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Title:
Volunteering for Refugees in County Durham:
Between Improvisation and Institutionalisation

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Abstract:

Since 2016 about 200 Syrian refugees have been settled in County Durham via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) sanctioned by the UK government. At that time no institution that held experience in supporting or advocating for refugees existed, while right-wing attitudes and hostility towards migrants were strongly present. Under these circumstances, parts of the local population responded to refugees' arrival in compassionate, altruistic, and improvised ways, and the Durham City of Sanctuary charity was founded. Given the sudden demand for and the reliance on volunteers, this thesis aims to develop an understanding of how volunteering works in Durham and how volunteers experienced voluntary support provision. Situating my research largely within Rhetoric Culture Theory and focussing on volunteers' narratives provided insights into how volunteers orientated themselves and navigated through the social world of volunteering in County Durham. Six months of ethnographic research as 'complete participant' revealed striking diversity and inconsistency across all levels of volunteering; volunteers engaged in a range of activities, provided multiple reasons to account for their involvement, demonstrated differing perceptions of accountability for the organisation of support initiatives, and engaged with refugees in diverse ways. The ethnographic account reveals the complex reality of volunteering for refugees in County Durham and shows that volunteering cannot be understood as a uniform category or defined practice. Instead, volunteering in Durham opened spaces for improvisation and interpretation. I suggest that the heterogeneity can be linked to the non-institutionalised context of volunteering and the local socio-political scene, and therefore constitutes a 'situated practice'. This research aims to contribute to anthropological scholarship on localised civil society initiatives and provide the local support providers with information that they can use to improve their services.

Volunteering for Refugees in County Durham: Between Improvisation and Institutionalisation

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2019

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Introduction

The movement of displaced people fleeing the Syrian war to seek sanctuary in Europe triggered a range of reaction on all levels of society. Governments of EU member states took on largely defensive positions towards migration, with the aim being the reduction of and restriction on immigration (Trauner, 2016). Asylum policy in Europe has placed the greatest burden on southeastern members states (Trauner, 2016), while the EU's overall intake of displaced Syrians was modest in relation to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (Gilbert, 2015; Ostrand, 2015; UNHCR, 2018). The UK shared only a small burden relative to its population size in comparison to small EU countries (Trauner, 2016, p. 320). Intensive and wide ranging media coverage accompanied the arrival of refugees and commented on the policies implemented by governments, framing a "war of position" (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016, p. 14) by shaping public perception, opinion and actions. On the one hand, we have witnessed the rise of the extreme right across Europe, which rejects immigration and cultural diversity, fuelling an increase of xenophobia and racism (Merali, 2017). While, on the other hand, civil society generated initiatives, providing humanitarian aid, offering legal support and tending to uphold solidarity (Feischmidt, Pries and Cantat, 2019). Pries (2019) argues that rather than the numbers of refugees, it is the breadth of civil society initiatives in combination with extensive media coverage, that accounts for the uniqueness of the 'refugee crisis' in Europe as a historical event.

County Durham in the North East of England experienced a similar contrast in responses to the arrival of a small number of refugees in 2016. While extreme right-wing white-supremacist groups, such as the North East Infidels (a splinter group of the English Defence League) and Bishop Auckland Against Islam, fuelled hatred and hostility towards newcomers in regular protests and public outcries against the settlement of Syrian refugees in County Durham (Banfield, 2017), numerous civil society initiatives to support Syrian newcomers' settlement have emerged spontaneously. As each cohort of newcomers to Durham received only limited government support, and relied heavily on non-professional voluntary assistance, the 'local helper' and the 'volunteer' came to occupy a central role (Cantat and

Feischmidt, 2019, p. 382). This research aims to comprehend the ways in which local community members participated in civil society initiatives, practiced support and experienced support provision for refugees.

This project follows a recent trend in anthropological literature that has found renewed interest in civil society in times of 'crisis' (Rozakou, 2012, 2016; Cabot, 2016, 2018; Papataxiarchis 2016; Rakopoulos, 2016; Theodossopolous, 2016, Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat, 2019, Jorgensen and García Agustín, 2019). There was widespread criticism of government policy in the wake of austerity measures following the 'financial crisis', particularly in Greece (Clarke, Huliara and Sotiropoulos, 2015). Successive governments have been challenged over the failure to take appropriate action to tackle the 'climate crisis' (Wahlström *et al*., 2019), and during the 'refugee crisis' inactivity, as well as an increasingly restrictive border regime attracted significant opposition from civil society (Tyler and Marciniak, 2013; Koca, 2016) and resulted in the mobilisation of support for refugees from local communtiy. Furthermore, this renewed focus comes with the withdrawal of welfare support under a policy of neoliberal restructuring, which has shifted the burden towards civil society to fill in the gaps (Newman and Tonkens, 2011; Muehlebach, 2012; Cabot, 2018).

During the refugee crisis we witnessed new localised forms of charity, solidarity and hospitality that disputed state policy and perceived inactivity. This has provided researchers with an opportunity to investigate the relationship between citizen and the state (van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel, 2011; Cabot, 2018; Sprung and Kukovetz, 2018), and to reconsider traditional understandings of humanitarianism and political activism (Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat, 2019). While scholars have made an important contribution to our understanding of localised forms of giving, existing studies on civil society engagement across Europe are based on contexts which diverged significantly from the unique circumstances I encountered in County Durham. The socio-cultural and political foundations in Durham, as well as the circumstances in which refugees were settled there, were unique, and notably shaped the emergence, practices and processes of voluntary refugee support.

Placing my research largely within the framework of Rhetoric Culture Theory with particular attention to human sociality, allowed attending to volunteers' moral reasoning, and to capture the lived experiences of the chain of actions and surprises that volunteering with refugees entails. This attention to volunteer sociality distinguishes my approach to studying civil society responses to refugee arrival from existing theoretical approaches.

Socio-political context

It is important to situate volunteering in the macro context, and understand volunteer practices and processes against the local political and social circumstances (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010, p. 425), therefore, it is necessary to contextualise volunteer-led support and to provide a rough outline of the unique socio-political environment in Durham. Durham is a post-industrial and rural county in the North East of England, which hosts a uniquely undiversified population. According to the Office of National Statistics in 2011, out of all the regions in the United Kingdom, the North East had the highest percentage of White British people, at 93.6%. and County Durham was amongst the least diverse local authorities in the UK with 98,2% of the population identifying as White (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Furthermore, the county has statistically high rates of unemployment and a high reliance on benefits. According to data from the 2011 Census, rates of unemployment and benefit claims in one of the areas in the county where refugees were being settled, was higher than the national average. The North East had the lowest employment rates generally, and by 2011 it had the highest unemployment in England, at 9.3% (Office for National Statistics, 2013). The City of Durham has a large university student and staff population, with high levels of education, while residents of other areas in the county, in which refugees were settled, are among the least educated in the country.

Nationalism is also widely spread throughout the region. With 58% voting to leave the EU, the North East hosted the third largest population of 'Leave' voters across the UK, in the 2016 Brexit Referendum (BBC, 2016). In the UK general elections, in 2017, the far-right British National Party (BNP) gained their strongest vote in County Durham's parliamentary constituency, Bishop Auckland. The BNP came

fourth with 2,3% (BBC, 2017). Extreme-right entities, such as The North East Infidels and Bishop Auckland Against Islam, have been actively mobilising against refugee settlement, with numerous protests and their divisive brand of hate speech. County Durham is also in the top 30% of the most deprived local authorities in England (Durham County Council, 2015, p. 2).

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Despite widely spread anti-immigrant sentiments and high levels of deprivation, Durham County Council agreed to welcome about 200 refugees as part of the governmental Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS). In 2015, the UK government announced that via the SVPRS it would resettle "20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in the UK by May 2020" (National Audit Office, 2016, p. 5, Durham County Council, 2017, p. 4). The SVPRS was introduced by the Home Office, the Department for International Development and the Department for Communities and Local Government, in collaboration with the UN High Commission for Refugees (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 4). It continues to permit selected individuals to settle in the UK (Home Office, 2017, p. 3) but gives priority to the most vulnerable, according to the vulnerability criteria (Cabot, 2013) set by the UNHCR (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 4) that identify some as more deserving and worthy than others (Ticktin, 2006, Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 165). By March 2017, 235 local authorities across the UK had agreed to part take in the scheme (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 6). Among them was County Durham, which agreed to support approximately 200 Syrian refugees by May 2020 (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 7, Durham County Council, 2015, p. 3), in line with the county's proportion of the national population, though it recently considered expanding the intake to 250-300 individuals. Twelve appropriate areas for resettlement in the country were identified and assessed against criteria including: availability of housing, access to medical care, access to schools and Job Centres, as well as the possibility of resettling clusters of family groups of about 25 people, to encourage mutual support (Durham County Council, 2017, p.7). The policy of settling families as groups differed from resettling strategies in France which placed only one family per commune to avoid "ghettoization" (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 169). The first group of five Syrian families arrived in May 2016. They

were settled in central Durham. In November 2016 six families comprised of 28 individuals, were settled in the south of the county. In June 2017 five families, 25 individuals in all, were welcomed to the North, followed by the settlement of new families in the same town a year later. In October 2018, three families were settled in another town; and by the end of my fieldwork, in spring 2019, another group had arrived in the east of the County. A final group is expected in autumn 2019.

Governmental Support

Selection into the scheme granted "refugee status" with permission to work in the UK and an entitlement to benefits. The settlement costs of the SVPRS were fully covered by the government during the first 12 months and assistance was provided by the local authority (Home Office, 2017, p. 4). Such assistance includes a meet-and-greet service at Newcastle airport, financial support, provision of furnished and suitable accommodation, assistance in accessing welfare benefits, education, translation, employment and integration services, compulsory English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and a personalised support plan (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 5). Each family was allocated a 'key worker' from the Family intervention Project (FIP) Team (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 7). S/he was regarded the lead professional (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 8) in the areas of "finances, education, employment and health and integration" (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 8) and would meet the families regularly. These services were reduced after the first year (Home Office, 2017, p. 4) to encourage refugees to become "more integrated and self-sufficient" (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 8). After five years, each individual hosted under the scheme will be considered "eligible to apply for permanent settlement in the UK" (Durham County Council, 2017, p. 4). Thus, the legal status and the needs of migrants who came to Durham via the SVPRS differed to those who had travelled to Europe independently, and constitute the context of existing literature o voluntary refugee support.

