter migration and foster hostility, rather than understanding and compassion. While ensuring safe passage through Europe’s borders is undoubtedly needed in the current immigration context, addressing the calls of both protestors and volunteers, more needs to be done to construct an empathetic discourse on the right to movement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form



Формуляр за съгласие за участие в индивидуални интервюта

Наименование на проекта: „Миграция във и извън Харманли, България“
Изследовател: Кристина Илиева

- Съгласен/а съм да участвам в интервю, извършено от Кристина Илиева от Университета в Съсекс, за да помогна с изследването на „Миграция във и извън Харманли, България“.
- Прочетох информационния лист, свързани с „Миграция във и извън Харманли, България“ и съм разбрал/а целите на проекта.
- Аз съм наясно с темите, които ще бъдат обсъдени в интервюто.
- Аз съм напълно наясно, че анонимността ми ще бъде запазена в процеса на обработката и представянето на данни, и че имам право да напусна дискусията във всяка точка.
- Аз съм напълно наясно, че данните, събрани ще се съхраняват сигурно, безопасно и в съответствие със Закона за събиране на данни.
- Аз съм напълно наясно, че не съм длъжен/а да отговарям на всеки въпрос, а това го направят по моя собствена воля.
- Съгласен съм разговорт да се записва с диктофон, така че да може да се транскрибира след като дискусията се проведе. Наясно съм, че имам правото да редактирам записа си, след като той е бил завършен.
- Наясно съм, че мога да правя всякакви разумни промени в настоящия формуляр за съгласие.

Име и фамилия

_____ Подпис на участника	_____ Дата
_____ Подпис на изследователя	_____ Дата

1

Информация за връзка

Това изследване е прегледано и одобрено от Комисия по изследователската етика в Университета в Съсекс. Ако имате някакви допълнителни въпроси или притеснения относно това проучване, моля свържете се с:

Кристина Илиева
kj51@sussex.ac.uk

Можете също така да се свържете с научните ръководители на Кристина Илиева:

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Какво става, ако имате притеснения относно това проучване?

Ако се притеснявате за това изследване, или ако сте загрижени за това как то се провежда, можете да се свържете с (наименование) председателя на Комисията по етика, Университета в Съсекс (адрес / електронна поща) или към Комисията за защита на личните данни към Република България на адрес гр. София 1592, бул. „Проф. Цветан Лазаров“, № 2 или на <https://www.cdpd.bg/?p=pages&aid=6>

Appendix 2: Information Sheet for the Focus Groups

Информационен лист

Групова дискусия

Научно-изследователски проект: „Дебати за бежанци в Харманли,
България“

Главен изследовател: Кристина Илиева



Поканени сте да участвате в научно-изследователски проект. Преди да решите да участвате е важно да разберете защо се извършва изследването и какво ще се случи. Моля, отделете време, за да прочетете внимателно следната информация и да я обсъдите с ваши близки, ако желаете. Моля, попитайте ако има нещо, което не е ясно или искате повече информация. Благодарим!

Каква е целта на изследването?

Целта е да събере съвременна информация и да представи нови обяснения и термини за разбиране на ежедневието на местните хора в един граничен град. Проекта започва с моето желание да разбера какво може да се научи от събитията, свързани с т. нар. бежанската криза. Интересувам се също така как да разбера как вижданията на хората свързани с миграция могат да ни представят картини за това кои сме ние, като нация и общност след комунизма. За да разбера местните дебати за бежанците, трябва да изслушам собствените думи, мисли и идеи на местните хора. Ето защо създадох проучване, което включва неформален групов разговор (групова дискусия).

Това е проект, започнал през октомври 2016 г., след като предложението, разработено от Кристина Илиева, беше прието от Университета в Съсекс и от Съвета за икономически и социални изследвания на Обединеното кралство. Изследването в Харманли ще продължи шест месеца; общата продължителност на проекта е до септември 2019 г. Това проучване се провежда за завършването на докторска степен по социология за Кристина Илиева под ръководството на проф. Жерар Деланти и проф. Джейн Коуан от Университета в Съсекс.

Защо съм избран?

Всички събеседници сте избрани заради пребиваването си в Харманли. Само хора, които желаят доброволно да участват в изследването, са част от груповата дискусия. Като цяло ще има 10 групови дискусии, с различни участници във всяка от тях. Хората във всяка група се избират като познати между тях, за да се осигури удобен разговор.

Трябва ли да участвам?

Участието в изследването е изцяло доброволно. Ако решите да участвате, ще получите този информационен лист, заедно с формуляр за съгласие. Можете да се оттеглите по всяко време и не сте длъжни да давате причини.

Какво ще се случи с мен, ако участвам?

Дискусията ще се проведе във време и място, което е удобно за всички. Ще има чай, кафе и бисквити. Групата ти ще се състои от още 3 или 4 души и мен, ще отнеме около 45 - 60 минути от времето ти.

