

Can “Grassroots” Aid Organizations Reduce Anti-Refugee Hostility?

Evidence from Fieldwork on the Northern Aegean Islands

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“I remember, once, it was the first summer, I think, or the second summer. We were in Eftalou, and a boat arrived. It was something I will never forget in my life, what I saw from people. They were passing in front of us. We were in a restaurant, a very nice restaurant, near the Therma. Everyone stopped eating. They stood from the table...And with whatever they had on the table—some bread, water—they started going to the refugees one to one. It was like going to church and praying to the Madonna. They gave the gifts, whatever they had on the table. Everyone in the restaurant. It was astonishing... it was something very spontaneous, it was not organized, there was no organization behind it. It was just what the people did when they saw people walking out from the boats. You could see that they were in bad condition.”

— Greek resident of Lesbos, recalling events of 2015 and 2016

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Abstract

Patterns of hostility toward refugees and aid workers in the Northern Aegean region of Greece challenge traditional explanations for anti-immigrant prejudice. When 800,000 refugees arrived in Greece in 2015, their presence and its subsequent humanitarian response disrupted the local economies and politics of the Greek islands closest to Turkey. Yet these “disruptions” inadequately account for local expressions of anti-refugee hostility, which rose in 2020, long after most refugees had left for mainland Europe. Drawing on 53 interviews and 3 months of ethnographic field research in Lesbos and Samos, I offer an alternative explanation of anti-refugee hostility, proposing a novel mechanism that can drive anti-refugee prejudice: through natives’ moral and emotional perceptions of the “grassroots” aid organizations that assist those refugees. I show that Greek islanders who financially benefitted from the joint arrival of aid and refugees still expressed intense opposition to their presence, by supporting anti-refugee political parties and participating in anti-NGO demonstrations, violent attacks, and targeted harassment. On the other hand, some Greeks who did not benefit from the presence of refugees or NGOs still supported them, by attending political rallies, volunteering at pro-refugee organizations, and offering them free rides from highways and refugee camps to the port city of Mytilene, incurring significant costs in the process. While distributive mechanisms linking humanitarian aid to intergroup conflict are well established in contemporary political science, I instead argue that Greek residents and refugees evaluated these organizations on the basis of emotional and moral criteria, judging them according to principles of procedural fairness, truthfulness, and political legitimacy. While these judgments ended in hostility for many residents, I also provide examples of aid organizations that employed similar emotional and moral logic as a means of communicating cosmopolitan values to fellow Greek residents.

Introduction: A Rising Tide of Anti-Refugee Hostility

In January 2020, thousands of local residents of Mytilene—the capital of the Greek island Lesbos—gathered in Sapphus Square to protest state and non-state failures to respond adequately to the continued presence of refugees, and refugee arrivals, on the Greek islands.¹ The protestors targeted several actors in their rhetoric including the EU, the Greek government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and what they termed “fake refugees.” By February, these demonstrations were accompanied by a rise in incidences of harassment and violence against refugees and NGOs on the Greek islands, perpetrated by local residents and far-right organizations.² Humanitarian aid workers, and volunteers working with refugees, reported cases of deliberate arson, roadblocks, car attacks, physical assault, and other violent incidents.³ Verbal harassment and tensions between NGOs and locals also reportedly increased, with some locals alleging that NGOs are “a pull factor” for refugee arrivals.

Well before these demonstrations began, the presence of refugees and aid organizations was a familiar phenomenon on Lesbos. Since 2015, over two million refugees and asylum seekers, largely of Middle East and African national origin, have arrived in the European Union by sea (UNHCR 2022). In the absence of sufficient state and EU responses to what became known as the “migration crisis,” a surge of “grassroots” aid organizations emerged to provide aid to refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers on Europe’s borders. Over 100,000 individuals participated in these ‘grassroots’ organizations from 2015 to 2020, representing, in the words of

¹ See, e.g., Katy Fallon, “We want our islands back’: Greeks protest against asylum seeker burden,” *Irish Times*, February 15, 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/we-want-our-islands-back-greeks-protest-against-asylum-seeker-burden-1.4159530>.

² The online Greek-language newspaper *StoNisi* reported that 15 to 20 Golden Dawn members patrolled the streets of Mytilini, carrying clubs and knocking on the doors of suspected aid workers’ houses. See “The islanders kicked Golden Dawn out of the gathering [Οι νησιώτες έδιωξαν τη Χρυσή Αυγή από τη συγκέντρωση],” February 13, 2020, <https://www.stonisi.gr/post/6871/oi-nhsiwtes-ediwksan-th-xrysh-aygh-apo-th-sygkentrwsh--video>.

³ See, e.g., Madeleine Speed, “Aid workers face growing hostility on Lesbos,” *Al Jazeera*, February 15, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/15/aid-workers-face-growing-hostility-on-lesbos>; Racist Violence Recording Network, Annual Report 2020, <https://rvrn.org/en/annual-report-2020/>.

Sue Clayton (2021), “one of the largest civic mobilizations in European history.” However, anti-immigrant prejudice in refugee-receiving communities has often accompanied negative perceptions of grassroots aid organizations, which face increasing state criminalization, particularly in Greece, Italy, and Malta.⁴

Mytilene and the island of Lesbos were at the forefront of these arrivals in 2015. At the time, they received international recognition for the hospitality they expressed toward refugees on their island, and most aid organizations were permitted to conduct their work unfettered. Yet by 2019, local journalists and human rights organizations had documented a rise in anti-refugee violence on the Northern Aegean islands, coinciding with an increasingly hostile public discourse regarding refugee-affiliated NGOs in Greece.⁵ In October 2019, the Greek Parliament had passed a law that burdened asylum seekers with complex and demanding procedures, stripped certain categories of asylum seekers of “vulnerable status,” and imposed obstacles on NGOs’ access to reception and detention centers (Amnesty International 2019). The deputy migration minister of Greece called NGOs “leeches...with the aim of gaining from EU funds.”⁶ Then, in 2020, the Greek government made restrictions on NGOs more explicit. In May, Parliament singled out NGOs working in asylum, migration, and social integration to re-register

⁴ For the remainder of this essay, I use the terms “refugee” and “asylum seeker” broadly to refer to any individual crossing an international boundary who is in need of international protection. Legally speaking, many individuals arriving in the European Union are asylum seekers, not refugees, since they have not yet received refugee status. Some of the subjects interviewed in this project, for example, have asylum claims that have been rejected or are pending. Considering the dramatic backlog of asylum applications in Greece and the EU, and the narrow legal constraints of obtaining refugee status, I am including asylum seekers, and other groups seeking international protection, in the broad terminology of “refugee.” See generally 1950 UNHCR Statute, 1951 Refugee Convention, 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

⁵ See findings and data from the 2019 Annual Report of the Athens-based Racist Violence Recording Network: “RVRN is also deeply concerned about the tensions manifested in 2019 against human rights defenders, both because of their association with refugees and migrants and their association with the LGBTQI+ community. Those incidents highlighted a growing trend for 2019 in targeting humanitarian organizations, and civil society organizations in general, due to their association with defending human rights...” <https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>.

⁶ See *Protothema*, “NGO ‘leeches’ were set up overnight to make money [Στήθηκαν ΜΚΟ- «βδέλλες» εν μια νυκτί για να βγάλουν χρήματα]” February 5, 2020. <https://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/971975/koumoutsakos-ston-thema-1046-stithikan-mko-vdelles-en-mia-nukti-gia-na-vgaloun-hrimata/>.

as legal entities with the Greek Ministry for Asylum and Migration, as well as register all staff for approval, whether paid or unpaid (Amnesty International 2020). Finally, in September, a new Joint Ministerial Decision made government certification mandatory for NGO operations, permitted ministries to reject NGO certification with discretion, and stipulated criminal offenses for refusal to register humanitarian or search-and-rescue staff on the NGO Members' Registry (Refugee Support Aegean 2020).

“Grassroots” aid organizations—which I define as ad-hoc humanitarian groups founded by private citizens or civil society actors to assist refugees in the Mediterranean—were some of the first humanitarian responders to arriving refugees in Mytilene. Five years later, in the same city, many aid workers at such “grassroots” organizations and other NGOs were so afraid of reprisals that they avoided leaving their houses for days. Expressions of hostility toward refugees themselves intensified over the same period (Racist Violence Recording Network 2021). Curiously, existing scholarship on anti-immigrant sentiment has little to say about the role that aid organizations can play in those expressions of hostility—particularly “grassroots” or service-based aid organizations. Could these groups influence patterns of anti-immigrant prejudice and violence, by exacerbating or curbing their effects? Grassroots organizations' widespread presence and prominent position in local Greek political rhetoric over the past seven years are certainly suggestive of a broader salience to the local politics and economies that have experienced refugee migration. Meanwhile, existing explanations of anti-immigrant sentiment, namely economic and cultural concerns about immigrants, do not adequately account for the timing and variation of contentious actions taken against refugees on the Greek islands.

This study addresses that puzzle, and poses the related research question of how grassroots aid organizations can influence local beliefs about refugees in prolonged “hotspot” settings of displacement. In so doing, I contribute to the anti-immigrant prejudice literature in

several ways. First, I offer an ethnographic account of a novel causal mechanism that can contribute to anti-refugee prejudice: that is, the emotional and moral meaning attached to the presence, actions, and behaviors of humanitarian aid workers who assist refugees. I show how this mechanism can affect anti-refugee prejudice even when other factors theorized to *reduce* prejudice, such as a boost to local economies, are present. I provide examples of how ‘grass-roots’ aid organizations contribute to natives’ attitudes, both positive and negative to refugee arrivals. While other recent scholarship has shown that humanitarian aid can have similar or null effects on native attitudes toward immigrants (Masterson and Lehmann 2020), this effect is theorized to occur as a byproduct of material conflict or benefit—not through judgments of aid organizations on the basis of moral and emotional criteria, which is the primary contribution of my study.

My thesis proceeds as follows. I first offer a literature review that places several strands of scholarship in dialogue, including theories of anti-immigrant sentiment, localization in humanitarian aid, and intergroup contact theory. I then describe the background of my primary research site on the Greek islands: the city of Mytilene, surrounding villages on Lesbos island, and the city of Vathy on Samos island, all of which were sites of major reception of and subsequent violence toward refugees from 2015 to 2022. In these sites, I identify a central empirical puzzle that my research seeks to explore: why Greek residents who received material benefits from the prolonged humanitarian presence on the islands eventually expressed intense opposition to the NGO workers and refugees there, sometimes to the point of violence. Rather than evaluating humanitarian aid on the basis of material interest, I argue that both refugees and Greek residents’ judgments about humanitarian NGOs on the islands hinged on *moral and emotional criteria*, namely perceptions of fairness, truthfulness and deceit, and legitimacy. Finally, based on several ethnographic insights, I propose conditions under which aid

organizations can employ moral and emotional arguments to effectively reduce hostility toward refugees—and toward themselves.

I. Literature Review

What drives anti-immigrant prejudice? Since the 1960s, two popular strands of scholarship have suggested that the primary drivers of anti-immigrant sentiment in highly industrialized democracies are either economic or cultural concerns about immigrant arrivals. These economic anxieties can come from perceived labor market competition between natives and immigrants (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Dancygier and Donnelly 2013), perceived fiscal burdens of immigrants (Hanson 2007), or sociotropic evaluations of immigrants' economic contributions to the nation (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2012). Cultural concerns include intergroup threat from immigrants who are perceived not to speak the native language or will not integrate into the national culture. They may be driven by related and overlapping prejudices against immigrants on the basis of differences in ethnicity, religion, and gender roles.

These two explanations for anti-immigrant sentiment are likewise present as drivers of Europeans' preferences for the kinds of asylum seekers that the EU ought to accept (Bansak, Hangartner, and Hainmueller 2016). With regard to asylum seekers, humanitarian concerns also factor into native attitudes about asylum acceptances in the form of moral "deservingness." Empirical evidence from conjoint survey data shows that natives are more willing to accept asylum seekers with legitimate claims of persecution and who have been victims of torture, for instance—while they still prefer to accept Christian asylum seekers over Muslims. Yet in this study, as well as other sources of survey data, researchers do not measure participants' actual *exposure* or *proximity* to refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant populations. These group-based attitudes are therefore assumed to operate independently of exposure.

Until 2019, few empirical studies explored how these theoretical drivers of anti-immigrant sentiment are expressed or reduced in the face of exposure—that is, how interactions with refugee migration change natives’ preferences, attitudes, and behaviors. Despite the limitations of confounding effects, insights from intergroup contact theory can explain the prevalence of anti-immigrant prejudice based on the conditions of exposure or contact (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Intergroup contact theory suggests then contact can reduce prejudice if conditions of contact meet “Allport conditions”—that is, if ingroup and outgroup members are in an environment of (a) equal status, (b) shared common goals, (c) cooperation, and (d) shared social norms or regulations. A vast range of empirical evidence has shown that conditions close to this environment can successfully reduce discriminatory attitudes between groups, or at the very least, discriminatory behavior (Scacco and Warren 2018). On the other hand, the mere *exposure* to other groups, without meaningful contact (without Allport conditions in place), may have a null effect on or even increase prejudice between groups (Enos 2014; Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Damm, 2018). Whether the conditions that regulate an encounter match Allport’s theory or not, both scenarios imply that meaningful face-to-face contact must occur in order to have any effect on prejudice reduction or amplification.

Some recent empirical evidence that relates intergroup contact to attitudes about immigrants directly concerns the subject of my thesis, by measuring Greek islanders’ attitudes toward immigration after exposure to the “refugee crisis.” In a widely cited *American Political Science Review* paper (Hangartner, Dinas, Marbach, Matakos, and Xefteris, 2019), researchers observed through a survey fielded in 2017 that Greek residents closest to refugee arrival “hotspots,” using distance from the Turkish coast as an instrument, exhibited “significant and lasting increases” in hostility toward migrants and Muslim minorities. This finding occurred even as the “transient” nature of arrivals—or at least as the authors claim—prevented meaningful face-to-face contact between locals and refugees. That finding, as the authors note, appears to

challenge assumptions of both proximity-based hostility and those of intergroup contact theory. Why would Greek residents closest to refugee-receiving areas in the Aegean demonstrate increased hostility to refugees if refugees were not particularly visible in their daily lives? Given the mismatch between intergroup contact theory and their empirical findings, the researchers attribute locals' increased hostilities to the "disruption of everyday life" that accompanied refugee arrivals rather than exposure to the refugees themselves.

What do "disruptions of everyday life" on the Greek islands look like in practice, as a causal mechanism for anti-refugee prejudice? By "disruption," as Hangartner and Dinas et. al. clarify in other parts of their paper, they refer to "the chaotic mismanagement of the refugee crisis" in 2015, when "the presence of large number of staff and volunteers from the UNHCR, the EU, the National Center of Disease Control and Prevention, and various NGOs further compounded these effects [of disruption] to create the impression of a state of emergency." Yet even with the clarification, this proposed causal mechanism for triggering anti-refugee hostility appears to insufficiently account for the hostile and contentious political actions on the Greek islands since 2015. This is true in at least two respects. The first unaccounted for question is one of actors: what groups are causing these disruptive effects, and how are they necessarily related to the arrival of refugees? The second question is one of timing. While the authors regard their finding of hostility toward refugees as evidence that anti-refugee hostilities are long-lasting, it is quite possible (due to the timing of a single-wave, 2017 fielded survey) that those measures are not representative of native attitudes at the moment of initial arrival of refugees in 2015.

What is more, even if attitudes of hostility remained constant since that date, that explanation cannot account for the *timing* of violence and backlash toward aid workers and refugees on the Greek islands in 2019 and 2020. If islanders with greatest exposure to the "refugee crisis" exhibited greater hostility to refugees and Muslim minorities, why would a

political and physical backlash to those populations take so long to foment, after the vast majority of those groups had left the region?

Finally, this account of hostility appears to contradict a host of recent scholarship that finds that the effects of refugee arrivals on local communities are largely *positive*. While an earlier literature, as well as humanitarian aid organizations themselves, have expressed concerns that offering material aid to refugees may exacerbate civil or intergroup conflict, Masterson and Lehmann (2020) find that providing cash aid to refugees in Lebanon has a null or negative effect on the propensity of identity-based violence that refugees have experienced. In a global analysis of civil conflict on the subnational level, Zhou and Shaver (2021) find this null relationship directly pertains to the presence of refugees themselves: refugees do not exacerbate civil conflict. On the other hand, the authors summarize recent studies and offer evidence that refugees “can encourage local development and even conflict reduction,” primarily through positive externalities to infrastructure and localized demand for services.

Evidence from my research findings broadly concurs with at least one argument from these prior findings—that refugee arrivals can come with positive externalities for local economies and material gains for some individuals in host communities. I argue, however, that those positive economic effects offer an insufficient explanation for patterns of anti-immigrant beliefs and practices in displacement settings. As I show from my ethnographic data in Lesvos and Samos, many local residents of Greek “refugee hotspot” areas who had much to gain materially from the emergence of humanitarian aid organizations still voiced intense opposition to their presence—sometimes to the point of using or threatening to use violence, either against NGO workers or refugees. Instead of material interests, I argue that these local residents justified their beliefs about humanitarian NGOs on the basis of moral and emotional logic, particularly motivated by perceptions of fairness, deceit, outrage, and political legitimacy.