Community support

Despite support from the government refugees' needs were not fully met and refugees relied on support from the local community. However, unlike other regions in the North East, such as Newcastle (Flug and Hussein, 2019) and Middlesbrough (Maybiln and James, 2018), County Durham did "not have significant experience or knowledge on which to build in relocating vulnerable refugees in the area" (Durham County Council, 2015, p. 3). There existed no established charities or facilities prior to 2016 that addressed the needs of migrants or encouraged intercultural dialogue. Consequently, spontaneous support initiatives began to emerge. Affiliated with the Durham Christian Partnership, the newly founded Durham City of Sanctuary, a community hall, and the Durham for Refugees student society of Durham University, these initiatives were staffed by members of the local community. Crucially, they were shaped by the socio-political environment, the specific needs of refugees, and the absence of established support facilitates. These included material donations, fundraising events, trips and gatherings, a befriending scheme, conversation classes and drop-in sessions, amongst other activities.

This thesis explores how support for refugees was practiced against the currents of xenophobia and notably shaped by them, in light of the lack of established institutions or facilities to support newcomers to Durham. My focus on the volunteers rather than refugees is informed by multiple reasons. Firstly, the experiences of volunteers in the context of refugee settlement are largely understudied and constitute a novel area of research, recently addressed in an edited volume by Feischmidt, Pries and Cantat (2019). Secondly, in the face of the increasing reliance on the volunteer sector (Newman and Tonkens, 2011; van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel, 2011;Mayblin and James, 2018), it seems crucial to develop an in-depth understanding of how support is delivered, organised and experienced by volunteers, in order to identify whether such voluntary support provision is sustainable, and how it can be improved. Most studies on integration and settlement attend to refugees, whereby volunteers and members of the local communities receive little attention despite their invaluable impact on refugee settlement. Thirdly, my own personal experiences in October 2018 inspired the study of refugee support.

Personal background

Despite having lived in Durham since 2014, until October 2018 I remained ignorant of the settlement of over a hundred refugees in the county since 2016. During an event I attended in October 2018 hosted by the 'City of Sanctuary North East', I discovered that my unawareness of refugee settlement was linked to the approach advocated by the Durham County Council, and reinforced by the Durham City of Sanctuary charity (DCoS), to keep publicity to the lowest level. Given the hostile environment and incidents of targeted hate crime (Durham County Council, 2017), maintaining a low public presence was regarded as the best approach in order to safeguard refugees as well as local helpers.

The 'City of Sanctuary' initiative is a national network of local groups reaching across the UK, whose aim is to welcome and support asylum seekers and refugees. In early October 2018, I coincidentally read an online announcement about the City of Sanctuary Regional Gathering. Intrigued by the description, I attended the event that month and engaged in talks, activities, discussions and networking. City of Sanctuary groups from across to North East, including the Durham City of Sanctuary (DCoS) presented their support activities. Every group reported on their activities, problems encountered and future plans. The Durham group announced that they "…give gift bags to every family upon arrival, *we* do conversation classes and have weekly Drop-Ins, *we* have been on a trip to South Shields". Following this description and choice of pronouns, I had the impression that the Durham City of Sanctuary oversaw, administered and organised a range of voluntary activities across the County. Soon after, I became a member of the Durham City of Sanctuary charity, joined conversation classes and befriended refugees. Not only did the event lead to my personal involvement, but it also inspired a new research project.

At that time I was a Masters student, considering reframing my thesis' topic. I developed an interest in the emergence of the DCoS charity in response to the arrival of refugees, and consequently started this research with the intention to study the Durham City of Sanctuary and its organisational culture and structure. In conversation classes I explained my intention to study the DCoS and received numerous unexpected questions: "I am not sure I am useful to you, I don't know

much about the DCoS". Some said, "I am a volunteer but I am not a part of the DCoS, is that still relevant to you?". I found little consistency in the description of the charity, in the organisation of events and in the institutional affiliations, and disappointingly I found no Excel spreadsheets, schedules or sign-up sheets. With great frustration after the first weeks of fieldwork I realised the weakness of the underlying assumptions implied by my research question.

Meanwhile, as I met more volunteers and distanced myself from predefined ideas about the DCoS, the picture of refugee support became more blurred, rather than clearer, and civil society's engagement emerged to be a far more complex and interesting phenomenon than expected. What was being revealed to me was a diffuse web of agents and institutions, who improvised to provide spontaneous and disorganised support to newcomers, in the absence of an established institution. Under these circumstances I wondered (1) how do volunteers make sense of and experience such an informal and un-institutionalised civil society initiative, and (2) how do volunteers experience the encounter with refugees in an un-institutionalised and disorganised context? Consequently, I embarked on a project that investigates refugee support from the volunteers' perspective.

Durham City of Sanctuary

Although this thesis is not about the DCoS, because it is the only refugee third sector organisation (Mayblin and James, 2018) in Durham, I pay attention to its role in shaping the experiences of volunteers. Therefore, I describe the DCoS charity, its emergence, its mission, and its attempts to formalise volunteering. The DCoS has been a registered Charity since 2016. It was established in response to the sudden need for volunteers to support newcomers, and is governed by a board of 12 trustees. Four of them came to Durham via the SVPRS; one came to seek asylum. Most of the others are staff of Durham University.

The charity is part of a large network called 'City of Sanctuary UK'. Founded in Sheffield in 2005, this is an umbrella organisation that supports groups and 'streams of Sanctuary' nationwide, with the aim of building a 'sanctuary movement'. Their public webpage states that they "…work to build a culture of welcome, hospitality

and inclusiveness right across every sphere and sector of society, so that wherever people seeking sanctuary go, they will feel safe, find people who welcome them and understand why they are here, and have opportunities to be included in all activities." The City of Sanctuary network encompasses 115 local groups across the UK, which enjoy flexibility in determining how to adopt localised responses to challenges posed by particular regions. Despite this flexibility, core principles apply to every group operating under the name of City of Sanctuary. These principles are largely concerned with the promotion of a positive image of migrants, education and the creation opportunities for friendship and solidarity. A full list of aims and principles can be accessed on the City of Sanctuary homepage (see https://cityofsanctuary.org/about/).

The emphasis on creating "a culture of welcome" was incorporated by the Durham CoS which states on its membership form that its aim is "…to foster a climate of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers in Durham and around," by "encouraging, supporting and liaising with the Durham County Council, other service providers," and by "providing accurate and up to date information to the local community on the situation of local refugees and asylum seekers, and to publicise and celebrate their contribution to their local communities and to UK society and culture, and to challenge hostility and discrimination against them.'' (Charity Commission, 2018). Its mission reveals the charity's intention to not only embrace humanitarian activities that target refugees but most importantly, to engage the public and check hostile attitudes towards newcomers.

The "hush-hush" approach

Despite an intention to strengthen the values of inclusion, tolerance and diversity and to foster an inclusive and multicultural society (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019) by influencing public opinion, the DCoS did not engage in this activity. In fact, none of its practices served the purposes of ensuring sustainable and long-term volunteers force (Bornstein 2009, p. 623) through mobilising, communicating to, or engaging with the public. On the contrary, the approach taken by the trustees, in conjunction with Durham County Council (DCC), undermined the charity's mission statement. A path was chosen that deliberately avoided advertising the charity's aims. This is

evident in the inactivity of its social media, and the absence of any public events. With two posts, 280 likes and 292 followers by June 2019 on their only social media platform, Facebook, the charity's online presence remains minimal, although the potential of online activism in mobilising and bringing people together is widely known (VanDyck, 2017). Moreover, the Durham County Council would only inform the DCoS trustees about the arrival of new refugee families, shortly before they arrived. This information remained strictly confidential, volunteers and the local community were not informed.

The ethos of "don't share with anybody" and the "hush hush approach" as volunteers called it, was deployed vis-à-vis hostility towards migrants in Durham, manifested in the many incidents of hate crime directed at Syrian families in recent years and right wing protests (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019, p. 224). As an evaluative report by the Humanitarian Support Unit of County Durham documented, several families were the targets of anti-social behaviour, which included causing damage to their quarters. Incidents of inappropriate social media posts were also reported (Durham County Council, 2017).

This is not to say that advocacy and fundraising did not exist in County Durham. Not all members of the DCoS agreed with the strategy that minimising publicity was the most appropriate approach; nor that it would reduce hostility and hate crime. The Regional Coordinator of the DCoS North Eastern Region, expressed concern about the lack of publicity in Durham. Various other organisations hosted events to mobilise, educate and fundraise, including the Students for Refugees University student society, Stand Up Against Racism County Durham and the Stories of Sanctuary community choir.

The DCoS is entirely voluntary-run, but for years there have been unrealised plans to employ a volunteer coordinator. Membership to the charity is attained by filling out a form, available online, and paying a one-pound membership fee. Members are insured by the charity, and receive irregular information about past and future events in relation to issues of migration. More rarely, emails are sent out to ask for specific donations or tasks. Communication is inconsistent; some volunteers received safeguarding confidentiality information and volunteer guidelines, others did not.

Generally, the information volunteers received varied. Membership does not entail any obligations to volunteer or compulsory attendance to any event. In order to be allowed to volunteer, one was demanded to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, yet there was no administrative system in place to keep a record on who was checked and who was not.

Recently, during a general meeting in April 2019, attended by 13 people, a 'code of conduct', a 'volunteer agreement', and plans for formalising and professionalising the role of the volunteer were presented and circulated via email to all charity members. Plans to re-implement the previously failed policy that all volunteers had to undergo an interview were discussed. Further attempts to professionalise volunteering include the introduction of compulsory training for volunteers and the implementation of system of certification in the form of a "volunteer passport" in collaboration with the Durham Council. The ethnographic findings presented in this thesis will illuminate the difficulties in implementing a formal role for volunteers.

Research Aim

This thesis intends to "open the world" (Carrithers, 2018) of the extraordinary domain of civil society initiatives to support refugees in County Durham. Concerned with the micro context of volunteering actions and interactions and the emerging sociabilities, it engages with the "constant mutability" (Carrithers, 2009b, p. 49) of social life in Durham as unanticipated situations erupted, demanding volunteers to act upon one another. I explore how volunteers orientated themselves and navigated in the social world of volunteering in County Durham by investigating the resources they employed to inform and justify their actions. Following Brenneis (2005) in Carrithers (2009b, p. 49), I regard culture not as a structure but as a "resource and repertoire", including images, and narrative schemes, cultural norms and concepts. Analysis of volunteers' narratives reveals the resources activated and marshalled "to move oneself and others towards a relevant performance" (Carrithers, 2009b, p. 49). This allows inquiry into the conditions of support in Durham, illuminating how volunteers made sense of situations and how they used resources to inform action. This theoretical approach informs my argument that civil society support initiatives were a "situated practice" (Cornwall, 2002, p. 3; Cantat and Feischmidt, 2019, p.

