13. SUBVERSIVE HUMANITARIANISM

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INTRODUCTION

Humanitarianism is commonly understood as a modern project with highly ambivalent moral and political implications (Barnett & Weiss 2008; Ticktin 2011). Proponents have for a long time hailed its universalist imperative to alleviate human suffering, regardless of the political beliefs and identities of those involved. Yet its opponents have written pertinent critiques on the power techniques through which it operates, and how its practices and discourses tend to perpetuate precisely the social and political structures that cause human suffering in the first place.

Most of these debates have taken place with a limited set of actors in mind: (I)NGOs and state agencies based in the global North, who provide aid to recipients in the South, usually in the event of an emergency or crisis (Calhoun 2008) (see also chapter 8 by Stroup on Humanitarian Organizations). Humanitarianism is often understood through a genealogy that situates its origins firmly within European modernity and traces its institutionalisation into international law and a series of leading international organisations. Other forms of essential, material support to populations in emergencies or protracted living conditions, have received much less attention or have even been delegitimised (Ager et al 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019; Jumbert & Pascucci 2021), and/or they have been studied through different conceptual frameworks (Della Porta & Steinhilper 2018; Feischmidt et al 2019; Fechter & Schwittay 2019; Schwiertz & Schwenken 2020; Verschraegen & Vandevoordt 2019b).

In recent years, however, scholars have drawn attention to other actors providing material and social support, often under conditions of - sometimes prolonged - emergencies. They have spawned a whole range of new concepts, some of which are embedded within studies of humanitarianism, such as 'new', 'volunteer' (Sandri 2018), and 'south-south' humanitarianism (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 2019), while others have emerged from neighbouring fields such as 'citizen aid' from development studies (Fichter & Schwittay 2019; see also chapter 14 by Choudhury Lahiri on Citizens Groups and Grassroots

Assistance) and 'inclusive solidarity' from social movement studies (Schwiertz & Schwenken 2019; see also chapter 12 by Marti I Puig and Alvarez on Solidarity Political Solidarity Movements).

The common thread throughout these studies, is that they show how the involvement of a-typical actors in humanitarian action often implies a departure from universalism and 'neutrality' as a guiding principle or hegemonic strategy. These actors are described as having the potential to put in place a more localized, 'thick' form of solidarity with a particular group of people. This means that these relations of support are embedded in social relations that recognise and build on people's biographical trajectories and socio-political subjectivities, rather than treating them as 'bodies' that need to be 'saved' (cf. Brun 2016).

Of course, this chapter has emerged from the specific positionality of its author. As a white, cis-gender man who has received higher education in the global North, I have conducted research among citizen collectives in West-Europe that are, broadly speaking, part of my own social milieu. Without a doubt, this has shaped the fieldwork I conducted, and limited its geographical scope. While my analyses are informed by the perspectives of people on the move, my own positionality – due to issues of access, language and ethical concerns – has led my research to gravitate towards the strategies of citizen collectives nonetheless. And while this chapter draws extensively on scholars working on places and with actors in the global South, the reflections I offer here remain inherently partial.

Analytically, this chapter draws on the concept of 'subversive humanitarianism', which I developed elsewhere as an ideal type to scrutinise to what extent grassroots forms of support can help us rethinking solidarity with refugees and illegalised migrants (Vandevoordt 2019, 2021a; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen 2019a). It is informed by fieldwork with citizen collectives in Europe that consciously try to overcome the challenges posed by humanitarianism and its critiques. In this contribution, however, I further explore whether and how we can reimagine humanitarianism as a moral and political project that has the potential of subverting established power relations between those providing and those receiving support. I do so by re-centring our gaze towards actors located within the global South, and towards bottom-up or grassroots practices. These lines of inquiry are explored through more specific cases: regional responses to displacement from Syria (see also chapter 27 by Hashimoto-Scalise on Refugees and chapter 32 by Wessels on West Asia), and solidarity with illegalised migrants in Europe. While the social solidarities emerging from these cases do not represent fundamentally novel or unique phenomena, I believe that at the very least, they point towards new scholarly attention for alternative ways of thinking about essential, material support.