More broadly, I show through my ethnographic data that *both* local residents and refugees on the Greek islands employed moral and emotional criteria to evaluate humanitarian organizations who met — and did not meet — their needs after 2015. While locals’ and refugees’ ultimate judgments about different aid organizations varied widely, I aim to show that these criteria were salient to aid organizations regardless of whether those organizations were “traditional” (well-established international NGOs, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and other organizations with a *global* presence and clear humanitarian mandate) or “grassroots” (organizations developed by private individuals or local civil society actors to assist refugees with a presence focused on Greece or the Mediterranean situation).

In this respect, this research also finds inspiration in the wide-ranging political science and sociological literature that argues for the centering of emotions and morals as explanations for individual behavior in contentious political situations. Emotional and moral rationales for action can motivate participation in violent political mobilization (Wood 2003; Balcells 2017), group polarization (McDoom 2012), and backlashes to ‘undeserving’ minorities (Hochschild 2016). Here, I theorize that they may drive hostility toward humanitarian aid organizations, offering a novel explanation for why direct and indirect beneficiaries of humanitarian aid may be unwilling to support its continued presence in a locality.

II. Methodology and Research Design

Ethnographic Field Research on Two Divided Islands

To convince a skeptical reader of my account of anti-refugee prejudice, I will show why other factors that plausibly contribute to anti-refugee prejudice (and anti-aid worker prejudice) offer insufficient explanation for the patterns of hostility and behavior toward these groups on

the Greek islands. I will also show adequate evidence of my proposed mechanism occurring, through changes to institutional formations, attitudes, and practices as a result of moral and emotional attachment to aid organizations. I will also challenge the empirical assumption that provides a foundation for the 2019 paper on anti-refugee hostility in the face of the “refugee crisis”—that refugees and local residents in Greek “refugee hotspots” rarely interacted. To the contrary, one advantage of an ethnographic, field-based study was the opportunity to witness that how these communities interacted a great deal more than official records and survey data suggested.⁷

To understand how seven years of “disruptions” affected host-refugee relationships on the Greek islands, and explore the role that aid organizations played in those disruptions, I conducted 2.5 months of ethnographic field research on the islands of Lesbos and Samos in Greece, among communities that were most directly involved in those events. I asked Greek residents and refugees about what they witnessed and how they participated in these “disruptions,” why they participated, and what they believed about those disruptions. I focused my research strategy on an ethnographic study of the communities that populate several “refugee hotspots” on the Greek islands: Mytilene, Moria, and the Mavromouni refugee camp, on the island of Lesbos; Vathy and the Zervou detention center on the island of Samos.

The two islands of Lesbos and Samos routinely experience some of the highest rates of refugee arrivals in Greece: they are two of the islands in the Hangartner, Dinas, et. al. (2019) study, along with Chios, that received multiple refugee arrivals per every island resident since 2015. In particular, Lesbos—the largest island in the Northern Aegean—has tremendous

⁷ This finding of regular interaction challenges one key empirical assumption in Hangartner, Dinas, et. al. (2019) regarding continued refugee presence on the Greek islands. In Footnote 1: “A fraction, about 11,000 of the more than one million asylum seekers that arrived on the Aegean islands, is still hosted in refugee camps on a few islands. These refugee camps, the largest of which is Lesbos’ Moria, are, however, located in the rural countryside, which severely limits the potential for interaction.”

symbolic and logistical salience to immigration politics within Greece and across the European Union. In 2015, during “the Mediterranean migration crisis,” over 379,000 refugees and immigrants arrived on the island of Lesbos from Turkey, representing about half of the total arrivals of people seeking international protection in Greece that year (UNHCR 2016). Residents of Lesbos once won the Nansen award and received nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to assist refugees. But by 2020, attitudes and expressions of behavior had soured toward refugees and humanitarian NGO workers on the island. The presence of preexisting, rigorous survey data, documenting a surge in anti-refugee hostility among these communities after 2015 (Hangartner and Dinas et. al. 2019) served as an especially attractive opportunity to complement my qualitative research, and an invitation to explore proposed explanations for the duration of that hostility in greater depth.

In light of the insufficient and sometimes entirely absent accounts of local and humanitarian responses to refugee arrivals at Europe’s borders, I decided to employ ethnographic methods as the best strategy for addressing this research question. Many official data and records (including state, UN, or INGO sources) that comprehensively capture the presence of aid organizations at various refugee hotspots are relatively scant. Eighty-six NGOs that work with migrants were registered with the Greek Ministry for Migration and Asylum by June 2020, but many more “grassroots” organizations also participated in mobilizations to support refugee arrival, reception, and social services. Many official sources do not effectively document grassroots organizations, some of which were not registered with state governments. Related to that absence was the fact that, for reasons of identity protection and physical segregation, grassroots aid workers and refugees on the Greek islands were two difficult-to-reach populations.

The few records that exist are also not detailed enough to identify meaningful variation in the sorts of characteristics that affect interactions with local residents, or host-refugee relations.

Survey data is not much help here either, with regard to analyzing the effects of aid organizations on local politics in Lesbos and Samos. While empirical survey data exists on Greek locals' views of refugees by region—as well as regional party vote share in the 2015 and 2019 legislative elections—these measures does not capture residents' perceptions of, or contact with, international or grassroots aid organizations. The specific mechanisms and actions through which aid organizations and refugees interact with host communities, as well as the political and emotional contexts in which those interactions occur, are difficult to capture in any simple survey question. To begin collecting information on these mechanisms, and to embrace a more inductive, hypothesis-generating research approach, I needed to engage in more personalized, immersive observation—the sort of methodologies involved in ethnographic field research (Schatz 2009).

Data in an ethnographic study comes from human sources. To attain that data, I adhered to a modified version of social scientists call the “snowball sampling” method (Auerbach 2003). All told, over the course of 2.5 months, I conducted interviews with 53 individuals who occupied three occasionally overlapping identities on the Greek islands: refugees (inclusive of people who had applied for asylum or been rejected), local Greek residents, and humanitarian aid workers.⁸ Over this period, I also conducted participant observation of rituals, social and cultural practices, and group meetings in which refugees, humanitarian aid workers, and Greek locals participated. These included farming practices, fitness classes, English and music classes, artistic performances, athletic events, “leaving” parties for humanitarians and refugees, textile- and clothes-making practices, and protests.

The interviews I conducted lasted between 30 minutes to 2.5 hours, with most lasting about one hour. They were not akin to controlled survey questions. Following principles of

⁸ I recorded all but seven interviews.

ethnography, I took an open-ended, holistic approach to semi-structured interviews, drawing general inferences from the social and cultural interactions that subjects described and experienced. That being said, from an empirical perspective, I hoped to identify variation in the structure and location of formal and grassroots aid organizations; in the attitudes that local residents expressed toward refugees and aid workers alike; and lastly, variation in the services that refugees received and the prejudice or discrimination they may have experienced.

Faced with the prospect of asking interview subjects about a process that occurred some years ago—that is, conducting interviews in 2022 regarding events that took place between 2015 and 2020—I had to consider sources of bias related to memory formation and social influences on those memories. Since subjects may have observed or participated in the emotionally intense events that concerned my research study (refugee arrivals, rights violations, and intergroup stress), it was likely that these events are well remembered. However, those memories were also likely to have been shaped by social and cultural processes, affecting what was emphasized, retained, or forgotten. Subjects’ retelling of their memories, and narrative interpretation thereof, may also have been retrospectively motivated by their specific political or social loyalties. Here, there is a danger in relying on “standard stories” as evidence to discern and isolate causal mechanisms (Tilly 1999). However, I followed the example in Wood (2003) in arguing that the choice to participate, discriminate, or otherwise react to the arrival of an outgroup rests upon individuals’ perceptions and interpretations of the process. These memories, socially and culturally influenced as they may be, are nonetheless relevant to scholarly analysis.

I define the criteria for the interviewed groups more precisely below. Over the course of my fieldwork, I also conducted several interviews with government officials from the European Commission, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum,

and the local municipal government of the Northern Aegean. All of these government officials were local EU nationals.

Group 1: ‘Aid worker.’ Individuals who work, either for compensation or volunteer, as a member of an organization to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum seekers at one of my sites of interest. If some aid workers are refugees, or are local EU nationals, I included them as aid workers and not count them as one of the other subgroups. This participant group excluded children, pregnant women, and incarcerated individuals.

Group 2: ‘Refugee leader.’ An individual who is seeking or has received refugee status in the European Union and who is living at one of my case sites. In order to mitigate risks to refugee populations in Europe, this category was only inclusive of refugees who already served in public roles, as community representatives in either media, legal, labor, religious, or humanitarian service contexts. This participant group excluded children, pregnant women, and incarcerated individuals.

Group 3: ‘Local EU national.’ An individual who has citizenship or permanent residency in the host country of my site of interest (Greece) and is living in the municipality of my site of interest. This category excludes those who are refugees and those who work in humanitarian aid. This participant group excluded children, pregnant women, and incarcerated individuals. Since my major outcome of interest was anti-refugee prejudice among European citizens, the largest plurality of my interviews were local Greek residents of Lesbos and Samos. I interviewed Greek citizens who spoke English with varying degrees of fluency, and some that spoke none. I conducted several of these interviews in the presence of a phenomenal local Greek student and interpreter, Labrini Blatsiou. Sometimes, Labrini needed to translate the entire substance of an interview but more often assisted with individual words, sentences, or phrases.

I analyzed the results from interview-based data collection based on aggregate observations of interview transcripts. In select interview excerpts, I highlight accounts of interaction between the three communities that I describe in my study, and particular passages that provide evidence of mechanisms of positive and negative contact in action. I aimed to present this evidence — as well as exceptions — of occurring mechanisms through the individual narratives of interview subjects wherever possible. In my interviews, I paid particular attention to testimonials about institutions, interactions, and patterns of language and narrative that elucidated broader themes about attitudes and behavior toward refugees and aid workers. I also took particular care to whether (and how) interview subjects differentiate aid organizations from one another, and whether these ‘typologies’ of aid organizations are interpreted differently by the three populations of interest (aid workers, refugees, and local EU nationals). Finally, I complemented my primary source of ethnographic data with several other qualitative data sources: the field notes I wrote, the photos I took, contemporary journalistic coverage (with a preference for local Greek media) and popular Greek-language social media sites and posts.

As a general inductive practice, issues that motivated and drove my interview subjects also motivated and drove my research.⁹ For instance, if my subjects pointed to a particular program or institution in Lesvos and Samos that was critical for refugee-host interaction, I took care to focus on that program or institution in the subsequent analysis.

Research Ethics Amid Incidences of Anti-Refugee Violence

Maintaining a robust ethical framework throughout my research design was essential, given the nature of the populations with whom I engaged.¹⁰ Refugee populations are a

⁹ Rethinking categorizations of frameworks and cases while in the field is fundamental to the interpretive process of qualitative field research. See Soss (2021).

¹⁰ Research for this ethnographic study was conducted under Yale University IRB Protocol # 2000032837 as “Can Grassroots Humanitarian Aid Organizations Affect Anti-Immigrant Prejudice in Europe?”

particularly vulnerable group due to political and legal marginalization in the European Union and widespread stigmatization in the media environment of Greece, bringing particular ethical concerns about data collection, consent, confidentiality of sources, and the presentation of research.¹¹ For these reasons and as previously stated, I chose not to depend on staffers from NGOs, international organizations, or camp bosses to develop a sampling frame of refugee interviewees. This choice freed me from certain bias and confidentiality concerns, but I also chose not to depend upon focus groups for the vast majority of interviews, and never did so with any interviewees speaking about asylum cases, as I could not guarantee confidentiality among group participants.

With further regard to confidentiality, I stored data relevant to my thesis project in a Dropbox and Yale Box accounts that were only accessible through an American server. Interviews with refugees took place purposefully beyond the confines the Mavromouni refugee camp, which has a curfew for residents beginning at 8:00 and ending at 20:00 each weekday.¹² Given the ethical, logistical, and psychological limitations of a camp setting, I always aimed to introduce myself and conduct interviews in a more neutral environment.

In the presentation of my research, I follow the “dual imperative” logic of Jacobsen and Landau (2003) with regard to social science research on forced migration—to balance academic rigor with an ethical imperative to produce policy relevant research, research that aims to alleviate suffering. This logic entered my methodology both at the moment of informed consent and when I completed my fieldwork. My informed consent process was verbal in nature, except when interview subjects preferred to read the consent form to themselves. Otherwise, I read out as I first explained my practices with regard to confidentiality and whom I was interested in

¹¹ For a related account of the ethical challenges of field research in contexts related to the Syrian refugee crisis, which informed the general principles and practices I followed in the field, see Masterson and Mourad (2019).

¹² Mavrovouni Refugee Camp is sometimes called “Kara Tepe II Refugee Camp” or “Temporary Kara Tepe Refugee Camp,” a reference to the former Kara Tepe camp, which existed at a nearby site until its closure in 2021.

interviewing. This included a discussion of my intention as a researcher. Regardless of the interviewee, while I emphasized that I could not promise or bring material gains to the individual subject, I stated that I nonetheless hoped to “add to our collective knowledge about assisting refugees and reducing prejudice.”¹³

Some approaches to ethnography and qualitative research involve depending on third-party interlocutors, such as legal aid providers or non-profit organizations, to connect a researcher with human sources of data (Auerbach 2003; MacAreavey and Das 2013). This is particularly prevalent when engaging with vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations—and can prove successful, when one’s interest in the third party is for a sampling strategy and not a substantive research question. This approach was, at one point, available to me. I received offers from two legal aid organizations in Mytilene to connect me with clients who had experiences and opinions relevant to my research questions.

After some consideration, I chose not to adopt this approach. The subject of my interviews, and the nature of my research design, pertained to refugee subjects’ evaluations and opinions of aid organizations. Ethnographic research can rarely be said to generate an unbiased dataframe, but speaking only to interview subjects who successfully received services from NGOs and aid organizations could guarantee data biased in the direction of individuals who felt positively about those groups (Boo 2012). I also worried that such a strategy presented incentives for interview subjects that were both empirically and ethically troublesome. Would interviewees, dependent on local aid organizations for legal, social, and material services, feel pressure or social desirability bias to adjust their responses upon learning of my affiliation with said organizations? In either case, I concluded that giving these groups the ability to choose a sample of research participants would surely lead to a biased data strategy.

¹³ Interview and recruitment materials found in Appendix 3.

Instead, through a modified method of purposeful “snowball” sampling, I depended on a diverse web of sources to lead me to further research participants (Auerbach 2003). I avoided using networks of client-worker relationships in developing these sources; instead, I focused on the social networks that did not map neatly onto professional circles. This approach, while attractive for the professional independence it brought for myself as the researcher, presented its own difficulties—namely in terms of locating these human sources of data. My first “snowball” source came from a journalist in Athens who is well known for her reporting in Lesvos; she connected me with a leader of a local “solidarity” group that offered fitness classes to people living in the Mavrovouni refugee camp and detention center. Some other initial sources came from the few contacts that I had developed in the humanitarian workforce in 2018, on Lesvos, who still remained in touch with residents of the island. For still other snowball sources, I benefitted from the advice of academics and student researchers at the University of the Aegean, as well as members of local NGO cooperatives large enough to maintain their own websites (and updated email addresses) in English.

Finally, I sought out my own sources through opportunities for participant observation in the field. I attended locally advertised events and wrote field notes in the coffee houses, tavernas, and bars that lined Mytilene’s two waterfronts. Eventually I discovered where aid workers and refugees alike would congregate in neighborhoods around Mytilene and their habits of preferring the same streets, parks, and businesses on weekends. I began to spend time in those places, attempting to strike up conversations with strangers.

III. Site Description and Historical Context

Mytilene and the East Lesvos Region

I arrived in Lesvos on the ninth of June, 2022, via Odysseas Elytis Mytilene International Airport. In my first week on the island, I conducted no interviews. Instead, I worked to re-familiarize myself and understand with the city and its broader environment, beyond the populations with whom I wished to engage. Each morning, I tried to stretch my understanding of the semi-urban and rural environments around which the events of the past seven years had taken place. In particular, I noted and documented the prominent English graffiti of Mytilene, left by political activists and NGO workers since 2015. Prominent messages in black and red paint were repeatedly on the city's trash cans, sidewalks, lampposts, building walls, and street signs, presenting a singular political narrative that no English speaker who visited Lesvos could miss.

CLOSE MORIA! SMASH FASCISM

STOP THE PUSHBACKS

NO BORDERS

WAR HAS NO BORDERS

EU, WHERE ARE YOU?

GREEK PEOPLE LOVE REFUGEES WHEN THEY PAY ¹⁴

While I centered my fieldwork around the city of Mytilene, I also made an effort to visit several villages that were also relevant to the island's recent history of refugee arrivals, such as Panagiouda, Moria, and Charamida, as well as several other villages that were far more

¹⁴ For documented photographs of these slogans, in Greek and English, please see Appendix 1.

geographically removed from refugee arrivals. Familiarizing myself with these villages was significant not only for their relevance, because also for the opportunity to compare villages to Mytilene and to each other, gauging the relative representativeness (and lack of representativeness) of each municipality. Mytilene's greatest distinction was its size, population, and available port—and for those same reasons, the city had served as the central hub for most humanitarian organizations operating in the Northern Aegean. In terms of villages that were further removed from refugee arrivals, and in the process of conducting participant observation, I also paid visits to Kalloni, a bus hub in an otherwise rural area of central Lesbos; Eresos, a beachside town on the furthest edge of the island; and Skala Loutron, a fishing village situated on one of Lesbos' two internal bays. A civil search-and-rescue boat, *Mare Liberum*, formerly operated out of the port of Skala Loutron, and since the end of 2021 has been left in the harbor, unused.

