Beyond East and West: Solidarity Politics and the Absent/Present State in the Balkans

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Over a million refugees made the dangerous journey from Syria, Afghanistan, and other parts of the Middle East across the so-called Balkan Corridor from the summer of 2015 to the corridor's closure in March 2016. Serbia, not an EU country, was never the final destination for the migrants. Refugees were primarily "passing through" in search of basic needs, information, and papers. Still, the Serbian response, like others in the region, became a litmus test. International press and policymakers scrutinized "the response" for evidence of state competence (to control borders) and to behave in properly "European" moral terms (see Dzenovska this forum).

Serbia is a useful analytic foothold to examine the dynamics of an "East European Response." It confounds a clear picture of two Europes and the divisions between them. Others in this forum have shown how the refugee crisis breathed new life into older divisions of east and west, successful and failed states, and mature and struggling democracies (see Krastev this issue). We take these broader discursive patterns as an important part of the picture, but we also ask what this latest crisis reveals about governance, citizenship, and politics in Europe for both refugees and Serbian citizens.

Below we develop a more complex picture of the east-west divisions that have characterized much analysis of the region since the crisis began. By examining how differently positioned actors have responded, the migration flows become a heuristic for other important but less visible processes in post socialist state formation and European integration. We use the complexity of Serbia's reception as an empirical ground to create a new analytic framework that moves beyond over-simplified dichotomies. Doing this allows us to bring seemingly unrelated kinds of political action into the same frame to reveal an emerging trend in citizen and noncitizen political engagement. We argue that Serbian citizens and refugees alike are creating new kinds of solidarity politics in the interstices of alternately securitized and absent states.

From Tolerance to Euro-authoritarianism at the Level of Political Rhetoric

In Fall 2015, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić officially welcomed refugees, spoke of tolerance, and compared the experience of refugees fleeing war-torn countries to those of refugees during the wars of Yugoslav Succession. Perhaps surprisingly given Vučić's political lineage, the official Serbian response did not include overtly xenophobic rhetoric. Nor did Vučić's dominant Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) use the crisis to bolster its nationalist credentials. While there were xenophobic reactions to the migrants,

particularly among nationalist, right-wing groups, Vučić publically distanced himself from these groups.

At the same time, services for refugees did not match the rhetoric, either due to lack of resources, political will, or a combination of the two. Since the closing of the Balkan corridor in March 2016, formal state institutional engagement with the now unofficial flows of migrants has dwindled. In July 2016, Hungary increased controls on an already heavily policed Serbian border. Human Rights Watch and UNHCR have reported increased violence and expulsions at the border, and migrants are forced to either remain in the no-man's land between Serbia and Hungary or are pushed back into Serbian territory.[1] As more people remain in Serbia, local NGOs report increasing repression and harassment in Belgrade, including clearing parks as recently as late August 2016. With Vučić's decisive victory in the April 2016 snap elections, it is possible that a Euro-integrationist stance no longer provides him sufficient political capital.[2]

Given this picture, the dichotomy between Euro-integrationists and Euro-skeptics that characterizes much of the recent analysis on the east European response doesn't accurately describe Serbia. Increasingly, scholars and public intellectuals are linking the success of the European right to their ability to yoke state protectionism to xenophobic politics and Euro-skepticism.[3] In Serbia, it was the former radical, nationalist right that has captured a Euro-integrationist stance since the late 2000s. The current Serbian leadership thus confounds easy distinctions between right and left, east European Euro-skepticism, and tolerance. At the same time that the government formally embraces pro-European "tolerance" talk, it also undercuts democratic participation, civil rights, and economic transparency in the context of privatization.[4] The reaction to the migration crisis both revealed and solidified this bundling of Euro-integrationist language with institutional exclusion. A closer examination thus provides a lens into how the complexities of left and right politics often go hand-in-hand (see Gille, this forum).

1. For a full account, and links to new Hungarian laws regarding border controls see: "Hungary: Migrants Abused at the Border," *Human Rights Watch*, July 13, 2016 at www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/13/hungary-migrants-abused-border (last accessed February 23, 2017).