Разговора ще започне с общ въпрос по темата за бежанци в Харманли. Вие и вашите събеседници ще споделите вашите мисли и чувства. Ще се опитам да се намесвам колкото е възможно по-малко, за да ръководя разговора. Очаквам, че всеки от вас ще се възползва като личен

моля, говорете с мен, за да обсъдите други методи за интервюиране.

Каква полза имам от участието?

Макар че няма пряка полза за участниците в проекта, се надяваме, че тази работа ще допринесе за опознаването на местната общност. Ако смятате, че в качеството си на изследовател бих могла да направя нещо за справедливото възвръщане на вашия принос, моля уведомите ме.

Ще бъде ли моето участие в този проект анонимно?

Цялата информация, която събирам за вас по време на изследването, ще бъде строго конфиденциална. Няма да можете да бъдете идентифицирани в никакви отчети или публикации. Някои от личните ви данни ще бъдат събрани от мен, като възраст и професия, само на индивидуална база, която ще бъде запазена и изтрита след края на проекта.

След като свърши разговора, не бива да разкривате самоличността на други участници, нито да посочвате кой направи конкретни коментари по време на дискусиата. В груповата дискусия ще помоля вас и останалите да поддържат разговора поверителен, но тази конфиденциалност не може да бъде гарантирана.

Ще бъде ли записан и как ще се използват записите?

Разговорът ще бъде записан със звуков диктофон, който ще може да видите. Това ще гарантира, че ще има достъп до точните ваши менени след разговора. В началото на разговора ще направя и снимка на групата, като снимков материал за тезата ми и образователни цели. Ако сте против това, моля уведомете ме и ще премахна тази идея. Никаква друга употреба няма да бъде направена без ваше писмено разрешение и никой извън проекта няма да има достъп до оригиналните записи.

Какво ще стане, ако променя решението си по време или след проучването?

Можете свободно да се оттеглите по всяко време и можете да го направите, без да предоставите обяснение.

Вашата лична информация ще бъде изтрита и няма да бъдат използвани директни думи или цитати от вас. В някои случаи обаче може да не е възможно напълно да премахна вноските ви, например когато е подходящо да обясня приноса на друг участник. В тези случаи ще бъде възпроизведена само общата идея на вашия коментар, без да цитирам директно или да използвам името ви.

Ами ако имам въпроси относно това проучване?

Това изследване се организира от Кристина Илиева и всеки въпрос може да се обърне към мен на ki51@sussex.ac.uk.

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

- How would you describe your identity? (Bulgarian, Harmanli, Roma, man, father..)

-Try to also include a note about how they look, what they wear (does their self-identification match with mine?)

Everyday

- Have you traveled outside of Harmanli? -where? (near the border, West, East, nowhere?)
- Have members of your family traveled abroad?
- (for those who have not traveller- Do you feel you have the opportunity to travel abroad?)
- Do you know of people who have left the country?
- What do you think about the saying that '*Harmanli has no need to travel, because the whole world passes through it*' (by Gentcho Stoev, popularised local saying)

Have you heard it until now?

In what context?

What do you think it means?

- How does a day of your life look like? (work, free time, family)
- You mentioned one part of your typical Sunday morning routine. Can you share with me some details about the way that part of your routine works?
- How do you socialise / engage with other people? -where?
- What is the place you visit most often in Harmanli?

Nation

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BULGARIAN FOR YOU?
- WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND AS THE BULGARIAN NATION?
- What is home for you?
- When you hear 'Bulgaria'- what do you think of? (home, nature, parents, heroes)
- What do you think makes someone
- Bulgarian?
- Harmanlian?
- European?

National Border

- HOW IS IT LIVING ON A BORDER TOWN? I GREW UP IN SANDASKI WHICH IS VERY FAR FROM THE BORDER, WELL WE HAVE A BORDER WITH GREECE BUT NOONE THINGS ABOUT IT.
- Do you think the border has an impact on your life?
- When you think of the border what comes in your mind? (events, people, dynamics)
- I HAVE HEARD THAT THERE IS FOLKLORE ABOUT THE BORDER.
- What stories do you know about the border here?
- What do you think is the function/role of the border?
- The role of the border has changed. It's not the same as in communism. How do you think it has changed?

EU AND WEST

What do you think about the european union? Is it a good thing?

What does it mean to be european for you?

Do you think bulgarian is european today?

Refugees

AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, THERE ARE REFUGEES NOW IN HARMANLI. I WANTED US TO TALK A BIT ABOUT THIS.

- YOU KNOW THIS REFUGEE CAMP THAT ITS HERE. WHAT IS IT FOR? --
- I want to talk with you about the role of the camp in the town. What do you think about it? What impressions do you have?

SECURITY -RELIGION - CULTURE- UNCERTAINTY

- What do you mean by security?
- What are your security concerns?
- What would make you feel safe?
- When were you last feeling safe?