Mytilene is one of the oldest cities in Greece, tracing its founding to the tenth century B.C. The Athenian Assembly's debate about the fate of Mytileneans after betraying the Delian League occupy a famous episode of Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War (Warner 1974). Since that period, Mytilene has remained the major port city of Lesbos, under Byzantine, Ottoman, and eventually independent Greek rule in 1912, and today serves as the capital of Greece's Northern Aegean administrative region. The city is centered around a narrow street that bisects two hilly ridges. Sitting atop one of those hills are the ruins of Mytilene Castle, facing the sea. The rugged Turkish coast eighteen kilometers to the east and visible from the city's waterfront on all except the haziest of days. On the other hill, suburbs of Mytilene snake up a finger ridge that is an extension of Lesbos' gently sloped Mediterranean coast ranges, which are covered in olive trees, poplars, and cedars. The buildings sport the traditional architecture of the villages dotting the Greek and Turkish coasts in the Aegean: red ceramic roofs adorned with ornate antefixes, iron terraces, and square apartments painted in pastel blues and yellows.

In antiquity, the two hills on each side of the city were not connected over land. Ermou Street, the major thoroughfare that bisects those hills, connecting modern Mytilene harbor to the city's old northern waterfront, was placed directly over the *Euripos*—a channel built for triremes by the Mytilenean Greeks in the 5th century BC. The channel itself was built on a strait that once separated the hill now occupied by Mytilene Castle from the hill on the island. Its winding street plan also dates to the 5th century, and requires visitors to brave steep climbs, dead ends, and hairpin turns. These features tend to challenge the average motorist, and so Mytilene's relatively compact city center is instead abuzz with motorcycles.

Just north of the city center on Ermou Street lies a ruined Ottoman mosque. A wooden boat, painted light blue, sits outside the mosque ruins on the paved street, at about waist height. The craft seemed too little to be seaworthy until I realized it was actually not a boat at all, but a memorial. Written on the boat's wooden hull is a name and a date: Smyrna, 1923. The memorial commemorates over one million Orthodox people who arrived on the Aegean Islands after being deported from Anatolia, as part of the mutually population exchanges between Greece and Turkey—especially Smyrna (present-day Izmir), which Mustafa Ataturk recaptured in 1922.

Even an unseasoned visitor to Lesbos, or newly arrived aid worker, could immediately distinguish Greeks of Mytilene from the refugee communities that continue to live around the city, in far lower numbers, by their choice of vehicle. The motorcycles that course through Mytilene are nearly exclusively the property of Greeks; with few exceptions, refugees resort to bikes. The bicycles are a cheap alternative to expensive and often unreliable bus transportation from Mytilene's city center to the Mavrovouni camp, where most refugees on the island must return before curfew. Since the heyday of Moria Refugee Camp (MRC), which was destroyed by arson in 2020, several aid organizations, including One Happy Family, one of the largest “grassroots” NGOs on the island, continued to provide the bicycles.

For the past seven years, Mytilene city proper has been home to about 30,000 Greek citizens, and several thousand humanitarian aid workers and volunteers. Few refugees “live” within the city’s borders in terms of a permanent address, although many asylum seekers visit during the day. Since individuals seeking international protection began to arrive in Lesbos in greater numbers, only those who qualified as members of particularly vulnerable groups were eligible to qualify for subsidized rental housing in Mytilene: single women, unaccompanied minors, or people with disabilities and major medical needs. Mytilene, then, was not a center of residence for other people seeking asylum, except for the few who are independently wealthy, and several others that are employed by a humanitarian NGO.

Nor is Mytilene, or Lesbos in general, an especially popular tourist destination—at least, not by the standards of other Greek islands. The Northern Aegean regularly ranks among the two regions of Greece with the fewest number of annual international tourist arrivals (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021). Those tourists who do regularly come to Lesbos are typically domestic Greek citizens, or the occasional Turk, on holiday in August. Instead of tourists or asylum seekers, the largest foreign-born population living in Mytilene has been, for the past seven years, workers affiliated with the humanitarian aid sector: staff and volunteers of independent NGOs, UNHCR bureaucrats, MSF doctors, social workers, teachers, interpreters, legal aid advocates, civil search-and-rescue workers, and even fitness coordinators and circus performers. Greek residents of Mytilene often referred to this population broadly as “the NGOs,” or *MKO* (*Míkio*) in Greek. This translated acronym for “the N.G.O.s” in Greek is often supplied as a derogatory label for “grassroots” aid organizations. If Greek residents did draw distinctions between NGOs, it was usually with respect to the root of their authority—from a United Nations agency or government, or a private organization—or the nationality of the individuals who founded it.

Forced Migration from Turkey to Greece, 2015 – Present

Despite the geographic separation of the two populations of natives and immigrants, the “refugee issue,” as many Greeks residents call it, continues to cast a long shadow over local politics in Lesbos. Kara Tepe, a joint refugee camp and detention center, lies some four kilometers north of Mytilene, a fifty-minute walk up the road. Just across from Kara Tepe is the exit to a side-road that pulls away to the town of Moria—and the ruins of the notorious refugee camp where, until 2020, as many as 30,000 asylum seekers were forced to live in dangerous and squalid conditions.

Moria Refugee Camp (MRC) was founded in 2015, when refugee arrivals in Greece increased dramatically. Over the course of that year, more than 800,000 people arrived by sea on the Greek islands, with the vast majority arriving on the Northern Aegean Islands closest to Turkey: Samos, Chios, and with the greatest number of arrivals, Lesbos. In the first months of the “crisis,” the search-and-rescue and humanitarian responses tasked with assisting those who made landfall in the Northern Aegean were haphazard and overwhelmed. On the northern and western shores of Lesbos, emergency response efforts on land were led by local Greek residents, visiting tourists, and the first wave of international volunteers, based in the villages of Molyvos and Skala Sykaminas. Responses to sea landings depended on the combined but often uncoordinated efforts of UNHCR, the EU Border Patrol, the Greek Coast Guard, and individual search-and-rescue groups.

The lackluster humanitarian infrastructure subjected many arrivals, especially unaccompanied children, to highly variable and arbitrary experiences of reception. On one day in October 2015, at the height of the crisis, over 10,000 people arrived on Lesbos, in small boats and dinghies on the north and east beaches; the assistance available to and pending legal status of individuals often hinged on the location of their landing.

In March 2016, in response to the dramatic increase in arrivals on the Greek islands, the European Union signed a “joint cooperation agreement” with the Republic of Turkey to accommodate “irregular migrants” traveling by sea to Greece. Referred to as the “EU-Turkey Deal” by international media, the agreement stipulated that any irregular migrants found in the regions of the Greek islands, including individuals whose asylum claims were rejected, would be deported to Turkey, and that Turkey would be required accept them. In exchange, Turkey would receive a €6 billion aid package to accommodate the refugees that would live in Turkey, and a guarantee of visa-free travel for Turkish nationals in the European Union.

The deal was roundly condemned by human rights organizations for violating of non-refoulement, a core principle of international refugee law. However, only some components of the deal appeared to have been enforced—namely, the European Union’s side of the bargain, to supply Turkey with €6 billion. Instead of deporting large numbers of asylum seekers back to Turkey after denying their application, Greece merely forced them to stay on the island. The degree of backlog in the Greek asylum processing system meant that individuals waiting for their asylum decision could be trapped in their region of first application — likely a Northern Aegean island — for years.

IV: The Puzzle of Anti-Refugee Prejudice on the Greek Islands

If Greece could put people in five-star hotels and still reject their asylum case, they would.

— Legal advocate in Mytilene

The Transformation of “Refugee Hotspot” Economies

In 2015, the sudden dramatic increase in refugee arrivals in Greece coincided with the final weeks of the islands’ peak tourist season. Lesvos became world famous; celebrities and the Pope made visits. The timing resulted in scenes of Europeans in bathing suits helping people in orange life vests disembark from the dinghies—and an enduring narrative that the islands’ sustaining tourism industry was sure to suffer as a byproduct of refugee arrivals. International media portrayed it a “vacation island” that became an “island of refugees,” trading the good fortunes of its tourist economy in the process.¹⁵ The narrative stuck, and has been presented as the theory for Greeks’ hostility. But long after the media attention faded, however, the local economies of “refugee hotspots” on Lesvos continued to transform. The abundant humanitarian aid organizations on the island contributed to that transformation, and helped to create new ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in the local economy.

A widely cited body of literature in political science has characterized humanitarian aid provisions as drivers of intergroup conflict—particularly conflict that involves refugees. The prospect of receiving humanitarian aid may create incentives to take risky journeys during an

¹⁵ See, e.g., Ben Hubbard, “Lesbos Turns From Vacation Island to ‘Main Point of Entry’ for Migrants,” *The New York Times*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/world/europe/lesbos-turns-from-vacation-island-to-main-point-of-entry-for-migrants.html> ; Nicolas Niarchos, “An Island of Refugees,” *The New Yorker*, September 16, 2015. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-island-of-refugees>.

active conflict (Arias, Ibáñez and Querubin, 2014), or finance or join an armed group (Salehyan 2009; Choi and Salehyan 2013; Wood and Sullivan 2015). Alternatively, the selective provision of humanitarian aid in resource-scarce regions may activate or exacerbate distributive conflicts between refugees and host communities (Dancygier 2010; Dahlberg, Edmark, and Lundqvist 2012; Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Damm, 2018). In the past two decades, however, a more recent body of literature has challenged this theory. Masterson and Lehmann (2020) find that providing UNHCR cash transfers to refugees in Lebanon appeared to produce a null or negative effect on the incidence of anti-refugee violence in localities eligible for aid; they speculate that cash transfer can reduce anti-refugee hostility by “increasing refugees’ capacity to appease hosts through offering help (e.g., sharing aid) and through buying locally and boosting demand for local goods and services.”

But while they offer competing conclusions, both theories relating humanitarian aid and conflict share an underlying assumption: that humanitarian aid’s influence on host-country nationals’ behavior is felt exclusively through the mechanism of salient material and distributive effects. Scholars who view aid as an exacerbating force on conflict may point to the selective benefits of humanitarian welfare programs as a source of division. As a principle of customary international humanitarian law, for instance, refugees in host countries may receive benefits and assistance for which host communities are not eligible, breeding resentment and reducing support for aid. On the other hand, scholars like Masterson and Lehmann may see humanitarian aid as a “dampening” force for conflict through the mechanism of a positive economic shock to the economy.

The underlying logic of this distributive mechanism, however, offers an unsatisfactory explanation for the patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and violence toward refugees on the Greek islands. In this section, I first show that the so-called “disruptions” of humanitarian aid and refugee arrivals transformed the economies of refugee “hotspots” on the Greek islands. But I

argue that these transformations, despite the domestic and international media coverage that has suggested otherwise, were largely *positive* after 2015. Since that period, many Greek residents of Lesbos and Samos experienced growing incomes and increased opportunities for employment, a trend that they personally attribute to the joint arrival of refugees, aid organizations, and the consumer spending of employees and volunteers who worked at those aid organizations. Their feelings are partially corroborated by economic data that I present in this section, which suggests that refugee and aid arrivals to the island had either a negligible effect or a positive effect on the island economy.

The variation in these material benefits presents a surprising puzzle for predicting anti-refugee belief. While some Mytileneans who observed gains to their income also expressed support for the presence of refugees and humanitarian groups on Lesbos, many more residents did not.¹⁶ A substantial number of these residents—people who could reasonably expect to receive, and did receive, material benefits as a result of the island’s “disruptions”—still expressed intense opposition to the presence of refugees, refugee-related NGOs, and aid workers, even to the point of threats and violence.¹⁷ Just as strikingly, residents who had little to gain from aid workers or refugees’ activities on the island still expressed support for their presence—by attending political rallies, volunteering at refugee-related organizations, and offering unsolicited goods to refugees, such as free rides from the city of Mytilene to Moria, Lesbos’ refugee camp.

Toward the end of this section, I then address why other economic explanations for anti-immigrant sentiments, such as labor market competition or increased fiscal burdens on public resources, cannot account for anti-refugee beliefs in Lesbos and Samos. Finally, I describe how an alternative explanation for patterns of anti-refugee prejudice on the Greek islands, cultural

¹⁶ Interview with Greek resident of Lesbos on July 9; interview with Greek resident of Lesbos on July 15; Interview with Greek resident of Lesbos on July 21; Group interview with Greek residents of Samos on August 9.

¹⁷ Interview with Greek resident of Lesbos on June 28; interview with Greek resident of July 19.

concerns about majority-Muslim refugee communities, fail to account for the variation in intensity and timing of anti-refugee hostility and behavior.

Winners and Losers in the Humanitarian Economy

A. Discriminatory Rent-Seeking: Taxi Drivers, Minimarkets, and “The Refugee Tax”

In interviews, Greek citizens of Lesvos often pointed to a common site where they first encountered the people arriving on their island from the sea: the two-lane highway that hugged the Turkish-facing side of the island’s coastline, connecting the capital of Mytilene in the southeast with the town of Mithymna in the northwest.¹⁸ This portion of the Lesvos coastline was long and difficult to surveil, and humanitarian NGOs and Hellenic Coast Guard officials in 2015 could not be present along the entirety of its course to receive and care for people arriving at sea. In the fall of 2015, asylum seekers who managed to disembark on the coast had nowhere to go except inland, stopping once they reached the highway. Without any contacts or emergency numbers to seek services on the island, these groups depended on the generosity of private Greek motorists for pickups. Some, despairing of getting a ride, started to walk along the highway in the hope of coming across a larger town on their own, which often meant walking until sunrise the next morning. A few daring others stopped in the middle of the highway to wave down passing cars. If the car stopped, they would ask where in Greece they had landed, and if they could be taken to the nearest city or humanitarian office.

One Greek schoolteacher in her fifties described her first experience encountering refugees in Lesvos in 2015. She had grown up in Athens, but worked in Mytilene as a secondary school teacher for a number of years before she left following staff disputes with the local

¹⁸ Interview with Greek resident of Lesvos on July 9; interview with Greek resident of Lesvos on July 21; interview with Greek resident of Lesvos on July 21.

superintendent. That year, she began commuting to her new position as a biology teacher in Mantamados, a village northwest of Mytilene, on the highway:

I was driving to Mantamados when I saw four men, five men walking, coming toward Mytilene. I was very close to Mantamados when I saw them. I said, Wow! So early in the morning. And they are out for exercising.

When I finished my school that day, going back to Mytilene by car, I saw three of them. I remembered because they were well-dressed, clean clothes, much more expensive than mine, cell phone, much more expensive than mine. English much, much better than mine. I saw them going back, the three of them. After five hours, being on the road. And they stopped me. In English, they asked me, “Are you going to Mytilene?” I said yes. “Please, can you take us?” I didn’t think anything. I said, “Yes. I’m going to take you.”

And I was not even afraid. I mean, there were three men. And there was one woman [herself]. Okay. You understand what I’m saying. There is a fear, a hidden fear, always. And with all this stuff now coming out...I was hitchhiking when I was your age. And I was safe. I met people that would pick me up. I love that they exist and I want be one of them...So, I said, “Okay, come. I can take you.”

The three men were Syrian. Two of them spoke English, and were former white-collar professionals. With the three men’s approval, the schoolteacher decided to go to the police station in Mytilene, and ask how to enroll her guests in the asylum system. Upon arriving, however, she was informed that the ride she had just offered was illegal—according to Greek law, such a practice amounted to collusion with human trafficking. If she offered any sort of aid to refugees immediately upon landing, before they formally applied for asylum, she could face prison time.¹⁹ Through the next year, though, the schoolteacher continued to offer rides to refugees who signaled her car on the highway, provided that all members of their party fit inside.

The schoolteacher knew that she could have easily provided the rides for a fee, as many other Greeks did. Offering assistance to refugees on the highway continued to be illegal, and thus

¹⁹ At least two other Greek residents of Mytilene reported in interviews that they had a similar experience, of assisting refugees and receiving threats of a domestic criminal or misdemeanor charge for assisting human trafficking. Human rights advocacy groups and investigative journalists in Greece have documented this trend more recently insofar as it has affected NGO workers and asylum seekers. Greek prosecutors justify the charges according to the 2014 Greek Law No. 425, which stipulates additional criminal penalties for assisting in human trafficking. However, many rights reports and statements that reference this trend often do not note that Greek residents were also penalized under the same laws, well before prosecution cases of NGO workers became prominent. See, e.g., UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, “Statement on preliminary observations and recommendations following official visit to Greece,” June 22, 2022. <https://srdefenders.org/statement-on-preliminary-observations-and-recommendations-following-official-visit-to-greece/>.

often came with an unpredictable private fee—a fact that asylum seekers soon discovered about many goods that they had hoped to access on the island. After inviting people in their Mytilene-bound car, some motorists, derisively termed “taxi drivers” by the schoolteacher, would demand that they pay up to 100 euros per person for the trip. The price was exorbitant, far more than a Greek hailing a taxi would pay for the same distance. In the first months when arrivals surged in 2015, the populations that arrived along the highway were primarily upper- and middle-class Syrians who could easily afford the fee, like the men that the schoolteacher encountered. The “refugee tax” of transportation was more burdensome on later arrivals of asylum seekers, who were more likely to come from poorer backgrounds.