2. "Between Transit, Repression and Push-backs: Report on the Current Situation for Refugees in Serbia," *Moving Europe*, May 30, 2016, at http://moving-europe.org/between-transit-repression-and-push-backs-a-report-on-the-current-situation-for-refugees-in-serbia/ (last accessed February 23, 2017).

3. See for example, Douglas Holmes, *Integral Europe: Fast-Capitalism, Multiculturalism, Neofascism*, (Princeton, 2000); Nitzan Shoshan, *The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany*, (Princeton, NJ, 2016). See also the contributions to Allegra's forum on Brexit: "#Brexit, Europe, and Anthropology: Time to Say Something," *Allegra,* July 1, 2016 at http://allegralaboratory.net/brexit-europe-and-anthropology-time-to-say-something/ (last accessed February 27, 2017).

4. Dušan Pavlović, *Mašina za Rasipanje Para: Pet meseci u Ministarstvu privrede* (Belgrade, 2016).

Whose Response and Where: Rethinking the Serbian State and Institutions in Relation to the Crisis

In moving beyond east-west dichotomies, an analysis of a national response requires keeping track of a multiplicity of actors: 1) the state, which in turn should be disaggregated into top officials like prime ministers and presidents, actors within ministries and the operative branches of institutions active (or inactive) on the ground; 2) other political actors within the political field (such as parties); 3) NGOs and volunteers; 4) publics that might include Serbian (voting, media) audiences and various policymakers and breakers at the international level. We do not have room here to address more subtle issues of the fluidity among these actors, addressees, and publics, but it is important to acknowledge the complexity that is erased when we talk about a national-level response as a unified phenomenon.

For example, new migrants in Serbia are interacting with institutions that have differentiated among migratory populations for many years. In this sense the very notion of "refugee" masks profound differences in public construction—and probably also state policies and treatment—of these different populations involving administrative negotiations across the border of newly emerging, post-conflict nation-states.[5] The institutional and legal response to the current refugee crisis will have its own specificities.[6] It is impossible, however, to ignore that the current flow of migrants will both inform and be shaped by one of the most multi-layered and differentiated citizenship regimes in Europe. It is too early to know whether earlier forms of registration or non-registration, erasure, or uneven forms of policing, governance, hostility, or empathy will be translated across different institutional assemblages. It will be important for scholars of the region to trace in the coming years whether practices of surveillance, detention and deportation migrate across different racially marked populations and redefine domestic security and surveillance of "suspect" populations—a process anthropologist Gilberto Rosas calls a "thickening of the border" in the North American context.[7] The current wave of refugees are coming into contexts that are already marked by complex deportation regimes that call for both specific and comparative analysis. As anthropologists Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz have argued, the "sociolegal production of deportable populations" is part of an "increasingly

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5. These include: refugees and IDPs from across the former Yugoslavia, Roma living in informal settlements without documents, rights and services, and (largely) Roma refugees who have recently been forcibly repatriated from western Europe. It is beyond the empirical scope of this article, but an adequate analysis of "response" would ask how such distinctions in citizenship practices play out and how bureaucratic institutions keep track of and manage these populations. Practices for granting and denying citizenship to those born in other republics (sometimes ethnic Serbs and sometimes not) were endlessly complex.

6. For excellent analyses of the complexity of these changing citizen regimes see: Jo Shaw and Igor Štiks, eds., *Citizenship after Yugoslavia* (London, 2013), and Jelena Vasiljević, *Antropologija građanstva* (Belgrade/Novi Sad, 2016).