380), embedded in and shaped by the particularities of the situation in Durham; refugees' needs, the socio-political scene and the absence of an established institution, which influenced the resources volunteers accessed to negotiate their actions. The unique circumstances in which help for strangers erupted distinguishe the study at hand from existing scholarship, and demand ethnographic attention to explore the implications of the socio-political environment and the absence of an established institution on the provision of support. Furthermore, ethnographic exploration of the volunteers' perceptions and experiences allows considering whether theories of humanitarianism and existing understandings of civil society engagement as active forms of neoliberal citizenship account for the happenings at hand.

As this thesis shows, the variety of voluntary activities, the multiplicity of reasons volunteers provide to account for their activities, and the diverse ways of engaging with refugees complicate the definition of volunteering in the present context and call into question the very meaning of "volunteering". In fact, heterogeneous, spontaneous and diffused seem the most accurate yet sufficiently broad descriptors of the phenomenon of volunteering at hand. Indeed, the heterogeneity shown in this thesis suggests that rather than searching for a common denominator, attention should be paid to the diversity of volunteering practices and their particularities. In the face of the diversity and inconsistency on all levels of volunteering presented throughout this work (what they do, how they get involved, why they get involved, how they make sense of who is in charge, how they engage with refugees, what role they ascribe themselves) the meaning of the concept 'volunteering' and the social category of 'the volunteer' are suggested to constitute 'empty signifiers'.

Finally, this thesis makes a case for the importance of an ethnographic approach towards a study of civil society. The following chapters reveal further insight into the misleading assumptions I held initially and the importance of adopting an emic approach in the framing of a research question, whereby the local volunteers' concerns and experiences are taken up. Ethnographic insights, such as those provided by this thesis, are of significant relevance at a time when the state is retreating from the provision of welfare services, under neoliberal restructuring, both in the UK and across Europe. As the successful resettlement of refugees relies overwhelmingly on

voluntary community-led support, it is more important than ever to understand not only the process and formations that emerge at the intersections between local volunteers, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and refugees, but how they are experienced and dealt with by volunteers. Only through understanding volunteers' roles, concerns and practices can the sustainability, efficacy and suitability of the existing approaches to refugees' settlement be reflected on and evaluated.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one lays out the field and describes the diverse practices of volunteers in the multiple field sites in the County. The writing enlarges on 3 key characteristics that define voluntary support in Durham, and distinguish it from institutionalised forms of humanitarian support: (1) diverse activities were carried out by a range of actors who held widely varying institutional affiliations; (2) spaces of support lacked organisational boundaries and institutional markers; (3) support was improvised and spontaneous. In general there were no structures, hierarchies or formalities involved. These characteristics suggest that the DCoS charity performed an ambiguous role. Chapters two to four further explore the implications of such non-institutionalised circumstances and discuss the ambiguous role of the DCoS charity, with respect to particular aspects of volunteering.

In chapter two I present narratives volunteers produced to explain their altruistic responses to strangers, and worked against the currents of xenophobia in English society generally, and in Durham particularly. Analysis of their rhetorical work offers further insight into the conditions of support provision in Durham. I found that the resources activated in their narratives to account for their involvement were highly varied but consistent in missing resources taken from the DCoS organisational rhetoric. Moreover, volunteers' explanations and justifications showed no inclination to link with narratives prevalent in public discourse to mobilise compassionate responses, and did not suggest the workings of a "neoliberal morality" (Muehlebach, 2012). This led me to argue neither the DCoS nor institutionalised discourse played a significant role in shaping volunteers' activities in Durham. In light of this, it seems that existing theories which try to account for the involvement and emergence of

civil society initiatives, with reference to the discoursive production of active citizens, are inapplicable.

In chapter three, I approach volunteering as an activity embedded in a network of volunteers. As such, I am concerned with the overarching question of how volunteers experience their involvement in diffused and messy support initiatives. I explore their interpretations of how support was being organised and who was in charge. Inconsistent descriptions about responsibilities and roles revealed an absence of transparent organisational structures. In investigating volunteers' accounts of the organisation of volunteering, reveals their shift in group membership and shifting ambiguous relations to the DCOS. As they expressed discontent and frustration, they engaged in rhetorical construction of social boundaries. In the circumstances of shifting group boundaries the distinction betwee 'formal' and 'informal' volunteering no longer serves to describe volunteering practices.

While chapter three discusses volunteers' experiences of the disorganised aspect of volunteering and the diverse ways of locating accountabiltiy, chapter four addresses volunteers' diverse ways of engageing with refugees. I demonstrate that the encounter with refugees is unpredictable. The absence of rules, policies and regulations on how to deal with refugees adds to the uncertainties inherent to volunteering with refugees in Durham. Therefore, I pay attention attention towards volunteers' ways of interpreting, negotiating and justifying their actions, with a particular attention to the way the engage with refugees. Rather than identifying a common pattern, volunteers make varying and opposing conclusions that reflect a non-institutionalised practice, brought about by the absence of resources ordinarily drawn from training, charity guidelines and formal expectations.

In the 'conclusion', I address an issue that emerges generally, through each of the chapters: the ambiguous meaning of "volunteering" and of "the volunteer" in Durham. The heterogeneity and inconsistencies on all levels of volunteering; what volunteers do and who they are affiliated with, how and why volunteers get involved, how they perceive the organisation of support, how they engage with refugees, question the utility and meaning of "volunteering". This reinforces the importance of an ethnographic approach to understand the particularities of human social life.

Finally, I consider the implication of such diversity on the attempts to formalise volunteering and suggest some particular fields of inquiry for further research.

Review of Literature

In this section I will discuss selected sub-fields of anthropological and social scientific literature to provide a theoretical background and overview of existing scholarship that will help conceptualise my ethnographic findings. Various sub-disciplines of the social sciences investigated different expressions of civil society engagement, developing different conceptualisations and approaches to understand the phenomenon of civic participation. Given the multifaceted nature of my fieldwork it would be unsuitable to place this project within one of these sub-fields but I draw inspirations from all of them. The review of literature is divided into three sections. The first part explores characteristics of voluntary action in respect of the migration crisis. I will introduce 'civil society' and the various concepts to conceptualise diverse types of civic engagement, including political activism, philanthropy, humanitarianism, charity, and solidarity. Regarding the recent civic responses to refugee arrival, the applicability of traditional distinctions between different forms of civic engagement is called into question. The second part discusses general explanations of voluntarism. First, I will explore structural approaches which understand cultural predispositions as a motivator for human action. Then, I will explore critiques of humanitarianism, inspired by Foucault (1978) and Agamben (1998), with an emphasis on biopolitics (Ticktin, 2006, 2011; Fassin, 2005, 2007; Muehlebach, 2011, 2012; Rozakou, 2012). In light of novel forms of diverse civil society initiatives in response to the refugee crisis, I will argue that these generalising theoretical perspectives enable only a very limited limited understanding of the locally embedded volunteering for refugees. Therefore, the final section argues for the importance of approaching volunteering as a multidimensional practice embedded in individual biographies, institutional structures, and the local and national social environment (Eckstein, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010) in ascribing agency to volunteers (Carrithers, 2005). I will adopt Carrithers's theory of human sociality which offers an abstract framework of culture and human life, while paying attention to the particularities of the every-day life of volunteers in County Durham. Such approaches to volunteering focus on people's actions, interactions and experiences, as well as their narratives to account for and justify these, thereby developing such a multidimensional and holistic ethnography of volunteering in County Durham.

Voluntarism and migration

The arrival of refugees gave rise to an increase in civil society activities across Europe. A breadth of civil society actors, ranging from international NGOs to grassroots organizations and independent volunteers (Rozakou, 2012; Skleparis and Armakolasm, 2016; Stock, 2017; Kalogeraki, 2018; Cantat and Feischmidt, 2019; Jorgensen and García Augustí, 2019) responded to the arrival of displaced victims of violence, political as well as economic (Castles, 2003; Rozakou 2012). In a liberal democracy, civil society is a part of society, autonomous and separate from the state but acts within the framework of the law (Shils, 1991). Civil society has the important role of holding a "government accountable to its own professed principles" (Allsopp, 2017, p. 19). It consists of groups and organisations, independent from the government, which represent the interest of citizens and articulate their demands at different levels of society. Civic engagement is also a way for citizens to connect to larger social issues (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 343; Rakopoulos, 2014) and reduces the power of the government (Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 419). Thus, civic engagement improves democracy (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, 2005, p. 230). Civil society organisations and activities are understood to be non-profit orientated, acting in the public's interest with the primary aim of creating and enforcing welfare. They fall into the civil or voluntary sector, also known as third sector (Alexander, 2018), distinguished from the public sector, occupied by the government, and the profit-driven private sector, comprising business, private industry, and corporations. 'Refugee Third Sector Organisations' (RTSO) are civil society organisations with a particular focus on supporting "those who have been, or are going through, the asylum system" (Maybling and James, 2018, p. 4). The increasing demand for and reliance on RTSO in the UK, is reflected in the increase from 7 refugee third sector charities in 1990 to 142 in 2018 (Mayblin and James, 2018, p. 9).

The figure of the volunteer drives all forms of civil society activities (Prince and Brown, 2016), and with the prominence of and increasing reliance on the third sector, the concept of volunteering has occupied a central place in individuals' every-day lives and political ideologies (Prince and Brown, 2016, p. 1). Although volunteering occurs often in the context of civil society and has been used to imply

the charitable third sector (Bussell and Forbes, 2002; Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009), volunteering does not necessarily imply 'doing good' for others (Baines and Hardill, 2008, p. 21). In fact, volunteers play an increasing role in the governmental and for-profit sector (Plewa *et al*., 2015; Sekar and Dyaram, 2017). In these instances, volunteering can be seen as a form of leisure or "work performed without monetary reward" (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 348), lacking the often-implied charitable character of contributing to others' good (Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth, 1996; Brown, 1999). In this thesis volunteering is understood as a practice of care (Stock, 2017), that is inherently altruistic, "performed outside the intimate sphere of family and friends" (Wilson, 2000, cited in Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 348) and is conducted out of free will (Cnaan and Amrofell, 1994). Thus, volunteering constitutes a unique type of social bond between strangers that differs from kinship or workplace relations and relations between citizens of the welfare state (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010, p. 417).