Incidences of price discrimination against refugees on Lesvos were pervasive across many consumer sectors of the local economy.²⁰ In July and August, when island temperatures often exceeded 35 degrees Celsius, minimarkets in Mytilene would stock up on bottled water to sell for €1 to Greeks who shopped there. Refugees were told by the cashier that they owed €10 for the same bottle. Multiple Greeks and NGO workers whom I interviewed recalled cell phone charging as the most egregious case of price discrimination. Cell phones are a lifeline for many asylum seekers in the Mediterranean, offering a means to navigate and communicate with relatives and smugglers. But it was an unhappy fact of Mytilene life in 2015 that many café owners charged refugees up to €20 an hour for the right to plug their cell phones into the establishment’s electronic outlets, in addition to the cost of any food and beverage purchases. When anyone who looked Afghan or African entered the café, the owner would come to their table, and patiently explain the policy. The practices seemed to decrease in frequency after the initial disorder of 2015 — perhaps because refugees realized they were being swindled.

²⁰ These descriptions were especially prominent in the following interviews, from which details of the following accounts are derived: Interview with Greek resident on July 9; interview with Greek resident on July 19; interview with Greek resident on July 21; interview with Greek resident on July 22.

From “taxi” rides to minimarkets, nearly every Greek citizen I interviewed on Lesbos was aware of price discrimination practices against refugees, and confirmed that the practice was ubiquitous on the island. The same high school teacher, like other interviewees, did not take money for the rides she provided, even as she became aware that other adults in Mytilene began to charge refugees for the service. The price gouging outraged her, in “taxi rides” as well as other contexts:

I was buying... a bed or something like that. And in front of me, it was so embarrassing. But I didn't react [A refugee] had bought something that cost four euros... I heard [the shopkeeper] say, ‘Forty euros.’ It cost, I knew how much it cost, four euros, and he said, it's forty euros. I couldn't believe that it was true. That is why I didn't react. I was surprised. I didn't expect this person would ever do a thing like that. I was going there often, and I didn't suspect.²¹

Implementing price discrimination, for some shopkeepers, was a relatively risk-free way of extracting rents from the refugee population. For the so-called “taxi drivers,” though, offering rides to refugees was a tremendously costly action, risking arrest and imprisonment for aiding human trafficking. Those costs made it all the more surprising that many Greek residents, like the schoolteacher, assisted refugees without charging a fee.

B. Positive Demand Shocks for Local Goods and Services

When I asked the schoolteacher whether humanitarian NGOs had an effect on the island's economy, she threw up her hands. “Of course! A positive one,” she said. She leaned over and described the transformation in a tone that suggested conspiracy:

“They were making a profit. Not the NGOs, they were working. But the local people, of course. People staying here, living here, eating here, going out here, they are...spending a lot of money, buying things. Of course, they had an impact. And [the locals] wanted this part...But they didn't want to go far, far away from their mentality. I mean, ‘I want your money but I want you to leave.’ At the same moment they were

²¹ Interview with Greek resident on July 9.

saying, [the NGOs] are not working, they came here...But [the locals] are renting their house. They're taking the money...it is like Britain. They didn't like the European Union, but they're doing Erasmus.”²²

Many shopkeepers and other small businesses did not need to resort to price discrimination to benefit from the humanitarian situation in their localities. Like the Lebanese civilians who benefitted from UNHCR cash transfers in Masterson and Lehmann’s (2020) study, these Greeks first benefitted indirectly from the cash transfers that refugees received monthly from the ATMs in Sapphus Square—through increased demand for local goods and services. Refugees spent their money at Mytilene’s Lidl supermarket, pharmacies, fish markets and butchers, local fruit and vegetable trucks, and clothing stores. But the service-based humanitarianism of the Greek islands, bringing aid providers and their consumption habits into the economy, provided another factor of increased consumer demand. When refugees’ disposable income was limited, businesses could instead rely on the thousands of paid employees and short-term volunteers affiliated with humanitarian NGOs on Lesvos. Aid workers frequented Mytilene’s art and furniture shops, gyro joints, its *kafeneios* and *tavernas*, where they drank Mythos and played backgammon. Grocery stores and bakeries flourished. New bars and gyms and restaurants sprang up, populating previously quiet streets and alleyways. One aid worker estimated that she could name from memory twenty new businesses that had appeared in Mytilene in the past four years.

Some businesses on Lesvos reoriented to market themselves explicitly in an effort to capture the humanitarian’s euro. Certain *kafeneios* and *tavernas* developed reputations as “refugee-friendly” establishments, where refugees could congregate with friends, NGO workers could hang photographs of their aid work on the walls, and organizations could advertise flyers for occasions related to the humanitarian situation on the islands. (Posted in one such *kafeneio*: two flyers, written in Greek and English, advertising a “Stop the Pushbacks” protest in Sappho

²² Interview with the author on July 9. The schoolteacher’s joke, drawing on stereotypes about the EU’s Erasmus exchange program, is now outdated. Since September 2022, the United Kingdom has launched a new exchange program with Europe run domestically to replace the Erasmus+ program.

Square on July 2nd).²³ Volunteers avoided some businesses that continued to refuse to serve refugees, and rewarded others based on their perceived openness to refugees. One long-term aid provider who lived in Mytilene for four years remarked that the “refugee-friendly” bars and tavernas seemed to perform better financially and stay open longer.²⁴ Landlords and real estate owners in Mytilene, too, capitalized on volunteers’ demand for short-term housing, offering more flexibility with per-month leases while raising overall rates for one-year leases.²⁵

Enjoying the benefits of a new consumer base, whether through passive or active means, was not necessarily indicative of a local political realignment. Often, Greek residents who benefitted from the humanitarian influx hesitated to name the source of their financial success in public. One Greek interviewee recalled meeting an acquaintance at the social event of a mutual friend who hid the fact that she was renting rooms to humanitarian workers on the island, for fear of apparently contradicting her own beliefs: “She didn't in public say anything, but as far as I can understand, she was [renting to them]. She was not backing the NGOs...on the other hand, she was making a profit.”²⁶

Perhaps the most striking case of a mismatch between material benefit and beliefs that I encountered was at a popular bar at the intersection of two alleys near the Mytilene waterfront. Already known for featuring live Greek music, the bar owner, a man of middle age, gained notoriety and appreciation among Somali and Iraqi refugees for allowing several of them to play DJ on the weekends, blasting electronic dance music in Somali and Arabic in the bar’s outdoor seating area. But the success of the bar surprised several local Greeks and aid workers, who had reasons to believe that the owner was no friend to refugees politically. He was known as a supporter of the Golden Dawn, an extreme far-right political party that has advocated for the

²³ See photograph in Appendix 1.

²⁴ Interview with aid worker, June 24.

²⁵ Interview with Greek resident on June 28; Interview with aid worker on June 30.

²⁶ Interview with Greek resident on July 9.

expulsion of refugees and Muslims from Greece. In February 2020, when far-right rioters attacked a demonstration of refugees in Sappho Square, the bar owner was spotted among them.²⁷

C. The Tourism Industry: Refugee Arrivals, Volunteer Influx, and Air Traffic

If there was a period where the humanitarian situation on Lesbos was most likely to affect tourism, it would surely be the period of increased refugee arrivals from July 2015 to July 2016. Several Greek and European media outlets documented a major slump in tourist arrivals in 2016, with a 65 percent decrease in arrivals from June 2015 compared to the prior year.²⁸ The slump is corroborated by evidence from firms: individual hotels and restaurants in 2016 reported financial losses from tourism that had decreased by 60 to 80 percent, compared to earnings from the following summer.²⁹

Many Lesbos residents who confront this narrative are quick to point out that the tourism on their island is far less extensive compared to other islands in Greece. Still, even domestic tourism was a major sector of the island's economy, and the claim that refugee arrivals harmed the tourism industry cannot be entirely discounted. And while it is also true that the humanitarian workers who flocked to Lesbos might be regarded as tourists of a sort, in terms of local consumption and demand behavior, their arrival is not necessarily evidence of a net gain in tourism.

²⁷ Although more than one interviewee testified to this man's membership in Golden Dawn and participation in the riot, I could not independently verify his presence there, as he was unwilling to speak with me. Per my prior description of truth and memory processes in ethnographic research, this data point should be interpreted as evident of the broader (accurate) perception of interviewees that many residents on Lesbos, including those who were intensely opposed to humanitarian NGOs and refugees, benefitted economically as a result of their presence.

²⁸ See, e.g., Ioanna Zikakou, "Tourist Arrivals to Lesbos Drop by 65%," *GreekReporter.com*, August 3, 2016, <https://greekreporter.com/2016/08/03/tourist-arrivals-on-greek-island-of-lesvos-drop-by-65/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

Thankfully, from a social science perspective, Lesvos stands out among Greek islands for its relative geographical distance and isolation from the rest of the country. There are few means by which tourists can reach the island, and that isolation generates useful proxy variables for rates of tourism and travel. Odysseas Elytis International Airport, just to the south of Mytilene, is host to the only commercial airstrip on mountainous Lesvos, and therefore the island's main connection to the rest of Greece. The only other way to reach Lesvos is by ferry, which requires a 10 hours' journey from Piraeus. Rates of tourism on Lesvos, then, are well captured by international traffic to Odysseas Elytis Airport—particularly because local Greek media regularly interpret this metric as a proxy for tourism to the island, and it was presented as evidence in their initial reporting that the refugee crisis caused tourism to decline.³⁰

The air traffic data do show a marked decline in international flights to Lesvos in 2016, and dampened enthusiasm for tourism as a result of refugee arrivals could very well be the cause. But that speculated decline in tourism either did not last or cannot account for the rest of the air traffic data. In May 2017, air traffic to the island began to grow again. From 2016 to 2017, the annual number of individuals arriving in Mytilene on international flights increased by 3.8 percent. The following year, total arrivals to Mytilene increased by 9.4 percent, and international arrivals jumped by 28.2 percent. Odysseas Elytis International Airport continued to see all-time highs in air traffic, exceeding its pre-2016 numbers, until air traffic collapsed at the start of COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns in March 2020.³¹

³⁰ See, e.g., Ioanna Zikakou, "Tourist Arrivals to Lesbos Drop by 65%," *GreekReporter.com*, August 3, 2016. <https://greekreporter.com/2016/08/03/tourist-arrivals-on-greek-island-of-lesvos-drop-by-65/>. The exception to this proxy variable is Turkish tourism in Lesbos, since many Turkish tourists who reach Mytilene do so by taking a ferry ride across the strait. In 2016, though, Turkish tourism rates in Lesbos were also widely reported to have declined, but for an exogenous and unrelated reason: the coup against President Erdogan in July 2016 and subsequent unrest in Turkey. For that reason, disregarding their effects may be a prudent choice anyway.

³¹ Odysseas Elytis International Airport posts monthly air traffic data, disaggregated into domestic and international arrivals and with percentage changes in traffic relative to the month of prior year, from 2016 to the present. <https://www.mjt-airport.gr/en/mjt/air-traffic-statistics>.

The recovery of arrival numbers in 2017, then, should raise skepticism about the theory that patterns of anti-refugee hostility on the Greek islands are driven by changes to tourism. Testimonial accounts of Greek hospitality and support for refugees typically began with the greatest positive expressions of support in 2016, and describe a marked deterioration in relationships between Greeks, NGO workers, and refugees in the period from 2018 to 2020. If rates of tourism were really predictive of natives' attitudes toward refugees, then the pattern of hostility ought to be precisely the opposite—an initial backlash against refugee arrivals, concurrent with declining tourism, followed by a slow decline in hostility as tourism gradually increased again. The finding that the two are not closely related also coheres with the survey results in Hangartner, Dinas, et. al. (2019): respondents in the study who received primary income from tourism showed no significant difference in attitudes toward refugees compared to those who did not.³²

D. The Agricultural Industry: Camps, Fires, and Olive Groves

Olives are Lesvos' other economic engine besides tourism. Over 11 million olive trees grow on Lesvos, more than any other island in Greece. One-fifth percent of land surface on the island, and sixty-five percent of the arable land in the south and east, are covered in olive groves (Loumou, Giorgia, et. al. 2000). A disruption to the olive oil industry would bring direct financial pain to many small-farm growers; if tourism rates were not predictive of anti-refugee hostility, perhaps changes to the agricultural sector brought by refugee arrivals could be. Indeed, as this section shows, spillovers from the humanitarian situation did affect the olive harvest, in an extremely localized area—but the influence of those changes on local politics is more puzzling.

³² See Figure E11 in the appendix of Hangartner, Dinas, et al. (2019).

Much of the agricultural output around Mytilene is generated through small individual plots of olive groves, the boundaries of which are marked with fences or small rock walls. These groves are typically owned by middle-class farmers in the nearest villages, who sell the fruit from the olive trees, harvested in late October and November, either directly to greengrocers or to buyers employed by the island's olive-oil-producing factories. Olives are typically removed from the trees by hand, and the labor required for harvesting is grueling. Households either harvest their olive groves themselves, or hire additional olive pickers in the peak of harvesting season, or both. These additional seasonal workers are rarely Greek: more often, they are Albanian temporary workers, who either emigrated to Greece in the 1990s or arrive in the summer as a population of rotating migratory laborers. Greek farmers in the harvesting season rely on this seasonal labor force, which the Greek government has regularized since 1998 by permitting foreign workers employed in the agricultural sector to apply for temporary residence visas (Baldwin-Edwards 2004; Maroukis 2011).

Moria, the village adjacent to Moria Refugee Camp (MRC), Lesbos' major refugee camp and detention center until 2020, is one such olive-producing community. Several families in the village suffered losses to their harvests as the camp expanded into what became known as "The Jungle": a loose assortment of dozens of shantytowns, Rubb halls, tents, and cooking fires that snaked up the hill where MRC was built. The layout camp was broadly organized by the ethnicity of its residents, and many asylum seekers from Afghanistan were relegated to the Jungle, after the populations in other camp sectors far exceeded maximum capacity. When fires would proliferate through the Jungle, the household farming cooperatives on the hill overlooking the camp—often owned by those same families who reported harvesting losses—also experienced grove and tree damage.

Yet the camp's presence presented more complicated externalities for the local olive growers than this damage alone would suggest. One young resident of Moria village, "Alexia," witnessed these economic transformations in the village's local agricultural sector, primarily for olives.³³ She belonged to a family of olive growers who lived in the village for at least three generations; their land was adjacent to MRC during its five years of existence. My interpreter and I met Alexia over Greek Nescafé frappes in the dense streets of Mytilene's city center, listening as she described the economic changes in the village that had affected her family, and their neighboring families, over the past decade.

At the time of the Greek financial crisis in 2011, Alexia was living with her mother and father in Athens. Their family were largely spared from the worst of Greece's economic downturn, and the austerity and debt policies that followed, because her father maintained a stable income as a naval officer. In 2017, she returned to Moria to live with her grandparents, whom she had visited every prior summer. They previously owned and operated a bakery in Moria village, and closed it the same year that she arrived, due to their retirement. Throughout this period, her family supplemented their income by tending to the olive groves on the land parcels that they owned along the outskirts of the village, which they harvested each autumn and sold to oil factories in eastern Lesvos. After closing the bakery, Alexia's grandparents depended more on olive production as a source of income, alongside the grandfather's pension.

As MRC became more crowded in 2018 and 2019, Alexia began to encounter more asylum seekers who ventured up the hills that led to her family's property. Other families in Moria village had told her to avoid residents of the camp, fearing that they would bring petty

³³ Not her original name. The following account is based on an interview with an anonymized Greek resident on July 19, and several accompanying sources of media documentation for verification purposes.

theft and home robbery. In our conversation, though, she recalled realizing that the residents were in search of more immediate needs:

...We never had [a robbery or crime] in my house. I hear that they—refugees, mainly— came into homes and took money, jewelry, or something like that. What I saw with my eyes is that they did some thefts, but it was mainly clothes...or some oranges, from people who are Greek. So it was things they needed...Even when they were at the edge of my grandfather's near Moria, because Moria camp didn't have the place for all those people, so they would extend it in our groves too, in my grandfather's olives. But they didn't do anything, except asking for some food when we were there to take care of our land.³⁴

As the Jungle expanded, more refugees settled on their large plot of olive groves. Yet Alexia's family did not resist the arrangement. By their estimates, the refugees appeared to have no effect on olive harvesting and production simply by pitching tents and portable houses among the olive trees. Even if they used several trees for firewood, the family estimated, the effect on their olive production would be negligible: "it was a big land."³⁵ Alexia and her mother began to visit the supermarket to purchase additional bread and cheese that they could bring out to the olive groves, offering it to their newest neighbors. Their motivation for these offerings was not entirely altruistic, as they feared that refugees may harm the family if they did not receive food. Still, the mother, daughter, and grandparents continued to provide the shelter of their groves, and the provisions of bread and cheese, to the asylum seekers, and never charged them for their stay.

Permitting refugees to live on their land may not have brought an obvious cost or benefit to their olive groves, but the social costs for Alexia's family were extremely grave. When other local families in Moria discovered the gestures of hospitality that Alexia's mother had performed, they punished her, and her family, by social sanction. Rumors about Alexia's family spread: many residents of the village believed that they must have been "taking money from the NGOs," she recalled, to pay for their refugee 'tenants.'³⁶ When they appeared in public, their neighbors in Moria would greet them with anger, harassment, and social ostracization. Local

³⁴ Interview with Greek resident on July 19.

³⁵ Interview with Greek resident on July 19.

³⁶ Ibid.

men that she recognized from the village began loitering outside the family home. They threatened Alexia, telling her that they knew her last name and who her grandfather was. She was afraid to go to the police station, where her family name would also be known. Finally, she avoided any associations with refugee or humanitarian NGOs in Mytilene, out of concern that any participation in pro-refugee or humanitarian activities would lead to violent reprisals against her grandfather.