SECURITY -RELIGION - CULTURE- UNCERTAINTY

- What do you mean by security?
- What are your security concerns?
- What would make you feel safe?
- When were you last feeling safe?
- What does religion- any religion- mean to you? (important, not)
- What is the role of religion in your understanding? (culture, faith, spirit, heaven)
- Have you felt afraid for your own religion before? (How is it similar to Christianity being shut down during communism?)
- How does Islam changes your experience of home?
- What does terror(ism) mean in the context here?
- Who has the responsibility to protect from terrorism?
- How does terrorism changes your experience of home?
- What are some positive things you can think of re:refugees?- from who/where
- Why do you like these things?

-
- There are people who work in the camp, there are people who protest about the camp. What do you think about this?
 - How would you feel if you see someone from the camp? Or if they work with you? Or if they live in the same building as you?
 - Would you be interested to teach refugee children some bulgarian language and culture?

-try to see what is understood as similar between 'refugees' and the local people.

Communism (for mature people) - for people aged 30+

This is an additional topic to my theme 'debates about refugees'. It is important to understand broader political positions of my conversants as well as to see/juxtapose how they create stories.

- What was it like growing up during communism?
- What was your life like back then? - the good and the bad.
- What was a day of your life like?
- Have you interacted with people from a *minority group*? /someone who is different from your identity?

Care/ HOSPITALITY

Understanding the dimensions of care is important as intersects issues of coping, everyday care, self care and care for the other. I want to know how care is prioritised and how people feel about these priorities. It also relates to femininity and the notion of victim.

- How are you coping on a daily basis?
- Who is taking particular care of you, helping you?
- Are you taking care of someone in your family? Outside of your family? What does it involve from you?
- How do you think is the best way to take care of one another?
- Do you think that there are some groups of people in town which may need particular care?
- How would you describe a self-actualised (реализирана) Bulgarian woman? (beauty, victim, mother, business, wife, politics, social care)

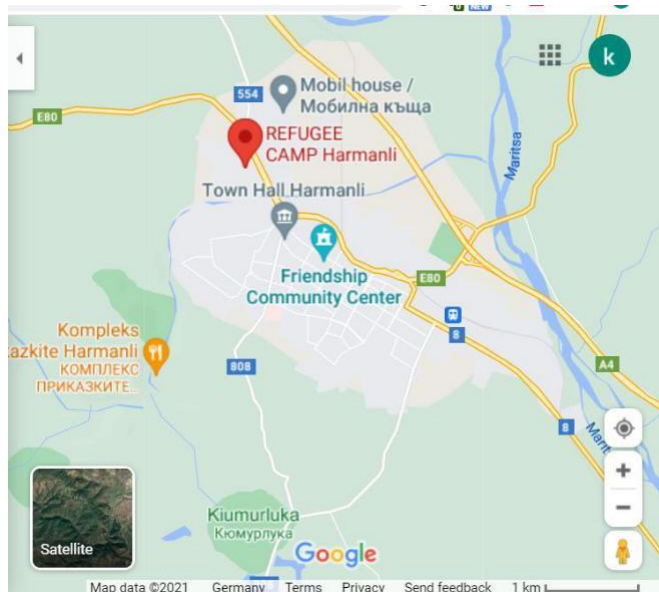
Future

- How do you think refugees should be integrated in Bulgaria?
- What should happen next in the town?
- What would an ideal day of your life look like?
- What are you going to do later on today?

Thank you! It's been nice talking to you! Your understandings will be very helpful for me to understand the context here in Harmanli.

This is a sheet of paper which has my contact details if you think of something else you may want to tell me. It has an email and a phone number. The phone number will be valid only for a few months while i am here in harmanli. Then, i am going to the uk to my university but you can contact me via email.

Appendix 4: Map of Harmanli



Source: Google Maps.



Map of Harmanli Municipality in Bulgaria

Source: Creative Commons,

https://search.creativecommons.org/search?license=&license_type=&categories=&extension=&aspect_ratio=&size=&source=&q=Bulgaria,%20Harmanli%20map&searchBy=&mature=

Appendix 5: List of Anti-refugee Protests in Harmanli

Date of the Protest	Newspaper Title
12 November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmanli Came out to Protest Against Refugees: 100 people Blocked the International Highway to Turkey (bTV, 2013a) • Protest under the Motto 'Against Syria' Organised in Harmanli (bTV, 2013b)
01 March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers from Harmanli Came out to Protest Against the Refugees (Darik News, 2014)
22 March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Protest in Harmanli Against the Refugee Camp in the Town (BNT, 2014)
28 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmanli Protests Again Against Refugees: They Want the Fence with Turkey to be Completed Urgently (bTV, 2015) • 40 Police Officers Guard 30 Protesters (Atanasov, 2015)
28 August 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSP Are Protesting Against the Camp they Built (Atanasov, 2016a)
02 October 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest Against the Refugees in Harmanli (bTV) • Second Protest Against Refugees Organised Today
09 October 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Protest within a Month Organised Against the Refugees (Atanasov, 2016b)
20 November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protests in Varna and Harmanli Against the Migrants • They are getting ready for a third protest in Harmanli, 23 New Cases of Scabies (Haskovo News)