Scholars developed categories to organise the diverse practices and actions encompassed by the term 'volunteering'. Corresponding to VanDyck's (2017) categories of 'organised' and 'organic' civil society, Ganesh and Mcallum (2009) differentiate between 'formal' and 'informal' volunteering. Organised civil society includes professional international and national non-governmental organisations, local and small community-based organisations. These forms of civic organisations comprise formal volunteering practices carried out exclusively by members in an organisation (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 346; Kalogeraki, 2018, p. 170). Organic civil society encompasses informal volunteering and takes on the form of un-organised, spontaneous interpersonal help unmediated by an organisation (Brown, 1999, p. 18; Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 346). This includes support for neighbours and strangers, and grassroots activities "below the radar" (Phillimore and McCabe, 2010). For example, during the 'long summer of migration' (Yurdakul *et al*., 2017), on Greek islands, locals and tourists acted as informal volunteers through their spontaneous acts of support (Rozakou, 2016; Sklepais and Armakolas, 2016). Solidarity networks emerged spontaneously (Jorgensen and García Augustí, 2019) and individuals volunteered to host refugees in their private homes (Meyer, 2017). These categorisations, however, cannot always be applied to ground realities. In fact, in the case of volunteering in Durham, it was not always clear whether an

organisation was behind certain activities or whether their were individuals' indepdendent initiative, challenging the creation of volunteering categories along the lines of organisational membership and accountability.

Volunteering can include the contribution of a range of resources (Alexander, 2018), including time, material donations, advice, living space, and labour in the context of refugee support. Thompson and Pitts (1992) distinguished between three types of support: emotional, information and instrumental. Information support entails transferring of knowledge and giving advice. Emotional support gives feelings of empathy, care and love, while instrumental support takes on a tangible form, for example the provision of material items. Depending on the context, the volunteers' motivation, the meaning of their practices, and the emergent social relations (Alexander, 2018), giving can be conceptualised as charity, solidarity, philanthropy or humanitarian giving.

Within the voluntary sector, political activism has been traditionally distinguished from charity, philanthropy, and humanitarianism. Political civic engagement involves activism, advocacy, political protests and public claims-making (Giugni and Passy, 2001; Lahusen and Grasso, 2018, p. 6). The aim is to bring about social change by addressing the roots of inequalities and mobilising on behalf of those affected by them (Giugni and Passy 2001; Scholz 2008). Although charity, philanthropy and humanitarianism are often used interchangeably, anthropologists have given them different meanings (Trundle, 2014, p. 14; Alexander, 2018; Sandri, 2018) linked to the assumptions underlying the acts of giving (Bornstein, 2009).

However, scholars (Bakalaki, 2008, p. 90; Trundle, 2012, 2014; Kynsilehto, 2018) argued cogently that these concepts are not in themselves useful in the close ethnographic study of specific cases. Trundle (2014, pp. 14-15) notes that they are not consistently used among informants and Kynsilehto (2018, pp. 181-182) notes the overlapping and interlinked networks, formal and informal organisations that do not allows for such rigid categorisation. Social practices and the values and meanings they imply, blur the boundaries anthropologists have constructed to classify 'charity', 'philanthropy', and 'humanitarianism' (Tundle, 2014, pp. 14-15), particularly with regards to civil society responses to mass displacement and refugee arrival. In line

with these arguments, the complex and multifaceted responses to the arrival of refugees that I found in Durham cannot be generalised and placed to any such categories. Therefore, the definitions are spared and, following Trundle (2014, p. 15), approaches to refugee support are encompassed by an 'ethic of doing good' in the form of giving which can take on diverse forms and meanings in different contexts.

It is however, important to review some criticism directed at these forms of 'doing good' through giving. A focus on service, assistance, and gift-giving fails to address the political and historical causes of suffering and treats the symptoms only (Barnett and Weiss, 2008). In fact, alleviation of suffering serves to shield the political and historical causes from visibility and safeguards governments from criticism (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019, p. 122). Thereby, the act of giving attains impartiality (Redfield, 2005; Barnett, 2014; Fleischmann and Steinhilper, 2017), which ensures access to sites and funding (Barnett, 2014; Skleparis and Armakolasm, 2016). Eliasoph (1998) argued that volunteering serves to excuse oneself from taking political action or responsibility for social inequalities. Moreover, charitable one-way gift-giving is detached from social obligations and reciprocal relations. Trundle (2014, p. 16) recognises the strange character of charitable gifts: it is given to strangers, it can contain rules against reciprocity, and often involves no social relations or obligations but impersonality. This led Bornstein (2009) to challenge Mauss' conceptualisation of the gift as bound to obligations and being reciprocal by nature. She adopts Derrida's concept of the "pure gift" which is not bound to moral obligations, rituals, or laws and does not expect returns in a material or symbolic sense (Derrida, 1992, cited in Bornstein 2009, p. 626). Muehelbach (2011) criticises one-way non-Maussian giving for exempting the recipient form mutual ties. Consequently, rather than being alleviated to attain equal status, the recipient has no other choice but to maintain a subordinate status to the giver. Therefore, humanitarianism is understood to create hierarchical and power-infused relations between giver and receiver, with the latter often developing dependencies (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019, pp. 108-109). Hence, as Theodossopolous (2016) documented, critiques of charity argue that one-way giving, as it is practiced in the humanitarian and philanthropic domain, is an economic redistributive activity that reproduces social hierarchies and inequalities. My

ethnography shows that time and skill, rather than material resources, were the most frequent gift Durham's locals gave. Thus, analysis of charitable gift-giving must not be approached from a purely economic perspective but take into account the diverse forms of the gift, which enhance recipients social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Hospitality, for example, involves the sharing of space, time and food (Still, 2000, p. 13) and open possibilities for social relationships.

'Solidarity' emerged as a characterisation of voluntary action that seeks to overcome the traditional categories of 'giver' and 'beneficiary' and the perils of one-way giving. Solidarity signifies the 'stepping down' of the privileged who "enter[s] a situation with whom one is in solidarity" (Freire, 1970, quoted in Oikonomakis 2018, p. 97). Acts of solidarity are performed out of shared experience and interest, common needs, and mutual responsibility that give rise to a union (Li, 2010, quoted in de Koning and de Jong, 2017, p. 13). Solidarity is essentially bound to a group and is based on expectations of mutual assistance (de Koning and de Jong, 2017; Lahusen and Grasso, 2018). Rokapolous (2016, p. 144) and Rozakou (2016, p. 189) note the disaffiliation from one-way giving through the terminological use of 'solidarian' instead of 'volunteer'. In this sense, solidarity is imbued with principles of equality and egalitarianism (Theodossopolous, 2016) that are also notable at the organisational level. Solidarity networks are understood to be horizontally organised and advocate direct democracy while lacking bureaucracy (Rozakou, 2016, p. 187), eligibility processes (Cabot, 2013) and internal organisational hierarchies (Mumby, 1988) as often observed in NGOs. However, Turinsky and Nowicka (2019) noted that often these loosely organised and unstructured initiatives face demands for funding and accountability and consequently implement measures to professionalise thereby translate their informal practices of solidarity into an institutional framework which reproduces the hierarchy they seek to avoid.

In fact, the response to mass displacement called up a variety of responses that challenge the classical distinctions between political activism, altruistic gift-giving, and solidarity. With the arrival of refugees in Europe, new possibilities for practices of inclusion and exclusion emerged (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016 p. 13). The migration management enacted by the EU and its member states established a regime of exclusion (Walters, 2002; Fekete, 2003; Grant, 2011; Topak, 2014) through the

politics of life (Fassin, 2007; Grant, 2011) and the criminalisation of refugees (Fekete, 2003; Fassin, 2005; Topak, 2014; Dines, Montagna and Ruggiero, 2015), and of local helpers (Skleparis and Armakolasm, 2016; Allsopp, 2017) in order to protect their nation state sovereignty (Fekete, 2003; Cheliotis, 2013). Competing with such regimes of exclusion were the local and international formations of collectivities and solidarities (Feischmidt, Pries and Cantat, 2019; Jorgensen and García Augustí, 2019), also described as the 'other face' of crisis (Cabot, 2016, p. 152; Rakopoulos, 2016, p. 144), which redrew the lines of inclusion and exclusion (Heckmann, 2012; Hamann and Karakayali, 2016). Welcoming newcomers and inviting them into nation states (Hamann and Karakayali, 2016, p. 70) and private homes (Meyer, 2017) created "alternative imaginaries" (Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008, p. 157). The newly fostered *Willkommenskultur* (culture of welcome) (Heckmann, 2012; Kober and Zotta, 2015; Yurdakul *et al.*, 2017) across Europe challenged the dominant system of exclusion, enacting a different social order.

Not only political activism, but also humanitarian support, although traditionally understood as apolitical, acquired political meaning as self-organised initiatives resisted the political regime. For example, civil disobedience was enacted in the case of rescuing refugees at Greek shores (Rozakou, 2016, p. 186; Skleparis and Armakolasm, 2016; Allsopp, 2017) and many humanitarian volunteers were motivated by political ideologies (Kende *et al.*, 2017). However, Vandevoordt and Verschraegen (2019) caution against over-politicising civic initiatives for refugees. Indeed, scholars observed that volunteers placed their engagement with refugee support in an apolitical humanitarian frame in which the political intentions of volunteering practices for refugees are often not evident (Hamann and Karakayali 2016; Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017; Feischmidt and Zakariás, 2019). Vandevoordt and Verschraegen (2019, p. 119, 123) argue that despite many actors' non-political intentions their practices "gained a political momentum", becoming "subversive" political acts due to their implicit counter hegemonic action. Similarly, Sandri (2018) interpreted grassroots humanitarian aid in Calais as "symbol against the violent border practices across Europe" (Sandri, 2018, p. 65) and termed the "space where the practices of activism and humanitarianism met" (Sandri, 2018, p. 76) 'volunteer humanitarianism'. Thus, distinctions along anthropologists'

conceptual boundaries to separate political activism from charitable action are difficult to maintain in such responses to mass displacement.

Explanations of volunteering

Having discussed how to characterise the response to mass migration, I now consider more overarching arguments that have sought generally to explain voluntarism as a phenomenon. I will discuss selected theoretical paradigms, which will be of value in conceptualising the findings in Durham. I will begin with structuralist approaches that identify the motivators for human action in 'culture'. Then, I will consider approaches to explain volunteer activity that are concerned with discursive technologies and the emergence of novel forms of citizenship under neoliberalism.