7. Rosas Gilberto, "The Border Thickens: In-Securing Communities after IRCA," *International Migration* 54, no. 2 (April 2016): 119–30.

unified, effectively *global* response to a world that is being actively remade by transnational human mobility."[8]

Rethinking Resistance and Complicity

Since the beginning of the crisis, it has largely been NGOs, refugee groups, and volunteers that have provided refugees with information and basic needs and services. These self-organized efforts are responses to both inadequate or absent international humanitarian responses and alternatives to the securitization and militarization of borders. The project Moving Europe (http://moving-europe.org/) is an excellent example of a networked organizations that is able to facilitate information, services and solidarity across transborder spaces. Yet, such groups also find themselves in awkward alliance with the security regimes that alternately help and hinder the flow of migrants. A scholar and member of the collective characterized it in the following way:

> In November 2015, when the corridor became restricted only to people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, there were then two sets of information to be prepared: for those allowed on the corridor and for those not allowed. Those not allowed to travel on the corridor were rendered invisible so it was sometimes difficult to access them. This was a difficulty [advocates] encountered, as by placing too much focus on the three 'acceptable' nationalities—even if we did so for purely practical reasons—we somehow became complicit in this segregation.[9]

In other words, as first responders and activists, these groups are part of a growing but diffuse apparatus for managing, identifying and tracking migrants. Identity profiling at the border uses crude metrics such as culture and language tests that filter migrants. Volunteer and activist groups are thus positioned in complicated ways to both challenge and work within securitized practices for managing often ad hoc humanitarian regimes.[10] If the institutional landscape facing migrants is endlessly complex, the reception and interface with volunteers and NGOs adds another mediating level to "reception." The route through the Balkans was an uneasy tension between state-organized camps and securitized border regimes, an inadequate humanitarian response from larger organizations and small scale volunteer, NGO, and activist network initiatives. The author, quoted above, writes: "The ambivalence of the corridor lies in the fact that while migration movements successfully created a safe and quick flight route for thousands—a great

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8. De Genova Nicholas de Genova and Nathalie Mae Peutz, *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* (Durham, NC, 2010), 2.

9. "The Long Year of Migration and the Balkan Corridor," Moving Europe, *Open Democracy,* (September 28, 2016) at www.opendemocracy.net/Mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/moving-europe/long-year-of-migration-and-balkan-corridor (last accessed March 20, 2017).

10. Elizabeth Dunn, "The Chaos of Humanitarian Aid: Adhocracy in the Republic of Georgia," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1–23; Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, eds., *Contemporary States of Emergency* (New York, 2010).

achievement—as that route became institutionalized it became increasingly state and police controlled."[11]

Within this complex institutional and rhetorical matrix the state emerges and recedes in relationship to particular kinds of citizens and non-citizens, the demands people make and the forms those demands take. The Serbian "state" is alternately tolerant, democratic, securitized, authoritarian, present, and absent. Furthermore, the interaction and interface among different kinds of citizen and non-citizen demands create new spaces for action and articulation of political personhood. Volunteers, migrants, NGO workers, and protestors are experimenting collectively and in parallel with living a life in relationship to different facets of state and bureaucratic power.

This is by no means a new process in the Balkans. As Stef Jansen has shown in his ethnography of an apartment complex in Bosnia, citizenship in the region seems to be increasingly defined by a desire to see and be seen by a state whose capacity to meet or acknowledge citizens' needs has dwindled in a post-war, but also post-socialist and neoliberalizing context.[12] In the postsocialist and post-industrial contexts that they now inhabit in the region, people still continue to articulate demands in terms of the imaginaries and ethics of economic sociality and social arrangements of "the past."[13] Across the former Yugoslav space, citizens are imagining and creating futures that are in tension with the forms of governance that have grown out of international intervention, neoliberalization, and postsocialist economic restructuring.[14]

11. Moving Europe, "The Long Year of Migration." It also can't be ignored that these experiences at the border were particularly resonant for Serbian citizens, whose own free travel into Hungary was recent and hard won. In one report from the Serbian-Hungarian border, reporters found a Serbian man "hiding" among a large group of Middle Eastern refugees waiting to be allowed into Hungary and further on to western Europe. He said he had his passport taken from him for some legal violation, and that "refugees were his only chance" to reach Germany and find a "better life" there. The problem is, he confessed, he didn't speak Arabic . . . so he complained to the journalists that he didn't know how successful he will be in pretending he was Syrian. This is a perfect, if tragicomic illustration of the way that border practices intended for some populations have ramifications for others. As borders become more heavily policed, it is not surprising that we see strategy sharing among different marginal populations. Serbs can now travel to Schengen countries without a visa, but for a limited period of 3 months, with restrictions on employment and earnings. That this man was trying to "pass" as a refugee is also testament to the provisional nature of "culture and language" controls at the border that leave people open to highly speculative and contingent application of rights.