1. CHALLENGING HEGEMONIC GENEALOGIES OF HUMANITARIANISM

Humanitarianism has often been associated with actors, principles and histories that are firmly embedded in the global North. While the histories of humanitarianism continue to be written in plural (Calhoun 2008; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019), a particularly dominant account situates its emergence with the battle of Solferino in 1859, and the subsequent establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the translation of its key principles into international humanitarian law. At the time, the founders of the Red Cross sought to ensure that medical care could be distributed to injured soldiers and civilians of either parties. To do so, it was crucial that specific organisations, such as the Red Cross, were recognised as neutral providers of care who had the moral and legal legitimacy to enter any scene of crisis. The principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence were successfully institutionalised in international law and in the practices of many (I)NGO that later emerged in this field of action. At their heart was the universalist imperative of providing care to everyone in need, regardless of their social and political identities (Barnett & Weiss 2008).

The same genealogy identifies a second, more rebellious strand of humanitarianism with the establishment of *Doctors Without Borders* in France in 1971. Formed by a group of medical practitioners and journalists who were dissatisfied with the Red Cross's silences of the atrocities committed in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict, Doctors Without Borders soon came to embody the practice of 'bearing witness' (témoignage) to man-made atrocities that create humanitarian crises. While the NGO never fully abandoned the principle of neutrality, it has repeatedly adopted an openly critical position towards social and political actors which they deemed to be causing conflict, displacement, and famine in the first place (Redfield 2013).

In this reading, humanitarianism is strongly associated with 'minimalist' forms of support that focus on the mere survival of human bodies in a context of crisis (Redfield 2013). This is reflected in a strong emphasis of medical interventions (Redfield 2013; Ticktin 2011), the provision of food (Scott-Smith 2019) and refugee camps (Agier 2011). Within such humanitarianism, there seems to be a strong focus on people's 'biological lives' (i.e. purely physical needs to survive), with little space for people's biographical lives, which are embedded in social ties and political identities (Fassin 2007; Brun 2016). Instead, humanitarian action is thought of as an endeavour in which medical and logistical concerns - and thus its professional experts – take priority on other considerations, such as long-term economic stability, human rights, or social relations.

This dominant understanding of humanitarianism has been increasingly complicated and challenged by two emerging bodies of work – for a general, historical critique of this genealogy, see Barnett (2011). First, scholars increasingly recognise that a wide range of actors from the Global South play a significant role in providing humanitarian aid (Ager et al 2015; Kennedy 2004; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019). This is particularly evident in responses to displacement: around 85% of the world's displaced persons finds

itself in the Global South (UNHCR 2020). The Syrian conflict and its aftermath provides a typical example: between 83 to 86% of its displaced population is officially registered to reside in the neighbouring countries of Jordan (ca. 700,000), Turkey (ca. 3,6 million) and Lebanon (ca. 800,000) (UNHCR 2022).

While we shall return to the Syrian example later on, it is worth considering two more general ways through which actors from the global South can enable us to reimagine humanitarianism as a more egalitarian endeavour. On the one hand, this includes cooperative relations between countries from the global south (see chapter 6 by Youakim and Stephan on Localization and chapters in section Five on different regions). Through notions of 'south-south humanitarianism' and 'south-south cooperation' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019), scholars have challenged traditional assumptions underlying humanitarianism, as being necessarily embedded in neo-colonial imaginaries: actors from the North distribute their resources and expertise, and by doing so impose their language, procedures and conditions upon their beneficiaries in the South. In contrast, state-led South-South cooperation has been consciously framed as being based on principles of reciprocity, solidarity, and non-interference in national politics (Aneja 2019; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019). In such cooperation, actors sometimes refrain deliberately from using labels of 'humanitarian aid' and 'development assistance', and instead speak of solidarity. This form of cooperation is part of broader collaborative efforts such as the 'Group of 77' and the Non-Alignment Movement, that aim to strengthen the collective self-reliance and independence of countries in the Global South from Northern states and institutions. While the gap between their principles and their practices are of course subject to debate (Aneja 2019), it is significant to note that these collaborations are often strongly embedded in other national or regional traditions that have different views on neutrality and political solidarity.