In one sense, Alexia pointed out, the anti-refugee locals of Moria had credible reasons to suspect that her family had cooperated with NGOs and received compensation for hosting refugees. The practice was not unheard of. Other households similarly situated in Moria, who owned olive groves near the hills of the refugee camp, received compensation from several international NGOs to host refugees on their land — and, if their land yield and efficiency rates resembled that of the land that Alexia’s family owned, then these households had little to lose and much to gain by renting it. Humanitarian organizations offered to pay rents to these olive farmers in exchange for housing refugees on their olive adjacent to MRC, “to compensate the loss of income for farmers and to protect their olive trees from being completely chopped down during winter time,” as one prominent aid organization described on Facebook.³⁷ Several farms accepted these offers. This compensation was additional to the investment that arrived in Moria from the East Lesvos regional government, which made pledges to repair roads and renovate the village’s football stadium in exchange for expanding the refugee camp on private lands.³⁸ Like the bars and restaurants in Mytilene that revamped their businesses to capture the “humanitarian

³⁷ See Movement on the Ground, Facebook post, May 11, 2020: https://www.facebook.com/movementontheground/posts/digging-towards-dignity-with-the-relocation-process-complete-we-now-take-the-nex/1704762029700102/?paipv=0&eav=AfbjuIQWfbnP5_FJ_w7rY45q6n9zPc25C5y7nBFu_gkSrAHwV2Fd5ruyaM4RbbaUUk&_rdr.

³⁸ See, e.g., Halima Kazem-Stojanovic, “How Lesbos residents drove the far-right Golden Dawn party off the island,” *TheWorld.org*, Public Radio International, September 12, 2017. <https://theworld.org/stories/2017-09-12/how-lesbos-residents-drove-far-right-golden-dawn-party-island>.

euro,” and the “taxi drivers” who charged refugees for safe passage on the highway, these olive farmers developed strategies of benefitting from the social, economic, and ecological transformations engendered by the evolving humanitarian situation on the island.

When MRC burned, in September 2020, several of these olive groves burned with it, bringing significant property and production damage to the households who owned them. Shortly thereafter, the regional government promised to compensate these affected households, too, for their lost trees and damaged acres of property.³⁹ Yet as previously described, these losses and compensations occurred *after* expressions of anti-refugee hostility intensified (in January and February 2020), and *after* the vast majority of NGOs and “grassroots” aid organizations had already left the island, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and tightened restrictions on migration-related NGO activities from Greek parliament. Thus, they cannot account for any patterns among anti-refugee hostility among citizens of Moria village—and before that date, according to several interview accounts, some households who extracted rents from these humanitarian NGOs still opposed the presence of refugees.⁴⁰

Alternative Explanations: Welfare, the Labor Market, and Culture

If the “disruptions” of refugees and aid did not harm the incomes of many Greeks — and to the contrary, may plausibly have contributed to income gains — then perhaps anti-refugee hostility could be explained through other economic mechanisms. Scholars point to two additional major economic explanations for anti-immigrant beliefs that I have not yet accounted for: labor market competition or immigrants’ fiscal burden on public resources. Regarding labor

³⁹ See, e.g., Anthi Pazianou, “Moria: ‘First tariffs and then compensations for olive groves’ [Μόρια: Πρώτα τιμολόγια και μετά αποζημιώσεις για τους ελαιώνες],” *StoNisi*, October 9, 2021. <https://www.stonisi.gr/post/20599/moria-prwta-timologia-kai-meta-apozhmiwseis-gia-toys-elaiwnes-pics-video>.

⁴⁰ Interview with Greek resident on July 9; interview with Greek resident on July 19.

market competition, however, if the aid workers and refugees on the Greek islands had any effect on employment in Lesvos, it was likely a positive one. Aid workers on the Greek islands very rarely participated in the Greek labor force outside of the duties presented by their own organization. Refugees' local labor market participation, aside from a small minority's informal work in olive picking, was largely limited to positions within the aid organizations and NGOs themselves.⁴¹ Some aid organizations also hired Greek locals from Mytilene as paid employees, especially as private security, camp administration, or as educators for Greek language courses.⁴²

Refugees also presented little risk of fiscally burdening the municipal and regional governments responsible for administering Lesvos in the long term. The regional government of the Northern Aegean explicitly decoupled refugee welfare programs from its budget and fiscal spending; instead, the bulk of spending was financed by the EU, the United Nations, independent humanitarian NGOs, and private donors. To be sure, the optics of refugees' cash transfers risked creating the wrong impression — some Greek interviewees pointed to long lines of refugees, waiting at the ATMs in Mytilene harbor at the first of each month, as evidence of burdened state resources. But the municipal government of Mytilene actively distanced itself from these cash cards and transfers to refugees: instead, in press releases, the mayor presented the outsourcing of refugee cash aid as a political win for the island.⁴³

Absent economic explanations for beliefs about refugees and aid organizations, we might turn to the other major theory that scholars offer to explain anti-immigrant beliefs: natives' cultural concerns about immigrants. Cultural concerns are certainly paramount for many Greek residents I interviewed in the Northern Aegean Islands, particularly concerns related to religious

⁴¹ Interview with asylum seeker on July 5; interview with asylum seeker on July 6; interview with aid worker on June 24.

⁴² Interview with Greek resident on June 27; Interview with Greek resident on June 28; Interview with Greek resident on July 11.

⁴³ Interview with Greek government official on June 27.

practices, conceptions of gender, and refugees' willingness to integrate in Greek society. But, as noted in Hangartner, Dinas, et. al. (2019), the variation found in *sub-regional* levels of refugee hostility within individual islands casts doubt on a solely cultural explanation for hostility, since concerns about Greek culture appeared too constant in survey data to explain this variation. More broadly however, cultural, religious, and racial concerns about refugees in Greece have dated to the first arrivals of majority-Muslim refugees in 2015.⁴⁴ Expressions of hostility on Lesbos have varied since that date, even while the number (and demographic profile) of refugees has remained high. If cultural concerns led to increased anti-refugee harassment and violence in 2019 and 2020, why did those not precipitate an earlier backlash?

Finally, cultural concerns without an account of more specific points of grievance also seem unsatisfactory for explaining anti-*aid worker* sentiment. The majority of visible NGO workers and volunteers on Lesbos are non-Muslim citizens of the European Union, of a similar demographic profile to the tourists who were known to visit the islands. And even if Greeks reacted negatively to other Europeans, many Greek residents who assisted refugees or worked in NGOs reported similar incidences of hostility and mistrust from individuals within their own community.⁴⁵ How could a constant level of cultural discord explain the variability in patterns of attitudes, behaviors, and violence toward refugees and NGO workers? If cultural factors are salient to this variation, and if they are related to aid workers as well as refugees, then a more precise explanation of *which* cultural concerns and *when* they are 'activated' in response to the presence of these groups is needed.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Interview with Greek resident, June 28; interview with Greek resident, July 21. See also survey data from Hangartner, Dinas et. al. (2019) that corroborates this finding to 2017 at the earliest.

⁴⁵ Interview with Greek aid worker on July 4; interview with Greek resident on July 9; interview with Greek resident on July 13; interview with Greek resident on July 19; interview with Greek aid worker on July 21.

⁴⁶ For an account of 'activation', see Ann Swidler (1986). Swidler argues that the degree to which cultural practices and ideologies influence human action depends on the 'settled' or 'unsettled' nature of cultural periods. But such an account would need to explain why the increased arrival of refugees (in 2016) was a 'settled' period but 2019 and 2020, when anti-NGO and anti-refugee riots occurred, was an 'unsettled' one.

Patterns of economic disruption and change, then, appear insufficient to account for the patterns of opposition and hostility to refugees and aid organizations on Lesbos and Samos, and present an empirical puzzle, as many local residents who experienced material gains from the neighboring humanitarian situation still expressed intense opposition to its presence. Other theories, such as cultural, racial, and religious differences, are compelling drivers of anti-refugee hostility, but these cannot account for anti-NGO hostility, nor can they account for the variation in expressed hostility over time. To better account for that timing and variation in hostility, I turn to a broader analysis of my ethnographic data.

V: The Moral and Emotional Dimensions of ‘Grassroots’ Aid Organizations

For Greeks, solidarity is a bad word.

— Greek translator at the University of the Aegean

“What About My Human Rights?” The Symbolic Import of Language

In the previous section, I demonstrated why conventional explanations for anti-immigrant sentiment do not adequately account for patterns of anti-refugee and anti-aid worker hostility on the Greek islands. Instead, as I argue in this section, through differences of language, narrative, and with evaluations made from incomplete information, both Greek residents and refugees who encountered aid organizations relied on *moral and emotional criteria* to form judgments about the groups that arrived on their islands. On a small island, these judgments often rested on observations about aid workers’ individual intentions and behaviors, or on media accounts of aid worker conduct. These observations and accounts served as evidence that informed Greeks’

moral and emotional narratives, some of which could be extended and generalized to all “*MKO*” workers.

Like many municipalities in Greece, Lesvos is home to a local Armed Forces Officers’ Club: a private building, usually with a restaurant attached, reserved for officers and families of the Greek military and the Hellenic Coast Guard. The Officers’ Club of Mytilene is situated on a hill with a steep slope that overlooks a public park, the city’s amphitheater, and a thin stretch of pebble beach. For humanitarian aid workers, that modest beach below is known only one name: “One Euro Beach,” a reference to the pay-to-enter requirement that sets it apart from other seaside attractions. But for the Greek officers, and other residents of Lesvos, the beach is “Paralia Tsamakia”—its official name, given by the Hellenic Ministry of Tourism and printed in capitalized Greek at the front of the beach’s entrance.⁴⁷

Paralia Tsamakia is also popular with asylum seekers who live in Mavrovouni refugee camp. They meet on Saturday mornings to play volleyball on the beach’s public courts, in informal leagues that are open to all who wish to participate. Volunteers, paid humanitarian workers, and curious Greek teenagers join the games, playing on rotating teams together, shouting to each other in English, Arabic, and Farsi, attracted by the universal language and appeal of sport. At other points of the week, Greek men played games of three-on-three on the courts, but the courts tended to empty of other groups when the informal ‘humanitarian’ league arrived. One Saturday morning in July, while observing the volleyball leagues, I noticed that the refugees and asylum seekers playing in the league had adopted the aid workers’ nickname for the beach—they also had begun to call it One Euro Beach. Many aid workers I came to know were unaware that the beach park had a different name. Older Greek adults and families with young children, with whom the beach was also popular, kept their distance from the volleyball courts,

⁴⁷ Photographs included in Appendix 1.

where the name “Tsamakia” has no meaning. They watched from the café, or retreated to the yellowing umbrellas and reclining chairs lined up next to the waves.

I noted these linguistic differences between Greeks and “newcomers” (refugees and aid workers) often, and found their expressions revealing. The central park of Mytilene, Agias Irinis, hosts the local bus station—the central public transportation hub of Lesbos—and the city’s largest playground. But refugees and aid organizations, even organizations run by Greeks, refer to the location as “WiFi Park”—a legacy of arrivals in the chaotic first months of 2015, when the park was the only place on the island where refugees could congregate for free Internet.⁴⁸ “Human rights,” on the other hand, was a term to which both Greeks and aid workers were partial, but that was understood with different connotations for each group. While aid workers usually referred to human rights in regard to push-backs, or abuses of power or neglect in Mavromouni camp, some Greeks used the term to refer to imbalances of attention. “What about *my* human rights?” several Greek residents asked me.⁴⁹

Differences in language extended far beyond a literal language barrier. These differences were significant to intrinsic as well as instrumental origins of anti-refugee and anti-NGO hostility insofar as they expressed the emotional and moral logics of humanitarian aid workers working in the camp, the refugees living in the camp, and Greek citizens who did not participate in such activities. The primary expressions of Greeks’ emotional and moral beliefs, upon which I focus in this study, were in new narratives and neologisms that ascribed meaning to the dramatic changes in local residents’ social worlds.

⁴⁸ Interview with aid worker on June 25; interview with aid worker on June 30; interview with Greek aid worker on July 4.

⁴⁹ The exact phrase is from a group interview with Greek residents on the island of Samos on August 9. It was paraphrased closely in several interviews with Lesbos residents, most notably in an interview on July 19.

Perhaps the most striking linguistic divergence of all was in Greeks' and aid workers' understandings of the term 'solidarity,' or *allilengýi* [αλληλεγγύη] in Greek. For some humanitarian workers, 'solidarity' referred to a degree of relational equality between themselves and the people they served who were in need of international protection—that is, refugees and asylum seekers. They used it to distinguish their principles of humanitarian ethics from the principle that aid workers always ought to maintain neutrality in humanitarian settings, and from paternalistic attitudes of saviorism. 'Solidarity' meant performing services not “*for* refugees, but *with* refugees,” in the words of one aid worker; it meant engagement in politics, speaking out against pushbacks and human rights abuses.⁵⁰ But for Greek islanders, who were aware of the term's popularity among humanitarians, αλληλεγγύη came to connote hypocrisy and deceit, as well as a certain strain of naiveté: it was a derogatory phrase that residents in interviews greeted derisively and with a scoff.⁵¹ 'Solidarity' was a term that NGOs used to paint a rosy picture of dishonest work, while in private they cared little for the residents of the region that they temporarily occupied—solidarity for refugees, and disdain for everyone else.

Most aid workers in Lesvos will openly acknowledge that they do not speak Greek beyond the most basic of phrases. Few express a strong motivation to learn the language. This choice, they maintain, is one of utility rather than a sign of ignorance or slothfulness. For humanitarian purposes, on Lesvos, the greatest skills investment that an aid worker could make was learning Arabic or Farsi, languages in far higher demand with the clients they served and for which paid translators would be otherwise required. English, nonetheless, remained the lingua

⁵⁰ Interview with aid worker on June 17.

⁵¹ Interview with Greek resident on June 16; Greek government official on June 24; interview with Greek resident on June 28. By 'understanding' solidarity in this sense, I do not mean that all Greek interviewees agreed with the portrayal it evoked, but that a Greek speaker familiar with the humanitarian situation on the islands would likely understand the connotation of αλληλεγγύη—in interviews, even Greek speakers who disagreed with this characterization recognized the social meaning that the term evoked.

franca of the humanitarian aid sector, and most refugees sought enrollment in English classes before enrolling in Greek ones.

As such, spoken English became the primary characteristic and instrument through which Greek residents could identify individuals affiliated with “the refugee issue” if they wished to target them for harassment or violence. Racial and cultural identifications were ineffective proxies for this targeting, considering the number of ethnic Greeks (including natives of Lesbos as well as those “who were outside,” from Athens or Crete) who also participated in the humanitarian NGO sector.⁵² Several Greek interviewees who were local to the island described patterns of harassment from other residents that began when they used English: they were assumed to be working for the NGOs.⁵³ As early as 2017, and with increasing intensity in the years that followed, private citizens from the villages of Moria and Panagiouda began to patrol self-made ‘checkpoints’ semi-regularly, on the road from Mytilene to Moria Refugee Camp.⁵⁴ They would stop cars and buses, identify suspected NGO workers, and attempt to prevent their passage to the camp. One Greek resident, who did not work at an NGO but looked unfamiliar to the local men at the checkpoint, reported that she was nearly physically removed from a bus—until she began to protest in fluent Greek.⁵⁵

As accounts of Greek residents’ harassment of *Greek* humanitarian workers suggest, the subjects of these emotional and moral beliefs do not match neatly onto cultural or racial differences among individuals on the island: their common denominator was a role in a humanitarian aid organization. Some Greek residents, however, also drew moral distinctions

⁵² The phrase “who were outside” to refer to Greeks who were not from Lesbos was employed by both aid workers and Greek residents of the island. Many interviewed Greeks drew a cultural distinction between residents of their island and mainland Greeks, which some attributed to the geographical distance of Lesbos.

⁵³ Interview with Greek resident on July 9; interview with Greek resident on July 13; interview with Greek resident on July 19.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., *StoNisi*, “They block the road so that the buses to Moria do not pass [Κλείνουν τον δρόμο για να μην περάσουν τα λεωφορεία προς Μόρια],” January 3, 2020. <https://www.stonisi.gr/post/7292/kleinoun-ton-dromo-gia-na-mhn-perasoun-ta-lewforeia-pros-moria-ektakto>.

⁵⁵ Interview with Greek resident on July 19.

between specific aid organizations in interviews, suggesting that perceptions of NGOs were not only informed by universal generalizations: rather, these residents' judgments relied on specific evaluations of aid organizations' intentions, behaviors, and structures. I center my analysis on three categories of criteria that, I argue, resulted in eventual hostile views of aid and NGO workers: perceptions of procedural fairness, truthfulness and deceit, and altruism. Ultimately, I argue that these hostile reactions ought to be regarded as an expression of a perceived 'legitimacy gap' that humanitarian aid organizations possessed, relative to the sovereignty they exercise over populations—even those populations that are not the *de jure* responsibility of aid organizations.

The moral and emotional criteria upon which aid workers were evaluated often escaped their notice—perhaps because so few aid workers had befriended Greeks beyond their professional interactions in the humanitarian sector. In one interview, a provider who worked in mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) extolled the many positive connections she had made with Greek residents on the island—then, elaborating further, she conceded that those connections were limited to transactional interactions in shops and cafes.⁵⁶ Their private lives often included friendships and social relationships with refugees, depending on their organization's policies for conduct, but rarely included non-humanitarian Greeks—humanitarian aid workers kept to different shops and different restaurants, and frequented them at different times. A legal advocate from a Spanish-speaking country, analogized the lack of engagement with the Greek locals to the social bubbles that international students experience while studying abroad:

We don't interact with the local community so much. It's like doing a master's abroad a little bit, like I did my master's in [the United States] and I didn't feel like I was in the US. I was with people from all over the world all the time, speaking different languages, eating food from different countries. It's like a bubble setting...So I feel like this is somehow a little bit like that. Humanitarian workers tend to stick together, especially the ones who are here long-term, before things were changing a lot...So, I don't have interaction

⁵⁶ Interview with aid worker on June 17.

with the local communities beyond what's needed to do my job. The hospital, or the camp authorities. Not necessarily with the communities.⁵⁷

The aid worker explained that local Mytileneans were rarely employed in her organization—not by any choice of the organization, from her perspective, but as a result of their lack of interest in NGOs. As we shall see in the following section, while aid workers' and Greeks who lived on the island maintained their distance, many Greeks maintained an interest in NGOs and formed moral judgments about their activities.