Altruistic giving in the form of volunteering has been understood by some as an expression of cultural predispositions. Such cultural motivational accounts are rooted in the understanding of culture as "repository of values that were transmitted via socialisation" (Vaisey, 2009, p. 1677), playing a motivational role in shaping human behaviour (Joas 1996; Hitlin and Piliavin 2004; Vaisey, 2009). Wuthnow (1995) argued that an early socialisation into an ethics of care by parents that is continued in secondary institutions increases the likelihood for altruistic action through volunteering due to the lasting cultural dispositions that are developed. Drawing upon Durkheim (1973) and Tocqueville (1960), this approach to understanding people's voluntary engagement was called 'normativist perspective' (Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998), 'sentiment theory' (Salamon, Wojciech Sokilowski and Haddock, 2017) or 'symbolic perspective' (Hustinx, Cnaan, Handy, 2010). Consequently, variation in commitment to altruistic volunteering is attributed to the degree to which cultural values of benevolence are internalised (Wuthnow, 1991, Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998, Dekker and Halman, 2003; Hustinx, Cnaan, Handy, 2010). Janoski, Musick, and Wilson (1998) use Bourdieu's (1990) concept of 'habitus' to understand volunteering. The habitus is a "system of durable, transposable predispositions […] principles which generate and organize practices" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). In other words, the habitus describes "the way society becomes deposited in persons, in the form of lasting predispositions […] to think, feel and act in determinant ways" (Wacquant, 2005, p. 318). As such, concept

captures a set of ingrained and embodied practices. Practicing care and benevolence is understood as a habituated mode of conduct that is carried out naturally (Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998, p. 497; Dallimore *et al*., 2018); and “go[es] without saying" (Bourdieu 1990, p. 71). Thus, volunteering at an early age and interation with an environment that promotes volunteering increases the likelihood of volunteering later in life.

Such a structuralist approach, however, is problematic and bears many limitations. Firstly, the assumption that cultural values or beliefs are translated into practice fails to account for acts of non-conformity, resistance, and social change (Carrithers, 2005), neglecting other aspects of human social life, such as “opportunity and social resources” (Janoski, Musick, and Wilson, 1998, p. 496-497) that are needed to translate value into practice. Moreover, identifying ‘culture’ or cultural predispositions as a main driver for action dismisses humanitarian volunteers as passive subjects, who are being acted upon by ‘culture’ instead of understanding volunteering as a result of moral reasoning (Carrither, 2005). Likewise, Sayer (2005 in Ignatow, 2009, p. 98) and Lamont (1992, p. 99) criticized Bourdieu for neglecting the moral dimensions of everyday life and the way in which people make moral judgements of other people’s actions. The view that ‘culture’ dictates human conduct like a table of instructions (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 4; Vaisey, 2009) denies the “ability to think and act otherwise” (McKee, 2009, p. 12; Carrithers, 2005) and allows no autonomous moral reasoning (Lamont, 1992, quoted in Ignatow, 2009, p. 99). From this view, the possibilities of actions and choices that shape the experiences of volunteers, as well as their capability of being coerced or influenced into certain actions (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440) are overlooked and remain un-investigated.

Another approach has been to explain volunteering as being incorporated into the meanings and practices of citizenship under neoliberalism. The rise of volunteering activities can be traced back to the 1980s (Shefner and Dahms, 2012) and the gradual replacement of the state by the third sector (Hardill and Baines, 2011; Newman, and Tonkens, 2011). According to Mayblin and James (2018), refugee third sector organisations have reached their highest number in UK’s history in 2018. This development is linked to the liberalisation of capital and market-led deregulation under the restriction of public spending and the reduction of the state (Ganti, 2014;

Cook, 2016, p. 141). The outsourcing of social services to civil society organisations to minimize costs (Burchell, 1991 in Sandri, 2018, p. 71) demands high volunteer activity. In pursuit of ensuring volunteer capacity, educational institutions (Gifford, 2004; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010), governments, corporations (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010), and the humanitarian industry employed means by which a particular rationality or mentality is fostered (Lemke, 2001), through which individuals are governed to assist the state's withdrawal from social services (Sandri, 2018, p. 71). Thus, the formation of "active citizens" (van Houdt, Suvarierol and Schinkel, 2011; De Koning and De Jong, 2017) and the fostering of a "neoliberal morality" (Muehlebach, 2012) can be understood as means to regulate and organise the "impulse to give" (Bornstein, 2009).

In 2001 the UN announced the International Year of the Volunteers, which marked an increase in government attempts to encourage volunteering and 'active citizenship' (Davis Smith, 2003, cited in Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010, p. 140). Scholars identified efforts to cultivate active citizens through "programmes or schemes that seek to direct and shape the actions of others" (Lacey and Ilcan, 2006, p. 131). Inherent to these developments are technologies of "responsibilisation" (Lacey and Ilcan, 2006), which redirect the previously held responsibility of the state for social welfare to its citizens (Muehelebach, 2011, 2012) and celebrate civic engagement and non-governmental organisations as democratic participation (Harbeson, 1994, cited in Yarrow, 2011, p. 2; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010, p. 145). Tony Blair's speech to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Howlett and Locke, 1999), his Labour government's Active Communities Initiative (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005; Lacey and Ilcan, 2006), the Big Society Agenda (Hardill and Baines, 2011, p. 1), and a series of compacts with voluntary organisations (Lewis, 1999; Milligan and Fyfe, 2005; Lacey and Ilcan 2006) fuelled individual responsibility for other's wellbeing (Clarke, 2005). These developments demonstrate the deliberate attempts to regulate human conduct towards the desired aim of increasing volunteer capacity (McKee, 2009, p. 7) by developing a 'political rationality' that is explicit about how citizens should be (Dean 1999, cited in McKee, 2009, p. 24). Such a discursive production of 'active citizens' is alleged by these writers to mark the shift from the welfare state to advanced liberalism (Lacey and Ilcan 2006; Peters 2006).

Such production of ‘active citizens’ has also been understood as a matter of sentimentalisation through producing narratives (Wilson and Brown, 2009; Fassin 2007) that construct worthy recipients, thereby mobilising philanthropic action (Fassin, 2007; Chouliaraki, 2012). Strategies to trigger compassion and pity (Muehlebach, 2012) include: positive and negative appeals (Chouliaraki, 2018), the “identifiable victim effect” (Jenni and Lowenstein, 1997), the display of a “spectacle of suffering” (Konstantinidou, 2008; Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero, 2015), and the ‘politics of compassion’ (Rozakou, 2012). Vandevoordt (2016) called such humanitarian appeals produced by NGOs “humanitarian media events”. In attempts to counter increasing fear, suspicion, and hostility towards migrants (Johnson, 2018, p. 20), they were depicted as the “refugee who must be saved“ (Cabot, 2017, p. 143; Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero, 2015), detached from politics and history, stripped of their sociocultural characteristics and political rights (Rajaram, 2002). Such representation of refugees produces a “limited version of what it means to be human” (Ticktin, 2006, p. 34) and encourages the protection and preservation of “bare life” (Agamben, 1998). The public is encouraged to witness suffering, make evaluative statements (Heyman, 2000), and respond with sympathy and compassion, and to act upon those emotions in the form of “sentimental out-pourings of charity” (Benthall 1993, cited in Heyman, 2000, p. 635). Although encouraging volunteers to act upon the impulse to help, the impulse is under rational control by the humanitarian industry to meet the demands of the neoliberal agenda (Bornstein, 2009). A sentimentalisation of the public (Muehlebach, 2012) and the introduction of morals into politics (Fassin, 2007) Can be understood as resulting in a novel form of “humanitarian citizenship” under which rights are replaced by sentiments (Cabot, 2018).

Although the descriptions and explanations so far covered highlight many general features of volunteering, they only provide a limited understanding of the localised response to refugee arrival. Drawing upon discourse or cultural predispositions to account for the phenomenon of volunteering locates the explanation for volunteering in an external force and neglects the individual’s ability to make decisions with regard to their particular life situations, the influence of broader societal transformations (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), and the local institutional and

social context in which volunteering is embedded (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010).

Linking volunteering to neoliberal discourse (Ilcan and Basok, 2004; Yin Yap, Byrne and Davidson, 2011; De Waele *et al.*, 2019), maintains a primary concern with 'mentalities of rule' and bodies of knowledge, and disregards volunteer practice (McKee, 2009). Analysis is disconnected from the messy realities of human life, the effects of bodies of knowledge on lived experiences, micro-level social relations, and individuals decision-making (McKee 2009, p. 473). To "read off" volunteering from discourse (McKee, 2009, p. 427) assumes that humans always submit to power and that the pursued ends are realised (Hunter, 2003). In fact, such theoretical frameworks view power as "omnipresent" (McKee, 2009, p. 13) and do not recognise human agency or autonomous decision-making following different rationales to either engage or disengage in volunteering.

Rather than simply reacting to mobilisation efforts, volunteers formally decide how much to involve themselves and in what activities, with whom, and under which circumstances (Paolicchi, 1995). Explanations of volunteering phenomenon need to take into account the broader and local social transformations (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003), the construction of the meaning of volunteering in the interplay between individual biographies, society and social interactions (Paolicchi, 1995, Eckstein, 2001), and shifts in modes of living (Trundle, 2014). Motivational narratives reveal great variability in such decision-making processes leading to involvement (Paolicchi, 1995). Motives for voluntary engagement can also change over the course of involvement, so that new motives emerge while others have become salient (Paolicchi, 1995, p. 161). Paolicchi (1995, p. 166) highlights the "situated" character of volunteering, also pointed out by Hodgkinson (1995), whereby the social network of family and friends was mentioned as primary source for opening the path into volunteering, personal motivations were secondary.

Similarly, Janoski, Musick and Wilson (1998, p. 496) noted that opportunities and social resources are key in translating cultural values into practice. Involvement linked to strong group ties, feelings of belonging, responsibility and obligation towards community (Wuthnow, 1991) was called 'collectivist' volunteering

(Eckstein, 2001, Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, p. 172, Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010). Collectivistic-based volunteering involves acts of giving that are initiated, organised, and overseen by a group, rather than individuals. Regardless of individual member's motivations, the collective effort is induced by an articulated problem and goals (Paolicchi, 1995) rooted in group values and beliefs (Eckstein, 2001). As such, volunteers form a 'moral community' which is defined by a set of values and practices (Trundle, 2014, p. 183). Cohen (1985, p. 37) regards values, norms, and moral codes as 'mental' or 'symbolic' boundaries that bind members of a group together and give meaning to their practices while delineating the group from other social entities. Members of a community are defined by their shared difference to the outside (Cohen, 1985, p. 115). Collective experience and purpose (Trundle, 2014, p. 68) promotes the bridging of differences within the group and triggers feelings of belonging and commitment to the group, while creating a shared sense of identity (Cohen, 1985; Eckstein, 2001; Trundle, 2014). A sense of commonality and feeling of self-worth impacts the way volunteering is experienced (Simon, Sturmer, and Steffens, 2000, cited in Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 425) and constitutes an important motivation for on-going involvement (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019, p. 256). Thus, a volunteer community is constructed through symbolic inclusion and exclusion (Cohen, 1985) and the sensations and sentiments that come along with it (Curtis, 2008).