On the other hand, actors from the global South have also consciously shaped and transformed relations of solidarity between the North and the South. It is often assumed that North-South relations represent a unilateral flow from countries with resources to those without, from continents of stability and wealth to those in crisis and conflict. However, some historical accounts have challenged this assumption. The case of Sandinista Nicaragua represents an illuminating example. Rather than emerging from Western-Europe, the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) developed several strategies to elicit and strengthen humanitarian and political support from Western-Europe (see also chapter 12 by Marti I Puig and Alvarez on Solidarity Political Solidarity Movements). By creating a transnational network comprising exiles, official diplomats and a plethora of local support groups in European civil society, they were able to foster cross-border cooperation in support of an initially local movement in Latin-America (Christiaens 2014; Helm 2014). This included sharing information in local groups, who then went on to raise funds and awareness in countries like Belgium and Germany. And after the Sandinista movement rose to power, it repeatedly invited its European activists for visits, to strengthen

not only the personal connection, but also to help inform and support their work in Europe. This raises broader questions on how actors from the global South, shape and rethinking North-South relations, whether through relations that are centred around 'humanitarianism' or more consciously 'political' solidarity.

A second, largely disconnected body of work that has challenged the dominant understanding of humanitarianism, has recently emerged to describe the wide range of citizen collectives acting in solidarity with newly arriving migrants in Europe (Della Porta 2018; Della Porta & Steinhilper 2021; Fechter & Schwittay 2019; Feischmidt et al 2019; Gabrielsen Jumbert & Pascucci 2021; Pallister-Wilkins 2022; Schwiertz & Schwenken 2021; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen 2019b). While scholars have used a variety of concepts to describe this phenomenon, a common thread seems to be that the act of offering material support to people who are subject to a politics of deterrence, render these very acts into a form of civil disobedience. While this process is not always analysed as a form of humanitarian action per se, the practices around which it revolves show a very clear affinity: they include offering shelter, food, clothes, medicine, as well as ensuring access to medical and psychosocial care, and legal information. In addition, many volunteers, at least initially, tend to frame their actions as a response to a humanitarian imperative, rather than an action that emanates from a preconceived political identity or ideological agenda (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017; Vandevoordt 2019).

While this variegated body of work has emerged from recent debates that are strongly rooted in Europe, it's potential for comparative analyses across time and space seems clear. In contexts of persecution and organised violence, the practice of providing humanitarian support turns into an act of civil disobedience. Scholars have thus pointed at resonances with grassroots solidarity during World War 2 (Vandevoordt 2019) and the so-called 'underground railroad' used by African-Americans to escape from Slavery (Queirolo Palmas & Rahola 2022; Stierl 2020). Understood this way, humanitarianism could perhaps be reimagined as a thoroughly political claim to one's common humanity, as part of broader struggles for human rights, (Black) abolitionism and radical solidarity (See e.g. Calhoun 2008; Mezzadra 2020; Walker 2000).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will zoom in on two cases, one corresponding to each of the bodies of work describe above: the responses of local communities to the Syrian conflict and its aftermath, and the grassroots support groups that have continued to provide support to migrants who were increasingly illegalized by the European refugee regime. Both cases point to hitherto neglected humanitarian actors, and document how these actors tend to explicitly dissociate themselves from hegemonic humanitarian principles such as neutrality or universalism, and its embeddedness in ideals of professionalism, international law and organizations situated in the Global North. Instead, they are borne from social relations that are strongly embedded in particular positionalities and local socio-political contexts. On an interactional level, they seem to pave the path towards social spaces, in which

both a more personal ethics of care and more complex power relations flourish side by side (Stavinoha & Ramakrishnan 2021; Vandevoordt 2019).

2. LOCAL RESPONSES TO DISPLACEMENT FROM SYRIA

As mentioned earlier, the Syrian conflict represents a typical example of how neighbouring states are usually the main providers of support to persons displaced by conflict. While these state responses to are subject to a lively, critical debate on their own (Turner 2015; Üstübici 2019), this chapter zooms in on the humanitarian support provided by local residents and their communities. Commentators agree that, especially in the early phases of the Syrian conflict, these groups have been the most significant providers of support, rather than state actors or established NGOs (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019). Sure enough, the strong involvement of local residents and their communities has sparked criticism. On the one hand, international stakeholders have warned that 'local responses may be motivated by politics and ideology, rather than [purely] "humanitarian" impulses and principles.' Hence, although this is increasingly disputed (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019; Ager et al 2015; see also chapter 10 by Eggert & Wilkinson on Faith-Actors), faith-based responses were long thought to be prone to exclude women, girls and LGBT refugees. On the other hand, scholars have repeatedly expressed concerns that discourses emphasising refugees' self-reliance and local communities' resiliency, may lead states and (I)NGOs to evade their responsibilities (Easton-Calabria & Omata 2018; Ilcan & Rygiel 2015).