Moral Evaluations of Humanitarian Aid Workers

A. Greek Residents: Perceptions of Procedural Fairness, Truthfulness, and Altruism

In 2018, an American woman named Ariel Ricker, who worked in legal aid on the Greek islands, was approached by an English-speaking camera crew and a far-right Canadian journalist in disguise.⁵⁸ Based in Mytilene, Fricker's organization of attorneys and volunteers offered pro bono services to asylum seekers on Lesbos ahead of their initial asylum applications with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). After the media crew's inquiries, she agreed to describe her work in "an informal conversation," her organization later said.⁵⁹ In a video interview later released by the far-right journalist, Fricker analogized the asylum interview process, which required the client explain the circumstances of their persecution abroad to an EASO officer, to a form of theatre. "All of this acting is a shield," she said. "For them to get through, they must act their part in the theatre."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Interview with aid worker on June 24.

⁵⁸ This account is derived from several interviews and contemporary media reports.

⁵⁹ David Axe, "Refugee Advocate Gets Rape Threats After Right-Wing Sting Video," *The Daily Beast*, November 27, 2018. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/refugee-advocate-gets-rape-threats-after-right-wing-sting-video>.

⁶⁰ Chris Tomlinson, "Pro-Migrant NGO Caught on Tape Admitting to Helping Migrants Lie to Claim Asylum," *Breitbart News*, November 15, 2018. <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2018/11/15/pro-migrant-ngo-caught-tape-admitting-helping-migrants-lie-claim-asylum/>.

Later that year, an article appeared in the far-right American outlet Breitbart News with the headline “Pro-Migrant NGO Caught on Tape Admitting to Helping Migrants Lie to Claim Asylum.”⁶¹ An edited video recording of Ricker’s video seemed to suggest that she had trained “migrants” to adjust their personal narratives of persecution in order to receive a positive asylum decision as soon as possible. As individuals involved in the episode described, the video touched a nerve in Lesbos, and went viral on local Greek-language social media platforms. One repost of the video (on Facebook, with Greek subtitles) was dubbed “NGO trains refugees in Greece to get asylum” [*ΜΚΟ εκπαιδεύει πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα για να πάρουν άσυλο*], and received tens of thousands of views.⁶² Fricker shut down the organization’s website and social media accounts, but damage had already been done. Representatives at other legal aid organizations in Lesbos described the secondary effects of the incident:

The parliament ordered an investigation of our organization, and all the cases of people who are working with us...Legal NGOs were affected, of course, because it was not just us, it was very much the government’s pitch that NGOs are here to make up these things, that they are teaching migrants how to lie so they can pass their interviews.⁶³

The outrage among Greeks to media portrayals of the Ricker case—a reaction to “training NGOs to get asylum”—spoke to a broader narrative that Greek interviewees articulated about humanitarian organizations: that such organizations undermined *procedural fairness*. When Greeks’ outrage was driven by concerns that NGOs had compromised the due process standards of applying for asylum, then those concerns hinged not on the additional aid that NGOs offered to refugees but the fact that refugees enjoyed a greater ease of the process for receiving aid compared to Greeks.⁶⁴ Concerns about procedural fairness also colored Greeks’ judgments of

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See, e.g., Η Ελλάδα σε απόπνιση, Facebook post, March 15, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=255835055432346>.

⁶³ Interview with aid worker on June 24.

⁶⁴ In fact, nearly every aid worker interviewee involved in refugee law indicated that the reverse was the case: refugees in the asylum process or who were contesting a criminal charge of human trafficking enjoyed far less procedural fairness compared to Greek citizens in the national justice system, or other forms of immigrants and

NGOs' role in welfare and healthcare services on the islands. One older Greek man I interviewed, a businessman, complained about the practices that NGOs employed to care for particularly vulnerable asylum seeker groups, such as unaccompanied minors and single women—by purchasing temporary housing in the city and allowing refugees to stay there. The man felt that this cheated locals, by allowing NGOs to serve as a formal broker for some populations on the island and not others.⁶⁵

The Ricker case highlighted another theme of interviews with Greek residents: perceptions of *truthfulness and deceit*. The chaotic proliferation of aid organizations in M.R.C., especially from 2015 to 2017, occasionally caused tension between staff at aid organizations who were concerned by other groups' apparent differences in their standards of professional conduct. This tension spilled into rumor among Greek residents of Mytilene, who frequently referred to the “black money” that NGOs made by participating in the humanitarian situation.⁶⁶

B. Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Moral Deservingness and Relational Equality

“Is that thumb more ‘up’ or more or less equal?” I asked “Farhad.”⁶⁷ We were sitting at one of Mytilene's *kafeneios*, and the 19-year-old political asylee was describing his impressions of various aid organizations that were present in both Moria refugee camp and the city of Mytilene over the past three years. Over the next fifteen minutes, Farhad rated about a dozen aid organizations after I named them one by one. These were generally well-known aid

visitors. I depended in these interviews on Cabot (2014), an account of how “legal limbo” and procedural injustice in Greece create incentives for human rights lawyers to reformulate the narratives of clients' asylum cases.

⁶⁵ Interview with Greek resident on June 28.

⁶⁶ Interview with Greek resident on June 28; interview with Greek resident on July 19; interview with Greek resident on July 21. “Black money” in Greek can have two related meanings: first, to refer to cash transactions made that are undeclared on taxes, and second, to refer to any financial transactions with assets acquired through corrupt, illegal, or immoral means.

⁶⁷ Not his original name. Interview with refugee interviewee on June 23. This account derives from interviews and conversations with an anonymized individual with refugee status between June 23 and November 22.

organizations and NGOs that both of us were familiar with, but which only Farhad knew intimately, as an asylee and recipient of aid. A ‘thumbs up’ and ‘thumbs down’ indicated his approval or dislike. He had a mixed opinion of most humanitarian organizations, offering ratings that fell at subtly different angles in the middle.

Farhad was one of the refugees I came to know who proved the exception to the motorcycle rule. He had purchased his own used motorcycle in Mytilene at the age of eighteen, and since that age, he has lived independently, with Greek roommates and no immediate relatives. His family are political refugees from a Central Asian country who first sought asylum in Turkey, but they still experienced high risks of deportation there, back to their country of origin. So Farhad and his older brother crossed by dinghy from Turkey to Lesbos, in 2015, where they were disembarked along the coast north of Mytilene, on the side of the highway, by the Hellenic Coast Guard. They were first directed to MRC as unaccompanied minors— particularly vulnerable because no interpreters were available in Moria at the time for Turkish or Uzbek, the languages they spoke. After ten months in Moria, Farhad’s schooling in Greece began at the local Coast Guard academy at age sixteen, where he learned Greek and English from scratch.

With the language skills he learned at the academy, Farhad’s also began to develop more informed opinions about Greek migration policies and the humanitarian organizations that, in his view, often substantiated and legitimized those policies. Out of necessity, these opinions were largely socialized outside the classroom. Despite Mytilene’s central role in the “refugee crisis” that brought Farhad to Lesbos, the only time that teachers at the Coast Guard academy was in reference to the displacement of ethnic Greeks from Smyrna in 1922.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Interview with refugee interviewee on November 22.

VI: Accounts of Reducing Prejudice: Why Emotion Matters for Civil Society

“Maybe globalization is possible, if we can see it.”

— local businessman and resident of Mytilene

Moral Communication and the Realization of Cosmopolitan Values

On July 3, 2022, I waited in Sapphus Square for two MSF workers to arrive in a battered sedan.⁶⁹ They were giving me a ride into rural central Lesbos, along with one young Afghan woman, to attend the rehearsal and subsequent evening performance of a self-described “intercultural choir” called Cantalaloun. The Afghan woman, who lived in Mavrovouni refugee camp, was a member of the choir, as were both MSF workers, and they were running late.⁷⁰ After interviewing one of the members of the choir, they had invited me to observe their rehearsals as an ethnographer and to witness the performance, which was the first of the season. Despite their enthusiasm for singing to strangers, the three members had never performed in such a rural area, and none knew what to anticipate in terms of an audience.

We roared along the small highway toward Kalloni, the interior bus hub of the island, before turning onto a dirt road lined with bitter orange trees. Our destination was an antiquities site, the late classical Temple of Messon, a sanctuary temple dedicated to Lesbos’ three patron gods: Zeus, Dionysus, and Cybele of Anatolia.⁷¹ Leaders of Cantalaloun had negotiated for access some months earlier with the Lesbos Ephorate of Antiquities, who agreed to keep the site

⁶⁹ This account also draws from field notes, photographs, and video documentation from July 3.

⁷⁰ Interviews with refugee participants in the choir, June 29 and July 3.

⁷¹ See “Archaeological site of sanctuary of Messon in Agia Paraskevi” in Thematic Index of Archaeological Sites, Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports (accessed December 18, 2022).
http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh355.jsp?obj_id=2560.

open late that evening, and permitted the group to bring their equipment and lighting to the site for a public choral performance.⁷²

A man in a white polo shirt stamped with the Greek Ministry of Culture logo surveyed the entrance behind the ticket counter of the closed archeological museum, donning an N95 mask. About 30 performers were present at this particular concert, and the majority were Greek residents of Lesvos; but there was also significant representation of foreign aid workers, and refugees, in their numbers.⁷³ Cantalaloun's total membership was larger: some aid workers and Greek residents who belonged to the choir came to watch the concert, but, as they explained, they had not attended enough rehearsals of the programming to feel ready to participate. The singers wore collared t-shirts and shorts and summer dresses, in solid shades of white and black, which stood out against the white bases of Ionian columns and the temple's floor marble that served as a backdrop for the stage. I helped attend to some of the singers' children while they rehearsed. As typical for Greece, an array of stray cats sat among the columns, watching.

Just before the performance, the singers began murmuring to each other in excitement: parked motorcycles, and cars as battered as the MSF workers' sedan, lined the route down the slopes of the hillside road. The grass surrounding the Temple of Messon was filling with people. The audience surprised the leadership of Cantalaloun, as the numbers seemed to exceed even their most ambitious estimates for attendance, as one of the directors described later.⁷⁴ At least several hundred concertgoers were present. The details of the "storytelling concert" had spread in advance through word-of-mouth, in flyers posted in the nearby villages, and with the promoting efforts of the antiquities ephorate.⁷⁵ Some audience members were residents of Agia Paraskevi, a nearby inland village, but others had driven to the remote temple site from villages across central

⁷² Interview with Greek resident on July 13.

⁷³ Interview with refugee choir participant on June 29; interview with Greek resident on July 13.

⁷⁴ Interview with Greek resident on July 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Lesvos. There were grandmothers, young couples, and single men sitting on the grass, smoking cigarettes and hushing their dogs.

At 22:00, the lights dimmed. Speakers announced in Greek that the theme of the concert was “women who return.” Their musical group aimed to include “people from all over the world in one corner,” including refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iran and Afghanistan, who were participating.⁷⁶ During the performance, the choir leaders continued to speak to the audience solely in Greek, but other songs in the program were sang in Farsi, Georgian, and Romani. The arrangements were polyphonic and harmonies, with complex melodies, call-and-response structures, and occasional percussive elements. The lyrics were explicitly political. The choir members sang “Canción sin miedo,” a Mexican feminist anthem originally performed in the norteño style, translated into Greek and rearranged into polyphonic parts. They performed a traditional Romani folk song, introduced as a celebration of Roma culture—a rarity for a popular audience to encounter in a public performance in Greece.⁷⁷

One song took me aback, because its subject was a person I once knew: a gender-non-conforming individual who went by Dimitra, who lived in Skala Sykaminias until she was found dead, in 2021.⁷⁸ The song was written by a friend of Dimitra’s who also belonged to the choir who had dedicated the song to her friend’s memory. The songwriter rose solemnly to tell the story of Dimitra to the audience before the song began. It was past midnight by the time the choir finished their program, but the grass was as crowded as when the performance had started. At 00:30, the audience stood in unison, and applauded with enthusiasm. Some were visibly moved.

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⁷⁶ Records from field notes on July 3.

⁷⁷ Photographs included in Appendix 1.

⁷⁸ See Stacey Harris-Papaioannou, “Marginalized, Victimized Transgender Greek Found Dead,” *GreekReporter.com*, June 11, 2021. <https://greekreporter.com/2021/06/11/marginalized-victimized-transgender-greek-found-dead/>.

Cantalaloun, and organizations that share some of its characteristics, challenge the notion that Greeks' negative judgments of humanitarian organizations on Lesbos were inevitable. Their example illustrates how uses of emotional and moral criteria to evaluate was not a unique property of Greek residents: aid organizations, too, could wield emotional and moral logic with the goal of instilling positive perceptions about refugees and NGO workers among host communities. To examine these groups' goals, structures, and outcomes, this section draws on testimonies of local residents who encountered the strategies employed by these organizations, and on observed accounts of emotional responses to these organizations' practices—like the enthusiastic reception given to Cantalaloun. Both sources of qualitative data speak to locals' willingness to engage seriously with the principles that these organizations articulated: principles of cosmopolitanism, moral suasion, and legitimacy undergirded by democratic responsiveness. The primary academic aims in studying these organizations' successes, then, are to yield theory-building and hypothesis-generating insights about the conditions under which humanitarian organizations might reduce, rather than contribute to, anti-immigrant sentiment.

The political tone of the July 3rd performance was typical for Cantalaloun. The organization had a conscious political identity since forming in 2016, after two female friends who grew up in Mytilene participated in an “intercultural festival” that a humanitarian NGO hosted near MRC. One of the women, “Pinelopi,” an elementary school teacher trained in musicology, had volunteered to give singing lessons to refugees who attended the festival.⁷⁹ Her friend belonged to a Greek NGO called Lesbos Solidarity, which supported both locals and refugees on Lesbos with psychosocial services and community art practices. After observing the results of the lessons, the friend suggested turning them into a permanent choir—for refugees, but also for any Greeks or foreigners who wished to join the organization. Pinelopi, who had

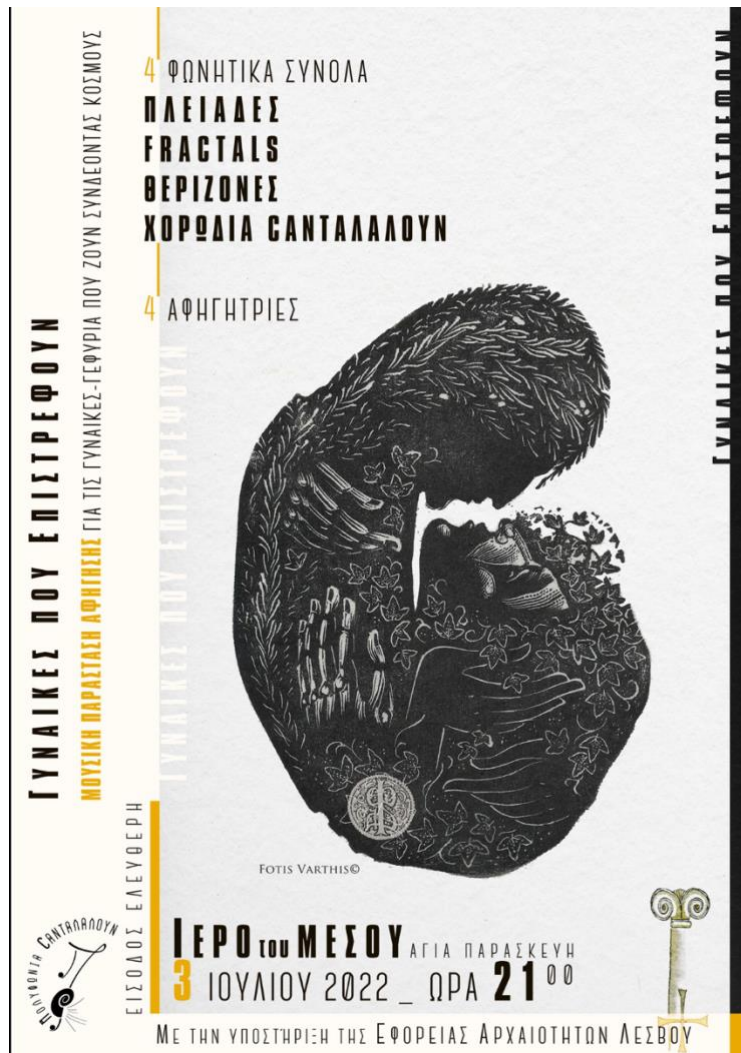
⁷⁹ Not her original name. The following account derives from an interview with an anonymized Greek resident on July 13.

enjoyed the lessons tremendously, agreed, and the friend reserved an indoor space operated by Lesvos Solidarity where the group could hold rehearsals. Pinelopi began teaching singing lessons in English and Greek at the Lesvos Solidarity site, open to anyone who wished to join.