Scholars noted a shift in the motives, meaning, and practice of volunteering, away from collectivist base toward individualistic volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). While a functionalist perspective regards volunteering as a means to reconnect with fellow citizens, build trust, and maintain a community like "societal glue" (Eckstein 2001, p.830), under the process of individualisation (Bellah *et al.*, 1985; Wuthnow, 1998) during "reflexive modernization" (Beck, 1994), volunteering has become individualistic, sporadic, goal-oriented and 'self-organized' (Putnam, 2000; Eckstein, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Dallimore, 2018). Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) coined the term "reflexive volunteering" to capture the self-orientated and individualistic mode of volunteering which centres on the self rather than on lasting relationships (Wuthnow, 1991, p. 303). People still help others and are connected, but create 'loose connections' in novel ways and become part of fluid groups rather than develop strong group affiliations like in the past (Wutnow, 1998;

Putnam, 2000).

In contrast to volunteering as an institutionalised and group-based practice tied to shared purpose and obligations towards the community (Eckstein, 2001), 'reflexive volunteering' is linked to personal life circumstances and expresses an 'ethics of self care' (Barnes *et al*., 2015, Trundle, 2014, p. 16) and concern for individual life-style choices leading to self-realisation (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, Hustinx and Meijs, 2011). Novel volunteer-centred institutional structures and the professionalization of volunteering respond to the needs and wants of the modern volunteer (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, p. 182). The biographical frame of reference and the implied search for personal transformation, fulfillment and development (Bakalaki, 2008, Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010, Chouliaraki, 2012) replace the previously held loyalties to a community as prime motivator for volunteering practices (Wuthnow, 1998; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). Thus, taking into consideration transformation at both societal and individual life situations and the social environment, volunteers are situated in a field of tension (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, p. 170). Neither culture as a set of instructions nor discursive explanation for volunteering account for the variation of meaning and practice of volunteering and the diverse motivational narratives and lived realities of volunteering.

Sociality

Another issue obscured by critical scholarship of charity and humanitarianism are the emerging socialities between giver and recipient. Research tends to reproduce the very category of the receiving refugee, which it aims to critique. Approaching charitable volunteering as a uni-dimensional and power-infused practice produces two types of subjects: the active giver who provides and the passive and dependent recipient (Barnett, 2011, cited in Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019, p. 208). This abrogates the recipients' capacity to make autonomous decisions and their ability to be social and political agents. In fact, scholars noted that displaced people not always appear as passive victims, instead refugees were identified as active agents in enacting resistance (Dines, Montagna and Ruggiero, 2015; Irfan, 2019) and in protesting against food quality in centres (Vandevoordt, 2017, p. 608), as well as in

developing networks (Thorleifsson, 2016), practicing hospitality (Rozakou, 2012; Vandervoort, 2017) and reciprocity (Darling, 2011). In these practices socio-political subjectivities are renegotiated (Vandevoordt, 2017). My ethnography reveals similar forms of agency on part of refugees who offered hospitality and actively sought help from volunteers when needed.

Wessendorf and Phillimore (2018) identified three types of relations emerging form the encounter between newcomer and local: 'serendipitous fleeting encounters', 'crucial acquaintances', and 'friendship', in all of which the migrant newcomer participates as agent, complicating the rigid categories of "the volunteer" and "the recipient". In fact, social roles are fluid and mutual as unpredictable interactions between giver and recipient (Trundle, 2014, p. 21) yield new possibilities for interactions. Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2016, p. 31) coined the notion of "cosmopolitan sociabilities" to describe the social relationships "established by people who, despite their differences, construct domains of being human together". Drawing upon Simmel, they use 'sociabilities', instead of sociality, to emphasise the egalitarian quality of the relationship in which "one "acts" as though all were equal" (Simmel, 1949, quoted in Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2016, p. 19). A volunteer who provides language assistance can develop a mutual relationship, built upon commonalities and shared interest, which recognises the recipient in their full social existence beyond mere biology. Critical studies on volunteering would benefit from such micro-level investigation of interactions between giver and recipient and the relationships they give rise to, rather than restrict investigation to abstract notions of power and bodies of knowledge.

In any case, my fieldwork experience made it difficult to limit myself to any approach which obscures or oversimplifies volunteering, which I came to understand as a multidimensional social practice 'characterised by conflict, contestation, and instability' (McKee, 2009, p 14). The diverse practices and relations in which volunteers are situated require a theoretical framework that lends attention to the micro-context of human experience and interaction while recognising the broad field of influences from culture, discourse, societal transformations, and individual life situations. I adopt a theory of culture as repertoire (Vygotsky, 1978; Swidler, 1986; Vaisey, 2009; Carrithers, 2009a) and Carrithers' (2005, 2009a, 2009b) approach to

human sociality, which sets a theoretical frame that offers an understanding of volunteering that acknowledges the dilemmas, uncertainties, and choices inherent to voluntary work. Thereby, I hope to produce an ethnographic account which more closely matches volunteers' lived experiences than grand structural narratives that leave no space for human agency (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440).

Carrithers (2005, p. 441) described our social world as a "mutual web of interconnectedness" in which we act and react. Social life involves habits, daily procedures, routines and encounters which one can expect, is prepared for, and anticipates (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 2). Social life is also constantly interrupted by incidents that are beyond one's control; from small happenings to great catastrophes (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 2). Thus, our social life is in a constant state of flux that yields possibilities and uncertainties (Humphrey 1997; Carrithers, 2005). This is particularly the case for a multi-cultural context, characterised by differences in access to resources, skills, knowledge, language, and ways of behaving with and thinking about people and the world. Thus, the encounter with difference (Favero, 2007) bears an unanticipated eventfulness, giving rise to 'situations', which Carrithers (2009a, p. 1) defines as the result of an episode of on-going happenings.

Situations, actions, and events demand a response. A view of social life that entails endless happenings that are unanticipated and beyond routine reveal the limits of culture as instruction, 'social structure' or 'discourse' in guiding or explaining human behaviour (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 1). As the unanticipated opens possibilities for action, advances scepticism, uncertainty, and choice, people can neither "read off" action from discourse (McKee, 2009) nor from 'culture' in a structuralist sense (Carrithers, 2008, p. 1, 2009a, p. 4). The creative work that is demanded of people to fill "the gaps" when presented with puzzling situations (Simpson, 2019) through interpretation and negotiation, making moral judgements and evaluations of behaviour (Sayer, 2005 in Ignatow, 2009, p. 98, 102), calls for an understanding of culture that "makes possible" rather than determines action (Swidler, 1986, p. 280). Such is the case with a theory of culture as "tool kit" (Vaisey 2009, p. 1679) or a repertoire (Brenneis, 2005, quoted in Carrithers, 2009b, p. 49) "of things learned, including mental schemes and images, values and attitudes, dispositions, forms of

speech and organization, narratives, and commonplace knowledge“ (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 4) that help people make sense of and cope with their social reality (Paocchini 1995, p. 162). Encountering everyday surprises enables people to draw upon culture to activate certain tools; to interpret an event, and inform action. With this approach, I aim to explore what kind of knowledge is used to inform and justify action and "destabilise division between knowledge and action“ (Trundle, 2012, p. 211).

The resources marshalled, however, are not limited to general 'cultural knowledge'. The cultural repertoire alone does not provide sufficient resources to allow us make sense of a situation (Carrithers, 2008) and is only of limited help in navigating the meeting with cultural difference (Favero, 2007, p. 52). Hence, other resources, such as personal experiences and narratives encountered in everyday life, in the media, or from our personal "knowledge database" (Favero, 2007, p. 52), open up further possibilities for interpreting, judging, and responding to the strange and unexpected situations (Carrithers, 2008) that arise in the sphere of volunteering. Retrospective narratives are insightful because they illustrate the creative diversity of rationales produced through the activation of resources to justify actions and persuade others (Vaisley 2009 p. 1679, Carrithers, 2005, 2009a) and oneself (Carrithers, 2005, p. 441; Nienkamp, 2009). Here, we find a "moral aesthetics" (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440) at work with the result being the production and narration of rationalities, justifications, and explanations to account for their actions. Thus, I suggest that the site of the encounter with difference as is the case between volunteer and refugee, is a suitable site to study the moral aesthetic at work and, in essence, the rhetorical edge of culture as volunteers interpret, persuade, and justify their choices.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach to the research. The methods deployed included participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews and 'go-along interviews'. The chapter is organised as follows: First, I discuss the development of the research question, and the ontological and epistemological approaches taken. Second, I explore the specific methods that I selected. The approach I adopted demanded attention to positionality and reflexivity in the research process. Hence, I explore in detail the contingent issues of emotions, social relations, and identity as a volunteer ethnographer, balancing the roles of researcher, volunteer and friend. My approach to the concept of 'the field' in this project is also discussed. Finally, I consider the ethical implications at all stages of the project.

Research question

After attending the Regional Gathering of the City of Sanctuary North East, my initial aim was to study the DCoS, its organisational culture and operational structure. However, after my first field experience, recounted above, I identified some major assumptions underlying my research aim. I had a predefined idea of 'a charity', making me assume that the DCoS charity occupied a physical space, organised events and support volunteers and oversaw their activities. I assumed clearly established procedures, an operational structure and formal channels of communication using excel sheets, sign up registers, an online presence to communicate activities, such as a webpage and social media accounts where information could be circulated and events published. My concern for studying the DCoS implied ontological assumptions about *what is*. During the first weeks of fieldwork, I realised that my preconceptions did not reflect volunteers' concerns, nor did they correspond to volunteers' understanding of *what is*.