12. Stef Jansen, *Yearnings in the Meantime: 'Normal Lives' and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex* (New York, 2015).

13. Tanja Petrović, "Museums and Workers: Negotiating Industrial Heritage in the Former Yugoslavia," *Narodna Umjetnost*, 50, no. 1 (2013): 96–119; Tanja Petrović, "The Past that Binds Us: Yugonostalgia as the Politics of the Future," in Srđa Pavlović and Marko Živlović, *Transcending Fratricide: Political Mythologies, Reconciliations, and the Uncertain Future in the Former Yugoslavia* (Baden-Baden, 2013): 129–47.

14. Azra Hromadžić, "Citizens of an Empty Nation: Youth and State-Making in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina," (Philadelphia, 2015); Elissa Helms, *Innocence and Victimhood: Gender, Nation, and Women's Activism in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Madison, WI, 2013); Ivana Spasić, *Kultura na Delu: Društvena Transformacija Srbije iz Burdijeovske Perspektive* (Belgrade, 2013); Andrew Gilbert, "From Humanitarianism to Humanitarianization: Intimacy, Estrangement, and International Aid in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina," *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 4 (November 2016): 717–29.

In the process, citizens are turning toward each other in ways that invite new kinds of constitutive democratic practices.[15] These "yearnings in the meantime" mean that citizens are highly critical of the forms of state care and governance available to them, even as they are complicit in the reproduction of those forms as they struggle to get by.[16]

It is perhaps not a surprise that there has been a proliferation of newly creative and constitutive political practices across the region.[17] What is new in this latest iteration of "crisis" is the way that citizens and noncitizens are finding each other in a more recursive process of experimentation and play with forms of address. This process of constituent power is resonant of Faranak Miraftab's notion of "invented spaces."[18] She argues that through such spaces, citizens are redefining and expanding both sites of acceptable (or "invited") public participation and the kinds of actors who can make claims. What is noteworthy in this moment is the way that these ongoing processes are intersecting with, shaping and being affected by similar struggles among refugees. While at the state level, response to the migration crisis has entailed new forms of repressive governance and management, people on the ground are engaged in claims-making processes in the absence of clearly defined audiences of address. In turn, citizens and non-citizens are watching and learning from each other.

New Models for Analyzing Citizens, Non-citizens and the State

Taken together, these brief sketches give us a better sense of the complexity of a changing set of state and citizen practices that are revealed by and crystallized in different responses to the crisis. Political status, rights, and distributive policies are entangled assemblages that constitute complex forms of governance that produce differently regulated populations through "technologies of subjection."[19] In turn, the state has been reconfigured through

15. Aleksandar Savanović, "Civilni Sektor i Teorija Suverenosti. *Case study:* Model "Plenuma" u Bosni i Hercegovini," in Milan Podunavac and Biljana Đorđević, eds., *Ustavi u Vremenu Krize: postjugoslovenska perspektiva* (Belgrade, 2014), 283–96; Maple Razsa, *Bastards of Utopia: Living Radical Politics after Socialism* (Bloomington,2015); Arsenijević Damir Arsenijević, ed., *Unbribable Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Fight for the Commons* (Baden-Baden, 2014); Azra Hromadžić and Larisa Kurtović, "Cannibal States, Empty Bellies: Protest, History and Political Imagination in Post-Dayton Bosnia," *Critique of Anthropology* (forthcoming, 2017).

16. Jansen, *Yearnings in the Meantime.*

17. Maple Razsa and Andrej Kurnik, "The Occupy Movement in Žizek's Hometown: Direct Democracy and a Politics of Becoming," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2 (May 2012): 238–58; Jessica Greenberg, "Being and Doing Politics: Moral Ontologies and Ethical Ways of Knowing at the End of the Cold War," in Othon Alexandrakis, ed., *Impulse to Act. A New Anthropology of Resistance and Social Justice* (Bloomington, 2016).