The choir supported itself through individual voluntary dues of five to ten euros per month, provided by members. The decision to seek funding from individual dues rather than seeking contributions from external and potentially wealthier donors was the result of a deliberative process between all its members. They decided that a dependence on external donors, particularly from large humanitarian or philanthropic organizations, would violate the choir's own ethical principles — and risk restricting their independence. Many members believed that UN-affiliated INGOs were part of a political and bureaucratic system that subordinated refugees.⁸⁰

The growing participation of refugees from MRC raised questions within the choir about the costs of participation—namely related to the price of the bus ticket from Moria to Mytilene, an expensive trip for refugees to make in order to attend just one mandatory rehearsal a week. After deliberating, the choir decided to direct its membership contributions fund toward purchasing bus tickets for those within its membership who lived in MRC. By its third active year, the choir had expanded to seventy people; half of them were refugees, who learned about the choir through word-of-mouth and other refugees' recruitment within their social networks in MRC. The other half of the choir was comprised of Greeks, including a substantial number with positions in the public education system, and humanitarian aid workers.

⁸⁰ Interview with refugee choir participant on June 29.



Cantalaloun's flyer for the July 21 concert at the Temple of Messon, in rural central Lesbos. Horizontal text (translated in English): "Women Who Return: A musical narrative performance of women-bridges who live connecting worlds."

I met Pinelopi for lunch at one of the only restaurants in Mytilene that serves Middle Eastern food. (The restaurant was founded by Iranian exiles, and consciously labeled itself as “operated by locals and refugees.”). When I described Cantalaloun as an “organization,” Pinelopi objected; instead, she preferred the term “choral union.” The members also did not describe themselves as belonging a traditional ‘civil society’ organization. One Greek choir member said when asked about Cantalaloun’s purpose, said simply, “We sing together, and we foster artistic

events, not only musical.” Pinelopi still identified their group as a “humanitarian” one, sharing similar motivations to other humanitarian actors and NGO organizations who assisted refugees.⁸¹ But the choir’s intentions and audience distinguished it from these NGOs too. Since its origins, Cantalaloun dedicated itself to the political principles of cosmopolitanism, moral suasion, and a belief that I believe is best captured by the phrase “aesthetic equality”—the principle that the cultural output of any single national, social, or ethnic group is not intrinsically better than any other group. A native of Lesvos, Pinelopi articulated the other-regarding nature of those principles in describing her own goals in founding the group:

...that this atmosphere of, we have more in common than that divides us, this model and this instinct is not only of people of common mind like this. That my hope is that it will influence other people from other walks of life...that maybe they didn't really think of [this idea], but by coming face to face with the choir, that it has so many different colors, languages, origins, songs, that probably it will make Greek society, and the Greek local society a bit more open. But, it takes time... it doesn't happen easily from day to day.⁸²

The choir’s intended audience was Greek citizens who did not agree with these principles. Per Pinelopi’s description, the members of Cantalaloun used “storytelling performances” to reach these citizens; through narrative, visual imagery, melodies and harmonies, they could communicate their cosmopolitan values even to a reluctant audience. Like the July 3rd performance, these performances involved providing narrative introductions to musical works that contextualized their moral and political meaning. Through the process of “coming ‘face to face’ with the choir,” as Pinelopi put it, the choir’s audience could imagine a possible encounter with foreigners who offered artistic products of intellectual and cultural value. The principles were also integral to their choices of musical repertoire. Songs were suggested from within the membership, and were approved by the directors if the pieces met two

⁸¹ Interview with Greek resident on July 13.

⁸² Ibid.

conditions: aesthetic quality, and a meaning that cohered with and conveyed the choir's cosmopolitan political message.

Cantalaloun's singers were not the only 'humanitarians' that realized the advantage of visual performance and communication as an argument for cosmopolitanism principles. Several other interviewees pointed to that form of moral communication as a means transcend differences in language between Greeks and foreigners, appealing to positive moral and emotional principles that might in turn instill positive evaluations of aid workers and refugees. One organization that I came to know in my first month of fieldwork sought to promote circus education on the Greek islands, in integrated courses with refugees and locals—a tall order, considering how few refugees were integrated in the Lesbos public school system in the first place. The educators offered circus training sessions, with acrobatic and music games, free for any children who wished to participate, at the playground in Agias Irinis ("WiFi Park"). Roma children in the park participated enthusiastically, and became some of the performers' most regular pupils.⁸³

In addition to these public training sessions, the circus group decided to arrange visits to public schools across the island, regardless of whether refugees had integrated there. As one leader of the group described, choosing these policies was a deliberate outcome that emerged from the principles of the organization:

To work with locals and refugees always has been the goal, because we think, with circus, it's possible to do and it's a beautiful thing to do. We have heard also that there was a lot of tension between NGOs and locals... But we had the possibility to address something to them....So sure, we came for the refugees in the first place, but it was obvious for us that the locals would be an important part of our work. And at the end, as a goal, to work in a mixed group, which is, as I say, some places happening, some places not happening, because we had to adapt. We don't have our own space... when we have been working in the camp, we are not talking with locals.⁸⁴

⁸³ Interview with aid worker on June 25.

⁸⁴ Interview with aid worker on June 25.

While the circus performer group had permission to work within MRC, they chose to decline that permission. Instead, the group made a conscious decision to focus their services in other regions of the island's social landscape, where they were most likely to encounter different groups in the same space. Hence, the circus performers turned to the park, placing their practices in the center of a public space; they wanted to “show them” that “yes, it's really possible” for Roma children to play with refugee and Greek children.⁸⁵ In the process, another site of integration opened: the parents of the children playing, who sat on the benches next to the park together and spoke to each other.

Even this gesture of cosmopolitanism served as a visual performance; Greek pedestrians in Agias Irinis on weekends often stopped and stood in place to observe with surprise the scene of “mixity” that the circus performer described several times as “beautiful.” The idea of “mixity” as a normative and emotional ideal had resonance with Pinelopi's instinct of the “face to face” value of cosmopolitan choirs for a Greek audience. In both cases, “mixed” groups had a particular emotional register for the audience: to elicit reactions of what I call the “pleasure of affiliation.”

Positive Evaluations of Legitimacy, Sovereignty, and Responsiveness

A final distinction between Cantalaloun and the circus performers on one hand, and other humanitarian groups on the other, lay in their diverging understanding of eligibility for services, and to whom they ought to consider themselves responsive and accountable as an organization. Cantalaloun's constituency included Greek locals, refugees, and aid workers, and their primary audience was purposefully one of skeptical Greek residents. They were also democratically responsive: the organization relied on deliberative processes to arrive at decisions. They

⁸⁵ Interview with aid worker on June 25; interview with aid worker on June 30.

presented the results of their labor to the general Greek public, answering in part the concerns about truthfulness and deceit; and they produced a cultural good of significant emotional value for their audience.

One source of legitimacy inarguably came from the advantages of personal credibility, which by often overlapped with the salience of local identity. Pinelopi's particular identity as a lifelong Lesvos resident bore fruit, for instance, as she attempted to organize the choir into its first concert, hosted in the amphitheater below the Armed Officers' Club.⁸⁶ She could depend on social networks within the local municipality and the police to ensure that the concert would go unhindered.

VII. Conclusion

Remaining Barriers to Curbing Hostility Against Aid Workers and Refugees

Over the phone, in one of my final interviews with residents of the Northern Aegean islands, I spoke with "Farhad," the 19-year-old political refugee. He reflected on his experiences in Lesvos after having left the island to attend university elsewhere in Greece. For Farhad, the island felt paradoxically like a place of tremendous personal growth and terrible trauma, a site where many events that he witnessed and experienced felt rooted in wild oscillations of morality and emotion, "all of them, one or the other, extreme."⁸⁷ Farhad was not alone among my research subjects in expressing ambivalence toward the situation in Lesvos. Many aid workers and refugees whom I interviewed articulated a similar uncertainty, questioning whether the events of the past seven years served more as warning, as anomaly, or as success story. The apparent relative peace on the island today — between the locals and few refugees that remain — is heartening to some of

⁸⁶ Interview with Greek resident on July 13.

⁸⁷ Interview with Farhad on November 22.

these interviewees, and disturbing to others, given that the environment of peace exists in a region deprived of most aid organizations and refugees.

Lesvos and Samos have run the gamut of extreme emotional and moral situations since 2015, when Farhad first arrived on the island. That year, as the European Union's responses to people in need on its shores proved inadequate, a ragtag group of humanitarian workers and volunteers responded to assist asylum seekers at sea, along coastlines, and in cities and refugee camps. These volunteers worked all across Europe, particularly in Greece, Italy, Malta, Germany, and Spain. More than one hundred thousand people are estimated to have participated in this effort, moving freely within the EU's internal borders, under protections of the same legal regime that enforced the forced ejection of human beings in its external ones. Often idealistic and inexperienced, these humanitarian volunteers nonetheless took on critical responsibilities in search-and-rescue, psychosocial support, legal advocacy, medical care, musical choirs, fitness training, circus performances, and language education, when no other actors on the ground would. But despite these aid organizations' salience to one of the world's gravest humanitarian crises since World War II, their efforts have been largely overlooked and understudied in contemporary political science.

This study has attempted in one small way to correct that oversight. Through ethnographic research on Lesvos and Samos, aimed to offer hypothesis-generating insights about the roles played by "grassroots" humanitarian groups play in politics and society where they base operations. The humanitarian groups' arrival in "refugee hotspots" in Greece contributed to social and economic transformations within the communities they were embedded, bringing significant (although not universal) perceptions of positive economic effects. In the wake of these NGO-born transformations, new 'winners' and 'losers' emerged in the East Lesvos

economy, driven by pioneering households and firms that adopted strategies to materially benefit from refugees' and humanitarians' arrival.

Yet the transformations in this humanitarian economy did not match neatly onto patterns of support and hostility exhibited on the island from 2015 to 2020. Some individual Greeks who had no expected material benefit from the arrival of refugees and aid workers still supported their presence; other Greeks, who did accrue material benefits from these arrivals, still reacted to their presence with intense opposition. Other traditional explanations of hostility toward refugees, meanwhile, inadequately accounted for the *temporal* variation in expressions of hostility, and why hostility increased even as the number of refugees on the island decreased and fluctuated. Finally, none of these interpretations offered a convincing explanation of patterns of anti-aid worker hostility, harassment, and violence, patterns that were a central feature of the 2020 riots and attacks on the Northern Aegean islands.

The individuals who spoke with me on Lesbos and Samos about their communities testified to an alternate explanation for these patterns of hostility: judgments of humanitarian actors according to *emotional and moral criteria*. Greek residents judged aid workers not merely on the basis of affected interest in the form of material benefits, but based on criteria of whether their behaviors and intentions indicated desirable moral and emotional practices: procedural fairness, truthfulness or deceit, and altruistic behavior. Refugees evaluated aid workers on the basis of their rejection of narrow deservingness principles, and their articulation of relational equality. While both these judgments ended in negative evaluations, some aid organizations, for their part, also engaged in moral and emotional logic—in the form of visual arguments for more cosmopolitan principles, calling on audiences to experience the “pleasure of affiliation” for engaging in a broader ethical project on the basis of cosmopolitan values.

The struggle over immigrants' and NGOs' legal and social recognition continues in Greece. On the island of Samos, which I visited in August, makeshift tents and shelters once rested on the hills above the port of Vathy—a free but impoverished refugee camp, exposed to the elements. Those tents and shelters have since vanished. They have been replaced by the European Union's latest solution to irregular migration, which was opened in September 2021 — the first Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC), opened on Samos. CCACs are new “closed” facilities for asylum seekers, presented as an alternative to the “hotspot” model, surrounded by 24-hour security and barbed-wire fence, and prohibited for exit without a valid I.D., which many of the asylum seekers forced to move to the CCAC in Samos do not possess (Samos Advocacy Collective and Europe Must Act 2021). For these reasons, Samos, at the time that I visited, had far less to offer for an ethnographic researcher than previously expected. After all, how can one research expressions of anti-refugee hostility when the visibility of those refugees has been relegated to the walls of a CCAC?

While my argument has concerned the emotional and moral elements of hostility upon contact between two groups, I close the essay with a reflection on these lost data points of Samos island. The absence of aid organizations that engage in these emotional appeals on Samos points to a significant and necessary condition for such organizations to emerge: the existence or opportunity for any contact mechanism, even a flawed one, to exist at all. If qualitative field researchers cannot access populations in a divided society, on account of physical, social, and legal barriers, how can those populations expect to come into contact with each other? As Closed Controlled Access Centers proliferate across other “refugee hotspots” in the EU and abroad, opportunities for positive emotional and moral contact will become further diminished.

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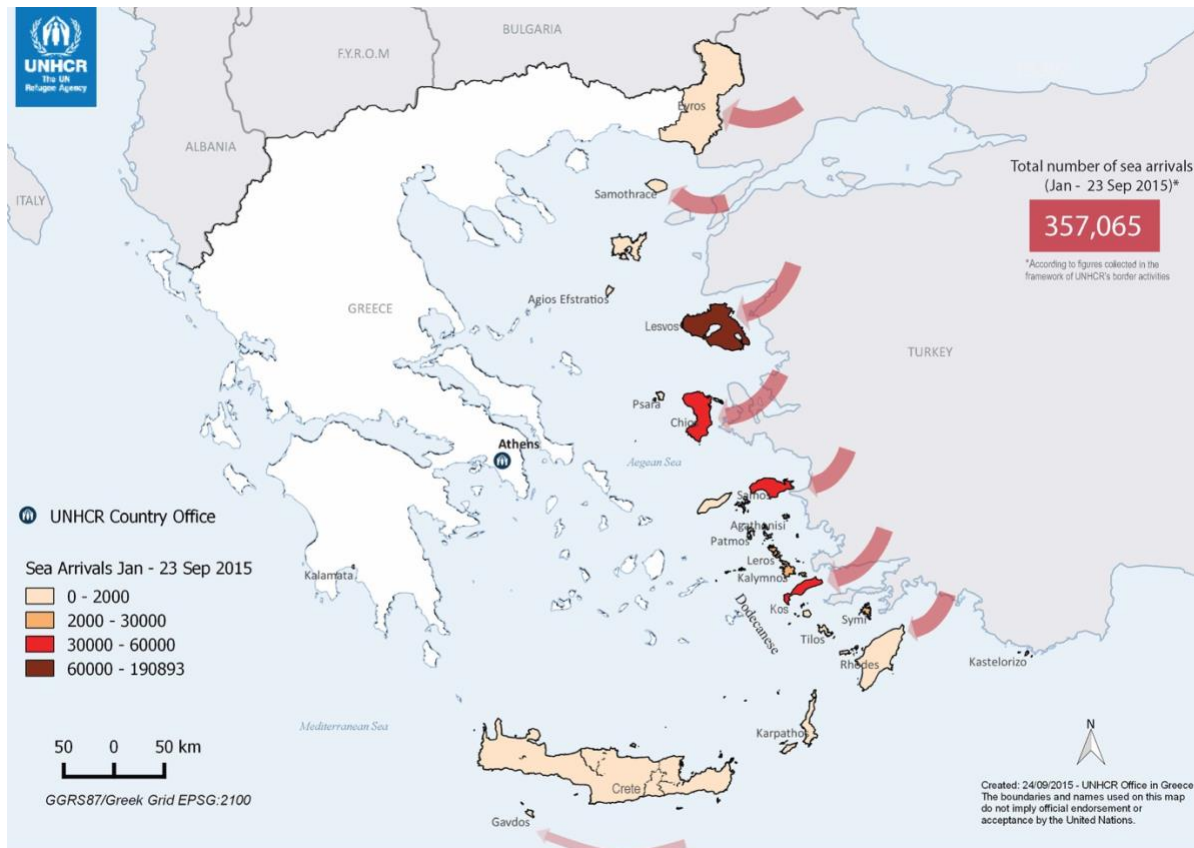
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List of Abbreviations

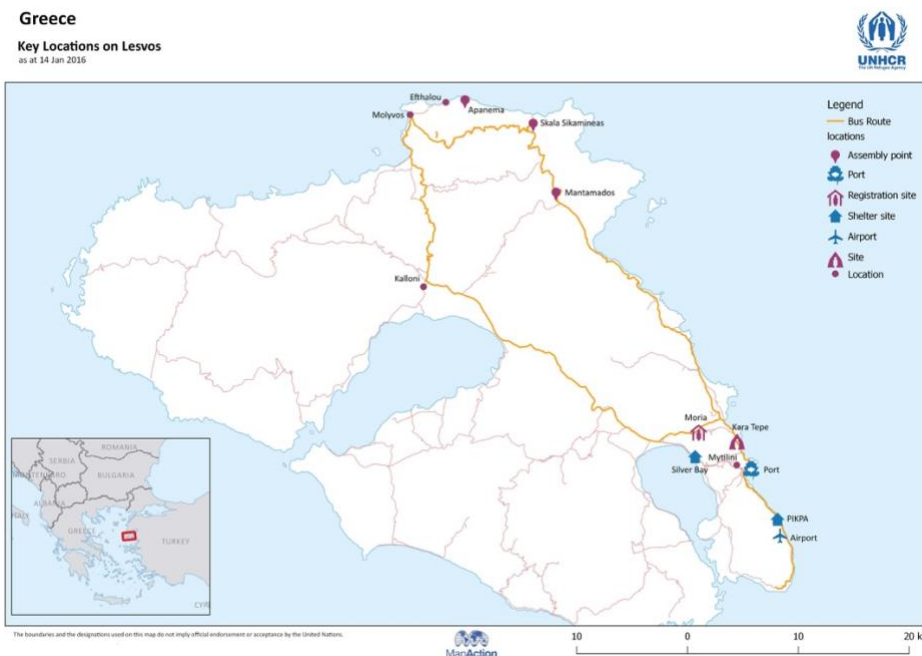
CCAC	Closed Controlled Access Centre
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services
MRC	Moria Refugee Camp
MSF	Médécins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Appendix 1: Maps, Photographs, and Figures