These early field experiences required me to redirect attention away from structural-functionalist concerns for organising principles underlying the provision of refugees support. The approach operated *as if* support provision consisted of stable patterns of behaviour, guided by formalised and static procedures along defined institutional

boundaries. Hence, I returned to the field with the most general question (Davies, 1999) of 'what is going on?', 'how does refugee support happen?' 'what do volunteers do and why?' and 'how do helpers experience the provision of support?'. Thus this research is driven by the ontological concern to understand a state of being through participant observation, whereby the ontological underpinnings cannot be separated from the epistemological approach taken. Rather than being informed by an outsider's perspective, raising inquiries within the broad space of volunteering for refugees, while maintaining a focus on the support providers, enabled the production of an ethnographic account of civil society responses that emerged from the 'native's point of view' (Geertz, 1974); in this case from the local helpers' understanding of their social world. Such emic approach sidestepped presumptions about a state of being and aims to develop an understanding of a society in their own terms (Moore and Sanders, 2006). It avoided the application of artificial categories and production of abstract models which did not accurately correspond to the lived realities on the ground (Leach, 1970 cited in Moore and Sanders, 2006, p. 6), and it revealed alternative realities beyond the outsider's perception. Specific questions about aspects of voluntary support provision surfaced as particular issues unfolded. In developing an understanding of the context support occurred in, and the condition of refugee support as an un-institutionalised practice, a concern for the implications for volunteers themselves came about, in particular with regard to their understandings and experiences (1) of the organisation of support and the role of the DCoS and (2) of the encounter and engagement with refugees. These key interests were identified during fieldwork, and had not been visible prior to immersing in the field.

Data collection

To access the 'natives point of view' and produce emic questions I deployed six months of participant observation as "complete participant" (Gold, 1958; Spradley, 1980) and conducted 22 in-depth semi-structured interviews. Many scholars have demonstrated the suitability of an ethnographic approach to study civil society engagements (Feischmidt, Pries and Cantat, 2019). Tinney (2008), Trundle (2014) and Garthwaite (2016) have shown how the adoption of the role of a "volunteer ethnographer" (Garthwaite, 2016), provides a particular insider perspective into the workings of an organisation. Carrithers (2018, p. 9) argued for the value of

ethnography to "to place a door in the page … for us to step through". Following anthropology's mission to allow access to someone's world, I chose to employ participant observation and interviews to reveal the social arrangements and reasoning (Carrithers, 2018, p. 225) underlying this area of civil society engagement.

As participant observert in weekly conversation classes and drop-Ins in central Durham, Greenwich and Wilburn, I took part in the same tasks as other volunteers, and additionally observed volunteers' action and interaction (Fine, 2003, p. 46). The first group of refugees arrived in 2016 and with it the first civil society initiatives began. Since then every six months another group has arrived. I started fieldwork in early November 2018, and terminated in March 2019. Shortly before I started fieldwork a group arrived, and two groups arrived at the time I finished fieldwork. This suitable timing allowed me to explore voluntary activities shortly before and after refugees' arrival. Furthermore, I attended events and gatherings, including a Christmas craft afternoon, a women's group, and a Christmas party. As an observer, I participated in a Board of Trustees meeting of the DCoS. When possible I accompanied volunteers during their voluntary work. This was not always feasible however, because much of the support was arranged spontaneously, occurred in refugees' homes, and often dealt with private issues, such as health care and finances. Therefore, I obtained information about the delivery of one-on-one services from volunteers' accounts during informal conversations.

I used semi-structured interviews to investigate how volunteers made sense of their involvement. Following a semi-structured interview guide, open-ended questions were asked, allowing the interviewees to direct the conversation to topics that were important to them, leading to the formation of new questions (Bryman, 2012). The interviews were an important addition to participant observation as they provided a safe space to discuss sensitive topics, and gave research participants a detached space to reflect on their practices (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Conversations frequently touched on personal and intimate aspects of their private lives, for example the impact of a family member's death on their volunteering engagement, or about frustrations about their voluntary work, and therefore, offered important information that would have been inaccessible during participant observation. Depending on the direction the conversation took, my interview guide demanded adaptation. Often

participants said that the experience of being interviewed was enjoyable and beneficial to them. Interviews were mostly held in a café, in a relaxed atmosphere, and lasted from one to two hours. Sometimes, interviews took the form of ‘go along interviews’ (Kusenbach, 2003) while “on the move” (Evans and Jones, 2011) to and from drop-ins, conversation classes, and during car and bus rides. In contrast to interviews in cafés, ‘go along interviews’ did not “separate informants from their routine experiences and practices.” (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 462).

Following the approaches to understanding human social life taken by Rhetoric Culture Theory as outlined above, I pay close attention to the rhetorical, argumentative and persuasive character of culture (Carrithers, 2009b), by analysing volunteers’ narratives. This approach provided insights into the use of their capacity to persuade and convince of their reasons to engage voluntarily, their interpretations of others’ actions, and negotiations for their reactions and justifications. My analysis therefore explores the resources people activate and marshal in narratives, and their use of pronouns (Carrithers, 2008). This has allowed me to infer how volunteers categorise their social world of volunteering, and where they position themselves in the complex web of agents. The process required careful transcription of interview conversations, and analysis of the use of nouns and pronouns. Furthermore, analysis of interviews focused on identifying categories and sub-categories, deriving from prevalent issues raised by volunteers, such as “reasons for involvement”, “concern for a balance” or “concerns for boundaries”. Categories were grouped and mapped to assess the relationship between them.

Positionality and entanglements

As “complete participant” I immersed myself into the routines of volunteers to develop a detailed understanding of the complexities and messiness of volunteering. I develop a “thick description“ (Geertz, 1973) of the emergence and practice of support for refugees in County Durham. The aspect of immersion (Lewis and Russell, 2011) and ‘becoming native’ add an emotive dimension and inevitably implies the production of knowledge through social interaction. This approach lies in the assumption that all knowledge is created through human actions and interactions and, therefore can never be regarded as an “objective truth” detached from the social

context (Latour and Woolgar, 1979). The ethnographic approach I have chosen as most appropriate for this study implied the most intense involvement with the research participants. It was therefore important to consider my positioning in the field, and dimensions of identity, personality and rapport (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and how these have shaped the process of data collection and participants' behaviour, narratives and thoughts. This section addresses these issues, while suggesting that the interactive aspect of ethnography should not be viewed as a "source of bias, error … a persistent set of problems to be controlled" (Holstein and Gabrium, 1995, p. 113), but constitutes a valuable source of knowledge production and meaning making (Holstein and Gabrium, 1995).

What emerged from my personal experiences is a unique understanding of what it was like to be a volunteer under the extraordinary circumstances in Durham. Engagement as volunteer meant being involved in situations and demands I had not anticipated prior to fieldwork (Darling, 2014). This included demands for private home tutoring, requests for my personal phone number, leading a conversation class and the unwanted attention of a male refugee, which made me feel highly uncomfortable. These engagements informed my understanding of how voluntary refugee support worked (Darling, 2014). Concerned about particular encounters with refugees and unsure how to act, I asked fellow volunteers for advice and inquired whether they had similar experiences, resulting in the exchange of volunteering stories. I identified issues that were not unique to my experience, but commonly felt by volunteers, but these issues were only revealed in discussions after I had shared my own concerns. Chapter 4 is written with this chain of events in mind, whereby my personal experience of unexpected encounters informed discussion, which allowed me to identify a key concern of volunteers that had not been visible to me previously namely: the question of how to engage with refugees. Therefore, prolonged volunteering as 'complete participant' resulted in open and honest exchanges, which offered insights into volunteers' personal thoughts, opinions, worries and concerns regarding their involvement in supporting refugees. From my own experiences, and the resulting conversations, I identified key issues and deducted new research questions, which would have been inaccessible to the outsider.

Furthermore, by becoming a volunteer I shared in the experience and activities of the people I studied, including the challenges and emotions volunteering implied (Spradley 1980). This crucially shaped the interviewing process and the output. Being a 23-year-old female postgraduate student from Austria, and enjoying a privileged lifestyle, some local volunteers and I had little in common. Due to my participation as volunteer we identified "points of commonality" (Darling, 2014, p. 204) as we connected over a shared concern about refugees, or exchanged experiences about the charity's disorganisation. Volunteering not only allowed me to empathise with volunteers, it allowed volunteers to relate to me. The importance of relating to one another and identifying shared experiences became clear to me after conducting several interviews. I realised that after I had shared personal experiences and revealed the feelings often implicated in volunteering, interviewees responded instantly, telling stories and offering insights into their own feelings. I speculate that had I not reciprocated by sharing some insights into my life (Darling, 2014), volunteers would have been more reluctant to offer information. It is important to note that in interviews with some, I did not establish rapport. As a result, the duration of those interviews was much shorter, and revealed less about the personal aspects and the emotional dimension of volunteering.

The outcome of the interview is a product of the social encounter between participants' (Holstein and Gabrium, 1995, p. 113). Following Holstein's and Gabrium's (1995) 'active interviewing' approach, I understood interviews as encounters framed by social processes, not as a means to extract and transfer knowledge through questioning. Interviews are interactive and therefore, shaped by emotions, gestures, language and the atmosphere between participants and researchers (Bondi, 2005), as well as their ability to build trust and sympathy. The exchange of information about oneself in an interview is a social process framed by expectations and demands, corresponding to levels of intimacy and familiarity (Linde, 1993, p. 7). As we get to know a person and the level of intimacy increases, we expect more detail about a person's life (Linde, 1993, p. 7). By sharing about myself, I demonstrated trust in the other, and they got to know me better. The level of intimacy and familiarity increased to the extent that new social demands and expectations framed the social encounter. Volunteers reacted by offering their views on my story, or offering a story about their own volunteering life. This suggests that

trustworthiness was achieved not only by prolonged engagement as a volunteer (Darling, 2014, Kawulich, 2005), but also by granting trust to others performing a similar role. Sharing information about myself increased the level of intimacy and trust, and effected movement in the interviewees' minds, resulting in an agreeable form of reciprocation (Fernandez, 1986, p. 8).

The negotiation of my diverse roles as friend, volunteer and researcher, implicates the data presented here. These roles pursued conflicting interests. As researcher my primary interest in attending social gatherings was to observe volunteers' action and interaction (Fine, 2003) and make connections, alongside gaining volunteering experience. As a volunteer I was required to pay attention to refugees, identify their needs, and respond accordingly. Hill O'Connor and Baker (2016, p. 183) note that in traditional ethnographies the researcher can judge and choose which role to adopt based on their research needs. In the case of 'volunteer ethnography' however, the degree of involvement and detachment is not always decided by the researcher, but bound to the situations' demands for participation (Hill O'Connor and Baker, 2016, p. 183). Given the demand for my voluntary labour in conversation classes and drop-ins, I often had no choice but to prioritise the interaction with refugees over observing, documenting and analysing (Spradley, 1980) volunteers' actions and interactions. This shift between roles also happened during interviews, as interviews turned into discussions about what needs were unmet, and how we could improve our services. Consequently, what set out to be an interview turned into a creative space where new ideas were discussed. I was thus forced to toggle between my roles as researcher and volunteer.