Nonetheless, it seems clear that local responses have clear advantages over traditional humanitarian programmes. They have easier access to vulnerable groups that are hard-to-reach for (I)NGOs and state agencies, and due to their linguistic, social and cultural affinities with the groups they seek to support, they are likely to establish relations of trust quite quickly (Ager et al 2015; Svoboda 2018).

Perhaps the most striking example is what Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2019) and her collaborators call 'refugee-refugee solidarity'. Many refugees experience 'overlapping displacement': they have relocated not once but two or three times, and they end up inhabiting the same physical space with other people who have been displaced before. This means that 'refugees often become members of the communities which are subsequently called upon to offer protection and support to other groups of displaced people' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019).

Tens of thousands of persons displaced by the Syrian conflict – including not only Syrians, but also Palestinians, Iraqis and Afghans – were thus hosted by Palestinian communities that had fled to Lebanon in the 1950s. The Baddawi refugee camp in North-Lebanon offers an interesting example in situ: established in 1955, it is currently home to between 25,000 and 40,000 Palestinians. Despite the extreme poverty and violence that characterises life in these camps, many displaced persons from Syria 'explicitly identified Baddawi as their destination point from the very onset of their journeys'

(Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). They told researchers they "arrived in the camps", and just "passed through Lebanon" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh 2016), which shows that, '[i]n many ways, the camp superseded the Lebanese state' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh 2016). This stems partly from the solidarity between these different groups of refugees, and what they have in common: 'they share the legal status of being refugees and an embodied understanding of the nature and impacts of violence, dispossession and displacement' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). As in other countries such as Jordan, in such places, friendships and relations of mutual support emerged between people who share specific experiences such as widowhood and displacement (Zbeidy 2017).
This shows, first, that displaced people are not mere recipients but also 'key providers of aid' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018). Second, it makes clear that urban spaces and camps such as Baddawi offer displaced persons 'an opportunity to form part of a broader refugee nation, to be with other refugees rather than arriving as strangers in a Lebanese city' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). In other words, the common historical trajectories, and experiences of displacement, albeit in different times and with different countries of origin, can give rise to forms of solidarity that are based on complex social ties, rather than binary relations between providers and recipients of aid (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018).

However, this does not mean that we should idealise or romantic such community-led forms of support per se. Much like any social relation shaped by hardship, displacement gives rise to struggles over access to services, resources, and livelihoods (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 2019). In Baddawi, for instance, initially welcoming ethos gradually made way for hierarchies, with established residents distinguishing themselves from newly arriving refugees (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). Interesting to note here is the ambivalent role that INGOs play in this context. Initial relations of solidarity sometimes seem to change as INGOs enter the scene: to allocate scarce resources and services, INGOs tend to categorize and divide people into groups, labelling some as hosts and others as refugees. Baddawi, researchers noted the UNHCR-ization of the camp, as the significance of UNRWA (the UN agency responsible for Palestinian communities) was diminished compared to the UNHCR (the main UN refuge agency, in this context principally responsible for coordinating support to displaced persons from Syria) (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). Similarly, in the border town of Akkar, in North-Lebanon, the introduction of INGOs turned Syrians into 'others'. Whereas before, there had been seemingly self-evident relations of support, embedded in the labour conditions and circular migration of people that regularly crossed the border in either direction, this process of top-down categorization gradually led to a division of its inhabitants into Lebanese hosts and Syrian guests (Carpi 2016).

While none of these phenomena are unique to the Middle East,[1] this case helps us to show two things. First, especially in the early phases of displacement, local actors often play a significant role in providing efficient and crucial support to displaced persons. Second, the fact that they emerge from relations between historically situated social subjects – rather than a relation centred around suffering bodies – enables them to build up trust and reach groups that might otherwise be excluded or neglected by (I)NGOs and state agencies.