18. Faranak Miraftab, "Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation," *Wagadu* 1 (Spring 2004): 1–7.

19. Ong Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, 2006), 7; see also: Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, eds., *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, Mass., 2005); Zsuzsa Gille, *Paprika, Foie Gras, and Red Mud: The Politics of Materiality in the European Union* (Bloomington, 2016).

dispersed practices where institutions emerge and recede as more or less present, effective or powerful in relationship to different citizen and non-citizen populations. We are suggesting not simply that migrants and citizens are differentially positioned through regimes of governmentality that distinguish between types of people and the rights to which they are entitled.[20] Rather (or in addition to this), the experience of differential governance is leading to new kinds of collective imaginaries for action. Moreover, as the case here shows, similar experiences of disenfranchisement can generate shared ethical and political commitments that bring differently positioned social and economic groups into common struggle. Such vocabularies of resistance emerge across the joint terrains of violent conflict and inequality from the Middle East to the Balkans.[21]

Citizens and refugees in the region share the experience of inclusion, exclusion, and desire for state institutions that are alternately absent and hyper-present. Even when they find themselves on different sides of legal categories and forms of policing, the long-term experience of paradoxical governance is nonetheless shared. Following Jansen's notion that citizens desire the state to see them, it seems as if citizens and non-citizens nevertheless see each other, and are learning to diagnose and understand state institutions as they watch each other's struggles. Such mutual seeing amounts more to a praxis of mutual recognition and collective structural analysis that upends models of depoliticizing identity politics.[22]

We thus require analytic frameworks that let us diagnose new and important features of a political landscape that includes *both* Serbian citizens and refugees together. In other words, if people in the region and refugees are bound together through new securitized borders, legal regimes of inclusion and exclusion, and the alternating realities of "tolerance," securitization, and economic exclusion, than how might they also be bound together in an imaginative process of political vision and social advocacy? While we can only speak tentatively to some small examples below, these trends toward shared strategies seem to be part of a larger scene of creative resistance in the region.

Scene One: InfoPark to the Border/Novosadskim putem

In late July 2016, a large number of refugees in Belgrade organized a series of protests, including a hunger strike. The subsequent "March of Hope" was led from a Belgrade park through the Vojvodina region (bordering Hungary) and on to one of the check-points at the Hungarian Border. Calling for dignity and respect, the refugees seem to be working largely independently, although with the support and concern of volunteers. The march and the hunger strike were still ongoing as we wrote this.

20. Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," in Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 52–76.

21. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, 2007).

22. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange,* trans. Joel Gold, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke (London, 2003).

The march followed a good deal of self-organization and community work among refugees (with the assistance of volunteers) in the Belgrade parks where they resided. While the march was received positively, there was concern among volunteers about the hunger strike, as indicated by posts on the Facebook page of InfoPark, a volunteer organization that has been coordinating assistance, information and support to refugees living in a park in central Belgrade. While posts indicate support for the refugees' collective action, volunteers were also worried by the potential health implications. As the following post makes clear, refugees refused food from volunteers and NGO organizations: "Refugees started refusing food last night, this morning Info Park and Caritas breakfast distribution was ignored and more than 200 people took part in a protest at Bristol Park."[23]

The hunger strike is a small indicator of the migrants' dire situation and their willingness to endure even more hardship in a pursuit of dignity at Europe's militarized borders. It also seems to be diagnostic of something else, however. The refusal of food from Serbian volunteers and organizations—often self-organized and opposed to closed-border policies themselves—operates as a kind of recursive protest. As volunteers and NGOs critique the state, they too stand in for it and in turn become objects of and audience to recursive politics of refusal. Migrants and volunteers are watching the state, each other, and each other watching and making claims upon state institutions. In this recursive and cross-hatched mix of institutions and people, it is not clear who is officially responsible to anyone else. Yet, people still seem to feel ethically compelled to work both in resistance and solidarity. The paradox of the hunger strike against (and with support of) volunteers is just one example of protest in the absence of clear responsibility. This is not illogical politics, but illustrative of the very core of citizen and non-citizen struggles in the region.