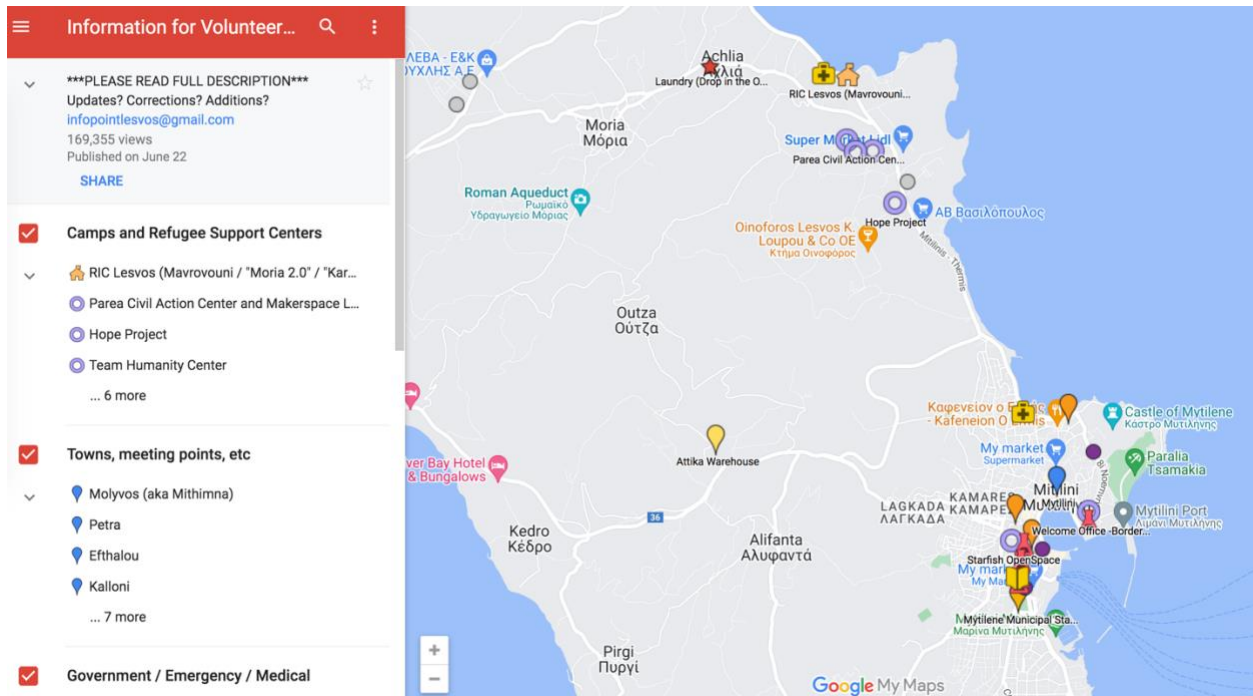
Map 1. Aegean Sea arrivals of asylum seekers in 2015. Courtesy of UNHCR.



Map 2. Humanitarian response locations on Lesbos, as documented by UNHCR. January 2016.
(Kara Tepe and Moria sites closed in 2020.) Courtesy of UNHCR.



Map 3. Community-made map for an audience of other volunteers and humanitarian aid personnel who work in Mytilene area. Location of Mavrovouni refugee camp represented as orange building symbol. (Businesses listed in community map are noted as “refugee-friendly.”) June 2022. Courtesy of Information Point for Lesbos Volunteers.



Map 4. Mavrovouni Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), built on former Greek military site. September 2021. Courtesy of Legal Centre Lesbos.



Figure 1. Common political graffiti and slogans in Mytilene. June – August 2022.

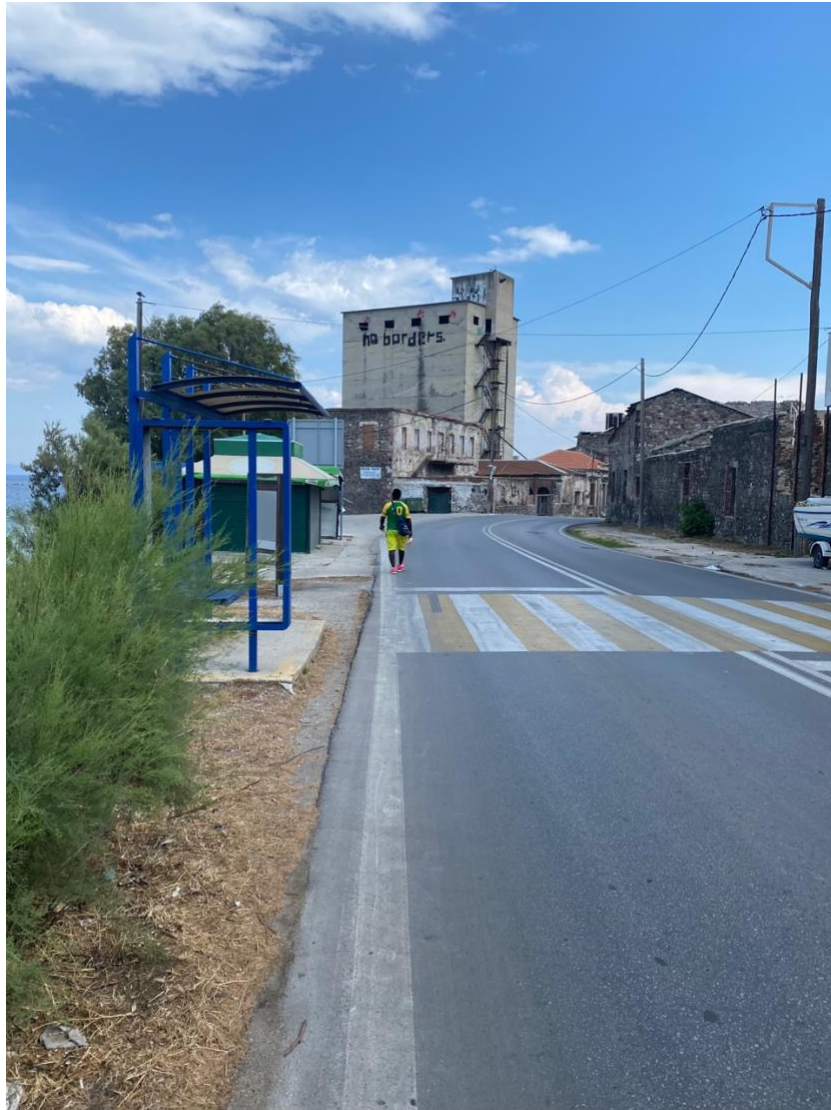




Figure 2. Many aid workers express a preference to frequent “refugee-friendly” businesses and kafeneios, a reputation signaled by displaying statements of support or “refugee-friendly” events in their public windows. Here, a kafeneio advertises a local protest against pushback practices in the Hellenic Coast Guard scheduled for July 2nd, 2022.



Figure 3. Aid workers and asylum seekers play volleyball in Paralia Tsamakia, which they call “One Euro Beach.” July 2022.



Figure 4. Members of Cantalaloun, an “intercultural polyphonic choir,” rehearse for a performance based around feminist and cosmopolitan political values near a group of inland villages in rural central Lesvos. July 2022.



Appendix 2: Interview Dates, Locations, and Details

NUMBER	PARTICIPANTS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	GENDER	AGE (approx.)	NATIONAL STATUS	Where Interviewed	Language of Interview	Recorded?
1	Aid Worker_1	17-Jun-22	F	20s	France	Lesvos	English	Yes
2	Aid Worker_2	19-Jun-22	F	30s	Netherlands	Lesvos (remote)	English	Yes
3	Aid Worker_3	20-Jun-22	M	40s	Norway	Lesvos (remote)	English	No
4	Aid Worker_4	22-Jun-22	M	30s	Netherlands	Lesvos	English	Yes
5	Aid Worker_5	24-Jun-22	F	30s	Argentina	Lesvos	English	Yes
6	Aid Worker_6	25-Jun-22	M	40s	France, Germany	Lesvos (remote)	English	Yes
7	Local_Government_1	27-Jun-22	M	50	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
8	Local_2	28-Jun-22	M	60s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
9	Refugee_1	29-Jun-22	F	30s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English	Yes
10	Aid Worker_7	30-Jun-22	F	20s	France	Lesvos	English	Yes
11	Aid Worker_8	4-Jul-22	M	30s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
12	Aid Worker_9	4-Jul-22	F	30s	France, Canada	Lesvos	English	Yes
13	Refugee_2	5-Jul-22	M	30s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English	Yes
14	Refugee_3	6-Jul-22	M	20s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English / Pashto	Yes
15	Government_1	7-Jul-22	M, M	50s, 40s	Austria	Lesvos	English	Yes
16	Local_3	8-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
17	Local_4	9-Jul-22	F	50s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
18	Local_5	11-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
19	Local_6	11-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece, Russia	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
20	Refugee_4	12-Jul-22	M	30s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English	Yes
21	Refugee_5	12-Jul-22	F	20s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English / Arabic	Yes
22	Local_7	12-Jul-22	F	30s	Greece	Lesvos (remote)	English	Yes
23	Local_8	12-Jul-22	F	40s	Greece	Lesvos (remote)	Greek	Yes
24	Local_9	13-Jul-22	F	55	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
25	Local_10	13-Jul-22	M	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
26	Local_Government_2	14-Jul-22	M, M	50s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
27	Local_11	15-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece	Lesvos	Greek	Yes
28	Refugee_6	15-Jul-22	F	20s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English	Yes
29	Local_12	18-Jul-22	F	30s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
30	Government_2	19-Jul-22	F	30s	Greece, USA	Lesvos	English	No
31	Local_13	19-Jul-22	F	60s	Greece, USA	Lesvos	English	Yes
32	Local_14	19-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
33	Aid Worker_10	20-Jul-22	M	30s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
34	Local_15	21-Jul-22	F	50s	Greece	Lesvos	Greek	Yes
35	Aid Worker_11	21-Jul-22	F	30s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
36	Government_3	21-Jul-22	M	40s	Greece	Lesvos	English	No
37	Local_16	21-Jul-22	F	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	No
38	Local_17	21-Jul-22	M	40s	Greece	Lesvos	Greek	Yes
39	Local_18	22-Jul-22	M	28	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
40	Local_19	22-Jul-22	M	70s	Greece, Australia	Lesvos	English / Greek	Yes
41	Local_20	22-Jul-22	F		Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	No
42	Local_21	25-Jul-22	M	40s	Greece	Lesvos	English	Yes
43	Aid Worker_12	8-Aug-22	F	30s	Belgium	Samos	English	Yes
44	Aid Worker_13	8-Aug-22	M	70s	United States of Ame	Samos	English	Yes
45	Aid Worker_14	9-Aug-22	F	30s	United Kingdom	Samos	English	Yes
46	Local_22	9-Aug-22	F, M	40s, 60s	Greece	Samos	English	Yes
47	Refugee_7	10-Aug-22	M	40s	Unnamed	Lesvos	English	No
48	Local_23	10-Aug-22	M	20s	Greece	Lesvos	English / Greek	No
49	Refugee_8	22-Nov-22	M	19	Unnamed	Athens (remote)	English	Yes

Appendix 3: Interview Materials

Initial Script for Semi-Structured Interviews

A. Consent

- At the beginning of the interview, I will read my consent form with my interview subjects. They can indicate verbal or written agreement.

B. Why Join a Volunteer Aid Organization?

1. Could you describe where you grew up, and your educational background?
2. Is there a national or cultural identity that is important to you?
3. How did you first hear about aid organizations in the Mediterranean, in general?
4. What was your opinion of these organizations, upon first learning of them?
5. How did you first hear about [current affiliate aid organization]? Why did you join?
6. Before joining, would you describe yourself as engaged in immigration politics?
7. Do you believe that your prior political beliefs influenced your decision to join this organization?

C. Purposes of Work in Aid Organization

1. What were your first impressions of this aid organization like?
2. What would a regular day of work look like for you?
3. What goals did your organization have in the longer-term?
4. Did you think the goals of your work connected to the locals in [Greek/Italian municipality]?
5. How did you view the goals of UN- or IGO-affiliated organizations in the Mediterranean?
6. Did those goals align with your organization's goals? Could you provide examples?
7. Did your goals in the organization change over time?

D. Structure of Aid Organizations

1. Who was the leader of your organization? What was your relationship like with this leader?
2. Did you feel personally close to the other individuals working in this organization?
3. Would you describe the organization as a bureaucracy?
5. Specifically, how did your organization choose to respond to [NGO restriction law]?
6. Did you feel that the structure of your organization affected the people you assisted (a benefit or a detriment)?
7. Are there differences between the structure of your organization, and the structure of a UN- or IGO-affiliated organization?
8. What about EU- or state-affiliated organizations?
9. When would your organization decide to leave a certain refugee-arrival setting or situation of similar need? What was that decision-making process like?

E. Relations with Authorities / Greek/Italian Citizens in Site of Operation

1. Did you interact with local authorities [Coast Guard/police]? What was your relationship like?
2. Did you interact with locals in [Greek/Italian municipality]? Did you get to know any of them well?
3. Do you think your presence changed the way that locals felt about the refugee situation?

Yale University

Recruitment Materials for Participation in a Research Study

I. Sample Scripts for Email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Verbal Messages

a) Snowball Sampling:

Dear Aid Worker/Asylum Seeker/Local Greek national,

I hope all is well. My name is Tyler Jager, and I'm in this region as a researcher affiliated with Yale University. My research concerns how aid organizations are perceived in your community, and how those perceptions inform perceptions of refugees. It consists of confidential interviews and observation with aid workers and other members of the community. I heard of your work through [another aid worker/interviewee], and wanted to reach out. I was wondering if you would be interested to speak with me about your work for the purposes of this research. I'm free on these dates, and quite flexible with my schedule.

[I am planning to speak to about 50 individuals, and have already spoken to around XX number.]

If you are interested in this research, you can contact me at +1 802-430-1996 or tyler.jager@yale.edu if you have any questions.

Many thanks,
Tyler Jager

b) Purposive Sampling:

Dear Representative of Aid Organization,

I hope all is well. My name is Tyler Jager, and I'm a researcher affiliated with Yale University in the United States, studying how humanitarian aid organizations in this region are perceived and build relationships in their communities. It consists of confidential interviews and observation with aid workers and other members of the community. I'm reaching out because I was wondering if I could visit your organization to learn from your work. I'm free on [these dates] and quite flexible with my schedule.

[I am planning to speak to 50-100 individuals, and have already spoken to around XX number.]

II. Recruitment Flyers (to pass to interview subjects on printed index cards)

Are you a humanitarian aid worker in this region? Do you have a relationship with the broader community where you work?

Yale University

If this describes your situation, then I would welcome your participation in a locally-based research project. I am a researcher affiliated with Yale University in the United States, conducting confidential interviews with aid workers in this region to understand how aid organizations facilitate relationships and reduce prejudice in their communities. If you are interested and willing to speak about your experiences, you can contact me at +1 802-430-1996, or e-mailing tyler.jager@yale.edu. You may also ask me any questions you like about this research in a confidential manner.

Please feel welcome to circulate this notice among fellow aid workers.

Yale University

Verbal/Online Informed Consent Script for Participation in a Research Study

IRB# 2000032837

Hi, my name is Tyler Jager and I'm a student at Yale University, in the United States. I wanted to chat because I'm conducting research on the relationships between aid workers and residents of this region. This will be an interview for social science research, and I am interviewing many people as I can, but my questions will focus on your specific experiences in particular. If it's okay with you, I'd also love to join you to observe your work. I expect that our conversation would last about one hour, or longer if you wish.

Our conversation may touch on some sensitive issues, or ones that are difficult to speak about. You can always tell me if you prefer not to answer a question or if you want to end our conversation. You can choose not to participate at any time for any reason, or choose not to answer any individual question without any penalties. Your decision whether to speak with me or not will have no consequences. With your permission, I will record our interview. If you do not want to be recorded, I will take notes.

I want to be sure you know that aside from the opportunity to share your experiences, the study may not benefit you directly. That said, I do hope that this research will add to our collective knowledge about assisting refugees and reducing prejudice.

Risks to you may be if there is a loss of confidentiality. I intend to keep all information that you share with me secure by using a code number in place of your name and keeping all information in a secure place.

I will keep our conversation confidential; I will only describe you as an aid worker. Only myself and my research advisor will have access to any identifying information from a confidential conversation. I would like to record your responses with a voice app on my phone, but if you prefer, I will not record and take handwritten notes. I will not share the recordings.

I save all digital information about this research on a secure platform [Yale Box] that's coded and protected by the Yale University server. I will code your responses by a number, and the code linking your number with your name will be stored in a locked folder. After my dissertation requirements are met, I will destroy the information you have shared with me, including the recordings and notes.

If you have any questions later about the study, you can contact me, Tyler Jager, at tyler.jager@yale.edu or on WhatsApp at +18024301996.

Finally, if you'd like to talk with someone other than myself or other researchers to discuss problems or concerns, to discuss situations in the event that a member of the research team is not available, or to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Yale University Human Subjects Committee, +1203-785-4688, human.subjects@yale.edu. Additional

Yale University

information is available at <https://your.yale.edu/research-support/human-research/research-participants/rights-research-participant>.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Would you like to participate in this research?

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Do I have your permission to voice record our interview?