3. SOLIDARITY WITH ILLEGALISED MIGRANTS IN EUROPE

In many European countries, the continent's 2015 'summer of migration' elicited a wave of solidarity with newly arriving refugees (Della Porta 2018; Feischmidt et al 2019; Verschraegen & Vandevoordt 2019). Refugees were welcomed in train stations, public squares and, at least for a brief period of time, received relatively favourable press coverage. In Germany and Sweden, national governments spoke out and acted in support of these citizen-led forms of solidarity. A few months later, the climate shifted. Several EU Member States re-established national border controls (including Hungary, Austria and France), and even national governments who continued a welcoming discourse, such as Sweden and Germany, eventually put in place more restrictive regulations to apply for asylum.

This went hand in hand with measures at different levels aiming to discourage and prevent specific groups of migrants from entering Europe. This included the EU-Turkey deal in 2016 and the broader hotspot approach across Southern Member States (Heck & Hess 2017; Tazzioli & Garrelli 2020), as well as an increasingly policed response to migrants that got stranded in 'precarious transit zones' across Europe (Ansems De Vries & Guild 2020; Vandevoordt 2021b; Welander 2021). In France, for instance, both the so-called Calais Jungle and make-shift camps in the metropolitan area of Paris were systematically destroyed, while citizens providing shelter to 'undesirable' migrants were persecuted and charged with human smuggling (Freedman 2018; Taylor 2020). Similar lockdowns of squats and make-shift in places like Athens, Brussels and other places followed suit. Across Europe, migrants 'in transit' and those standing in solidarity with them, have been increasingly subject to criminalisation (Dadusc & Mudu 2020).

This repressive approach has, to some extent, discouraged and scaled down the popular support to welcome people on the move. Nonetheless, many groups have continued to provide material, social and political support to migrants that are being pursued by the state. Plenty of scholars have pointed

[1] A 2016 volume of Forced Migration Review that was dedicated to 'local communities' as 'the first and last providers of protection', presents numerous examples (Forced Migration Review 2016). See especially the contributions of Konda et al (2016), Mukandayisenga (2016) and Ensign (2016). For a contribution on the role of Sudanese diaspora providing support to newly arriving migrants in Brussels, see Rajab (2022).

at the tension between this hostile social and political climate, and the subversive nature of grassroots humanitarian action (Della Porta & Steinhilper 2020; Schwiertz & Schwenken 2020; Vandevoordt 2019, 2021; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen 2019). This has been perhaps most visible in the Mediterranean Sea, where a pertinent struggle has emerged between a 'fleet of Mediterranean border humanitarians' and a range of border national and international agencies trying to guard the borders of Europe (Stierl 2018; Mezzadra 2020). Similar struggles have emerged *within* the EU, in places such as Calais and Brussels, where citizen collectives have continued to distribute food and tents, host migrants into their own homes and, occasionally, engaged in counter-marauds to obstruct police raids designed to detain and deport migrants (Vandevoordt 2021; see Jumbert & Pascucci 2021).

While their social and political backgrounds vary, most of the individuals acting within these groups had no prior history of being involved in pro-migrant movements, and instead were spurred into action by humanitarian sentiments of compassion (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017; Sinatti 2019; Vandevoordt 2019). Over time, they shared a growing sense of indignation both with repressive state policies, and with what they saw as a lack of adequate action by established (I)NGOs and other high-profile actors – especially the UNHCR. The latter were seen to be largely absent, leaving citizens to 'fill the gaps' in offering humanitarian aid across Europe. And when they did enter the scene, their lack of recognition for citizens' efforts, and their modus operandi, seemed to elicit at least as much frustration as appreciation (Mogstad 2021; Jumbert & Pascucci 2021b).

From this perspective, these acts of solidarity appear as forms of 'civil disobedience', in which humanitarian support (i.e. biological material support and care) is complemented with social (e.g. extending migrants' social networks), legal (e.g. providing information on asylum procedures, as well as ensuring access to legal representation) and political support (e.g. organizing protests and letter-writing actions). In this sense, it moves beyond 'minimal' interventions to the benefit of migrants' 'biological lives', and embeds these within a 'maximal' form of solidarity that centres around their 'biographical lives' (Stavinoha & Ramakrishnan 2021).