Indeed, the hunger strike points to a question that Serbian activists have been struggling with for many years now: how do you protest against a state that is a moving institutional target? How do you generate political responses from state institutions that tack back and forth between commitments to rule of law and practices of repression? Indeed, it is not coincidence that simultaneous to the unfolding migration crisis, Belgrade has witnessed some of the largest and most energized citizen protests since the October 2000 democratic revolution.

Scene Two: Savamala

In the middle of the night of April 24, 2016, following Serbia's "extraordinary elections," masked men attacked and bound people strolling down a darkened street by Belgrade's waterfront. The victim's cellphones were confiscated so they could not film the destruction to come. The masked men with bulldozers and heavy construction equipment proceeded to demolish buildings on the

23. See InfoPark on facebook: *Facebook,* "InfoPark," at www.facebook.com/Info-Park-885932764794322/ (last accessed February 24, 2017).

waterfront.[24] The area had been an object of contestation since the 2012 proposed redevelopment plan for a high-end waterfront project called Belgrade Waterfront (*Beograd na vodi*). Making the chain of responsibility even less clear, the police refused to answer emergency calls from some witnesses that night (later denying that they had been called). The demolition had followed years of organized protest, advocacy, and research into the financial, legal, social, and environmental implications of the plan. The demolition sparked further street protests by thousands of people.

The current government has presented Belgrade Waterfront as largely financed by capital from Abu Dhabi. The project was announced as a "multi-million investment," although the financial liability for the project seems to largely rest with the Serbian state, taxpayers, and public resources. Both citizens and urban planning and architecture experts have critiqued the plan. Given recent devastating floods in the region, the project seemed to blatantly ignore environmental planning challenges in the 21st century. Many objected to the corporatization and privatization of a beloved and publically accessible space. And still more people were concerned with the undemocratic, secretive nature of the project, as well as the circumvention of laws to push the project through, the concessions to foreign capital, and a contract that would leave Serbian taxpayers on the hook with a cost than outweighed the economic benefit.[25]

In response, and following years of a loose network of advocates and experts analyzing documents, demanding public information, calling officials to accountability, and smaller scale protests, people took to the streets of Belgrade in large marches under the rubric of a campaign called "Let's not 'drown' Belgrade"/We won't give Belgrade away" *(Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd)* and the slogan: "Whose city?—Our city!" *(Čiji grad?—Naš grad!).*[26] With the secretive night-time destruction of the waterfront, the protests gained a new symbol for corruption and violation of the rule of law that has characterized much of the privatization process in the region.[27]

Like the refugee hunger strike, protestors were targeting specific grievances while trying to make sense of the shadowy relationship between capital, corruption, and law. As with the refugees, the "state" emerged and receded with different faces at different moments of time. In an incident in front of the City Assembly of Belgrade, the Ne Da(vi)imo Beograd protesters asked for the Mayor's resignation. After an unclear instance of provocation, an activist was summoned almost immediately to the police precinct. The police—alternately highly present and absent—produced few investigative results of the

24. The ombudsman report can be found here: Saša Janković, (Untitled Report), May 9, 2016 at http://zastitnik.rs/attachments/article/4723/savamala.pdf (last accessed February 24, 2017).

25. For an excellent overview and critique of the planning, financial and social costs of the project see: Ljubica Slavković, "Belgrade Waterfront: An Investor's Vision of National Significance," May 15, 2015, at www.failedarchitecture.com/belgrade-waterfront/ (last accessed February 24, 2017).

26. The name relies on a pun with the parenthetical "vi" which translates alternately as *Ne Damo*, "We won't give Belgrade away," and *Ne Davimo*, "let's not drown Belgrade."

27. See: Pavlović, *Mašina za Rasipanje Para.*

demolition in the three months that followed. The police response to protestors took less than a day.

Scene Three: And Back Again

In both these examples, refugees and citizens are experimenting and struggling with how to engage institutions that emerge and recede in relation to securitized borders and social erasure. What happens if we read their efforts together?

Let us return briefly to the March of Hope to conclude. Again, an InfoPark post tells an eloquent story of solidarity, and of creative and collective pedagogies of resistance among volunteers and the park dwellers. From InfoPark Facebook:

> "As the news about the march collapsing started to come this morning, we just couldn't stand still and decided to check it out ourselves. Yes, at one moment it looked like it's over and the refugees split over what to do and where to go. However we got in contact with an activist who was with them who told us it is getting critical with food, water and medical aid. We understood the needs and sent one of our workers to load the car with meals, water and bananas, and to find where they are."

> 60 minutes later we were 3 km north of Indija in an emergency food distribution. As we were only 1 person so no real capacity to do it ourselves, we made a group of 4 refugees, gave them safety vest and told them they are to keep the order and distribute the food.

> We couldn't do it better, it was one of the best distributions ever regulated by the people themselves! About 150 people (if our sunblasted counting is correct) got either a warm meal (rice with vegs) or ready made serbian veg beans, chicken pate plus bread, 2 liter of water and 1–2 bananas. There were even some leftovers, that police kindly took with them. Info Park mission was supported by No Borders crew who brought warm meals and others, plus helping hands to assist refugees with cleaning behind them and compassion to talk and give them strength. When we left them, they cheered . . . and we almost had tears in the eyes to see such a heroic, epic act of unbeatable human power. . . ."[28]

Taken together, these are examples of the ways that citizens and non-citizens are facing each other, engaging in recursive practices of solidarity and refusal in ways that parallel how people in the Balkans have interacted with alternately omnipresent and disappearing state institutions for years. The evidence of the imaginative capacities of citizens and noncitizens are found along the Balkan Corridor, in the Savamala protests, the open-border networks, the InfoPark, and the March of Hope. They range from creative and contemporary revolution projects, to "old-fashioned" citizen street action, to NGO organizing. What is emerging is a praxis of competence among people that stopped asking for things from state institutions (although never stopped critiquing the failure of those institutions), because it was easier and frankly

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28. *Facebook,* "InfoPark, Post From July 23, 2016" at www.facebook.com/Info-Park-885932764794322/ (last accessed February 24, 2017).

Figure 1.   Refugee sitting on the shoulders of a protester during the Ne da(vi)mo Beograd protest on July 13, 2016. The sign the boy is holding reads: "*Vladavina prava, a ne pres konferencija*" ([we want] rule of law, and not [another] press conference). Courtesy of Ali Türünz.

more effective to do it themselves. This is neither good nor bad on the face of it. It is certainly not a simple or a romantic picture of resistance. These forms of protest represent citizen and non-citizen claims and actions that respond to proliferating ways of currently being marginalized in Europe.

Beyond East versus West

Beyond metaphor and parallels, people are coming together in parks, on the streets, and at the borders to share strategies, experiment, and figure out against whom to protest and to whom they can appeal. At times, it is state institutions, at others the EU and the rule of law, and at other moments, in paradoxical and powerful ways, it is each other. While bulldozers are tearing down public spaces and building up borders, the people we have discussed here are engaged in the creative labor of sociality. The InfoPark site lies within a short walking distance from the site of the Savamala destruction. As protestors walked the demolished site, they shared placards with refugees, who cheered and at times joined the protest.

This is a kind of constitutive power for generating social order and ethics. They are not only "mimicking" state forms and institutions in their absence. They are taking on the work of society and democracy.

What role might the EU play in all this? Can the EU, given its normative "borderwork," provide an architecture for an imaginative program like the one that citizens and noncitizens alike imagine?[29] Answering this would

29. Madeleine Reeves, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* (Ithaca, 2014).

require knowing more about the multifaceted nature of state and governance, revealing gaps, openings, and possibilities for new responses. The collective work of figuring out both what the European Union is and what it might be is the warp and woof of much work by activists, human rights lawyers, street protestors, and even EU bureaucrats. It is also the work of financiers, central bankers, and politicians from across the political spectrum. Examining the European project as a field of practice and contest is a matter of political and social urgency. These seem to be more politically and ethically relevant questions than whether the east European response is moral or immoral, modern or retrograde, "European" or backwards.