At least two more features stand out in these scholarly accounts. First, several citizen-led groups do not use universal principles to determine who they provide, but rather focus on specific groups which they deem are wronged the most by the European refugee regime (Vandevoordt 2021a). Thus, the Brussels-based *BXLRefugees – Citizen Platform for the Support of Refugees* gradually shifted its focus from asylum seekers and recognised refugees towards migrants in transit, because the latter have (albeit limited) access to existing public services provided by state agencies or NGOs (Vandevoordt 2021b).

Second, several scholars have argued that these practices of support have created spaces of encounter where migrants and their supporters develop personal relations (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017;

Sandri 2018; Sinatti 2019; Stavinoha & Ramakrishnan 2021). While their success in doing so remains to be scrutinised, many volunteers have at least consciously sought for ways to engage in more egalitarian relations with migrants, thereby distancing themselves from professional NGOs and state agencies who, according to them, treat migrants as 'files' and simply go home after working hours. In this sense, they have tried to create what Cathrine Brun (2016) describes as an 'ethics of care', in which *caring about* takes centre stage of caring for, and in which support directed at migrants' biological life, is complemented by genuine care for their biographical lives – i.e. their individual personalities and trajectories.

Several studies have indicated that volunteers highly value these personal relations, and that these constitute a transformative experience to them – with many becoming aware of the consequences of migration policies. In addition, some studies indicate that precisely this informal, personal nature of these relations is valued strongly by migrants (Behrendt et al 2021; Stavinoha & Ramakrishnan 2021).

At the same time, scholars have shown how, despite the intentions of those involved, these spaces of encounter do not necessarily feed into more equal relations but can also become the scene for conflicts that are highly gendered and racialized (Braun 2017; Maestri & Monforte 2020; Steibelhofer 2019). Most volunteers are indeed white, middle class, middle-aged women, whereas most migrants are relatively young, racialised single men from a variety of class backgrounds. This can give rise to a 'maternalistic form of care' (Sluijs 2021), in which volunteers not only care *about* migrants as if they are family (Kekstaite 2022), but also tend to infantilise migrants into the role of children or little brothers and sisters who need to be *taken care of* (Ballet 2021; Sluijs 2021). In sum, these spaces of encounter harbour the potential both for more equal relations based on a genuine concern for migrants as social subjects, as well as incite distinct forms of power relations.

While these examples come from recent studies set in Europe, they are by no means new. What seems new, is mainly the scholarly attention to these acts of solidarity as instances of grassroots humanitarian action set within a hostile social and political climate. Both this tension with a hostile climate, and their conscious efforts to deviate from the traditional, top-down approach for which established NGOs are often criticised, would lead me to describe them as subversive forms of humanitarian action.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter has explored whether and how humanitarianism can be reimagined as a more egalitarian moral-political project, by zooming in on the subversive potential of a-typical humanitarian actors. Bottom-up practices in both the global South and North seem particularly well-placed to depart from the traditional humanitarian focus on providing 'minimal' support to save 'biological' lives, and to put into practice a more encompassing form of solidarity that centres migrants' 'biographical lives' (cf.

Stavinoha & Ramakrishnam 2021). This complicates the clear-cut, hierarchical distinctions between providers and recipients of aid that are based on a formalised division of tasks that locates scarce resources exclusively in the global North. In the case of local responses to displacement from Syria, common trajectories and experiences, whether constituted by shared cultural backgrounds, he sharing of living spaces or histories of forced migration, can lead to solidarity-relations rooted in encompassing social relations. In the case of solidarity with illegalised migrants in Europe, subversive humanitarianism emerges in a climate of social and political hostility, where providing even 'minimal' humanitarian support turns into an act of civil disobedience. In this context, socially subversive humanitarianism also has substantial potential to politicise humanitarian support and the human causes behind protracted displacement.

Rather than idealising these subversive acts of humanitarianism as inherently egalitarian or political in practice, this chapter is intended as an invitation to further examine hitherto neglected forms of humanitarian support, and scrutinise their potential for challenging some of the main criticisms for which humanitarianism has been so widely criticised. This means that we should take into account how and why these forms of support may foster other, possibly more intricate power-relations between people with and without resources, and explore how they may or may not serve to reimagine humanitarian support as being part of broader political struggles.

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