Engagement and detachment as the ethnographer moves between the roles of insider and outsider, is a core feature of ethnographic research (Yarrow *et al*., 2015). It demands skillful negotiation, which is particularly difficult to do when involved as 'volunteer ethnographer' (Hill O'Connor and Baker, 2016, p. 183). Often I felt a tension between my roles as researcher and volunteer that resulted in concerns whether my roles in conversation classes and drop-ins had shaped the data I collected too strongly (Trundle, 2014, p. 5). To avoid losing sight of my role as researcher, prior to every social gathering I made a list of specific issues I wanted to inquire about, and in the case of an interview I prepared a guide. Narrowing my focus, rather

than trying to record everything, allowed me to move between my roles more quickly and frequently. Moreover, it prevented feelings I had at the beginning of being overwhelmed by what I had to record and analyse, and frustrated by my own inactivity as a researcher (Darling, 2014, p. 204) due to situational demands. In different stages of fieldwork I emphasised different roles (Hill O'Connor and Baker, 2016, p. 184). Initially, I was more concerned as volunteer to build trust and rapport (Garthwaite, 2016, p. 63). As the research progressed I emphasised the needs of my research, with a narrowing focus and a clearer picture of the direction my project was taking. For my write up phase I withdrew entirely from active volunteering.

As my involvement intensified I developed social relationships and friendships with refugees. My roles could not be reduced to the 'insider' and 'outsider' as my emotional entanglement in the field took on another dimension. In drop-ins and after conversation classes, when my volunteer involvement was less structured (Reynolds, 2017, p. 352), I was able to make decisions more freely, which revealed the multiple personal and emotional involvements (Darling, 2014) that implicated my activities. Drop-ins were vivid spaces, filled with chatter and attended irregularly by seven to forty people. In this context I was faced with decisions about how I should take on the role of a volunteer, and help refugees practice English conversation. How should I reconnect with a Syrian woman, who had become my friend, knowing that I was one of her only friends? How might I prioritise my research, and join a group of volunteers discussing funding for a trip? A dilemma I encountered regularly after conversation classes, occurred when my Syrian friend invited me for lunch at her house right after the class, while other volunteers stayed, cleaned the room, and drove home together. Should I accept the invitation, which meant fostering friendship and being a positive addition to a refugee's life, or should I follow my research needs and join my fellow volunteers? These situations provided insights and valuable data.

Navigating this landscape of possibilities revealed that not only did I have to find a balance between my roles of researcher and volunteer, but I had to be a companion to refugees where friendship was implied. I responded to the demands, expectations and commitments in a variety of ways. A list of subjects I wanted to discuss with volunteers helped to make decisions. If I had addressed all the issues before the class

ended, I often would have placed the emphasis on friendship, neglected my role as researcher and gone to the home of my Syrian friend. Sometimes I felt that commitment to friendship demanded more attention than research needs, particularly after seeing my friend's disappointed face when I rejected her invitation. At other times, in consideration of Syrians' social isolation, I made the ethically informed decision to prioritise their needs over my research needs. On a few occasions, my decisions were impulsive and did not follow any rationale. Most frequently, my decisions were motivated by concerns about inactivity (Darling, 2014, p. 204) and a fear of "missing out" (Falzon, 2009, p. 33, Reynolds, 2016, p. 335), and "not living up to the anthropological ideal of developing "thick description" (Geertz, 1973)**.** In short, social, practical and emotional entanglements (Darling, 2014) bore expectations, commitments and obligations, which implicated the decisions I made in the negotiation of different roles in the field.

Field-notes

Being actively engaged as a volunteer, meant that I took few notes during participant observations. While always equipped with a notepad and phone to make quick jottings, an activity Clifford (1990, p. 51) called 'inscription', I wrote field-notes afterwards, on my laptop, when I was alone and had time to reflect. Capturing the numerous atmospheric, sensorial and emotive experiences (Pink, 2003) as I recorded my observations demanded "memory work" (Thompson, 2014, p. 248). I followed Merriam's (1998, in Kawulich, 2005) suggestion to identify key words in conversation, to facilitate recollection of the content when taking notes afterwards. When I had the desire to take notes while volunteering, but felt uncomfortable pulling out my notebook, I made notes on my phone and deleted them afterwards. The use of my phone felt less interruptive of the social dynamic, as phones were always being used by refugees and volunteers.

Although de Munck and Sobo (1998, p. 45) suggest keeping two separate notebooks, one for observations, and one for personal reflections in a diary-style, I followed Thompson's (2014, p. 249) example and kept observations and records of activities and conversations, as well as abstract thinking, analysis, personal reaction, and emotional expression (Emerson *et al*., 1995) in one Word document on my

computer. Putting my thinking and my work into the same file (Thompson, 2014) seemed the most suitable way, as my observations, personal experiences, questions and comments often overlapped. Alongside my reporting of the physical surroundings, describing how participants engaged with their environment (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999) as well as interactions, conversations and reactions of volunteers (Kawulich, 2005), my field-notes contained expressions of anxieties, frustration and excitement (Smith and Kleinman, 2010), adding a deeply emotional dimension (Thompson, 2014, p. 249). Thus, in writing fieldnotes I "transform[ed] the self into an object for consideration" (Trundle, 2014, p. 3). Hence, field notes are a manifestation of the blurred boundaries between my research activities and my personal life, and manifested the impossible separation of the researcher's positionality from the process of knowledge production when doing ethnography.

Furthermore, my field-notes distorted the distinction between data collection and data analysis. I not only recorded behaviour, but reflected on how my role affected those I studied and analysed by identifying common patterns and considering behavioural changes across different settings. In the process of data production through interactions with research participants, the first stage of analysis occurs during the encounter (DeWalt and DeWalt, 1989). While still in the field, it continues with the writing of field-notes, and throughout the writing-up process. During participant observation I identified multiple themes, which I explored further in interviews. Among many themes, reasons for voluntary engagement, experience of the organisation of refugee support, reflexions on encounters, and cultural difference with refugees, all emerged as key concerns of this thesis.

Participants

Given the emphasis on the co-production of data, this section introduces the participants; the volunteers, refugees and myself. Although the refugees were not research participants, they were integral to the research setting and were the source of volunteers' voluntary engagement, hence I introduce them in more general terms.

The researcher

This ethnographic account only produces partial truths (Clifford, 1986), shaped by my position and personality. Thus, there is an inherent bias in my work resulting form the cultural constellations and the social dynamics (Clifford, 1986, p. 7), but also from my particular way of thinking influenced by my habitus (Heintz, 2008). I am a Durham graduate in my early twenties, raised with a privileged background in Austria. This shaped how others viewed me. Inevitably, my academic and socio-cultural background influenced my own impressions of encounters with the local population and Syrians in post-industrial and rural working class towns across County Durham, as well as my actions in this setting. I put effort into adapting my appearance and language to the context. My light foreign accent and my gender were unlikely to have significantly impacted my interaction with volunteers. Most of them were female as well, and many noted that they had not noticed my foreign background. My gender became more significant in my encounters with refugees. I mostly interacted with and was approached by Syrian women and children. There was one incident though, where I felt uncomfortable in the presence of a Syrian man, due to his comments and body language. This influenced my movement in the room during a conversation class. I informed the class leader of my discomfort and explained that it was the reason for my decision to miss the class. When participants shared deeply moving stories, I empathised and I often could not prevent an emotional response. Extrovert and passionate about my work as anthropologist and volunteer, I was often challenged to resist impulsiveness, practice patience, and listen actively (Forsey, 2010) rather than talk. I might not always have succeeded. As student I approached volunteering with a set of institutional affiliations similar to student volunteers, and different to most other local volunteers, who had different ideas and life experiences. Finally, my approach to studying civil society was intrinsically shaped by formative experiences I had in Vienna, as volunteer in an "emergency camp", during the "long summer of migration" in 2015 (Yurdakul *et al.*, 2017). From this I could draw implicit comparisons to the workings of refugees support in Durham.

Volunteers

While there was great variety in volunteers' occupational backgrounds, gender and age, some general observations about participants can be made. People involved in refugee support were mainly from a white British middle class background, with a few exceptions who had a foreign background, but had been residents of Durham for decades. The majority of participants identified as female. A significantly lower proportion identified as male. This corresponds with many studies that suggest that women engage in altruistic activities more often than men (Helms and McKenzie 2014, Dittrich and Mey 2015, Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994). There were three volunteer "types": Local Durham-residents who were retired or for other reasons not in employment, who worked on the ground with refugees. Many local helpers had previously worked in the civil service, including retired teachers, civil servants and a career advisor. There were some individuals from Iraq and Syria, who did not come to Durham as refugees, and were able to volunteer as interpreters in drop-in sessions and English classes. Also, there was a group of student volunteers from Durham University. They gained access to conversation classes via the Durham for Refugees student society. Lastly, Durham university staff were generally involved in the bureaucratic aspect of the charity, and were trustees of the charity. They had little contact with refugees, and rarely worked on the ground in conversation classes or other gatherings.

Due to the diffuse nature of the support network, and its multiple and overlapping institutional affiliations, it is impossible to estimate how many volunteers there were. The number of volunteers who attend conversation classes and drop-in sessions fluctuated between two and seven. As many of the volunteers helping conversation classes were university students, the numbers decreased during term time. Another difficulty in providing an accurate breakdown for the number of volunteers is that although the DCoS kept a record of their membership, not all members volunteered. This study included people who supported refugees in diverse ways; including services such as, organising events, teaching, driving and translating, amongst others. They were committed to varying degrees. Local-residents appeared to be more committed than students in weekly attendances. All people involved used the term "volunteer" to refer to themselves and other helpers, and described their activities as

“volunteering”. I adopt their terminology and use the general term “volunteer” to lable the people involved in differen tasks with different degrees of commitment, and “volunteering” to refer to the diverse activities they engaged in.

The newcomers

Throughout my practice as volunteer ethnographer I gained a level of detail about refugees which publication might cause harm to them. Thus, to protect them, the information provided here about Syrian refugees is taken from official public resources, published by the Durham County Council and emerged from general observations, which do not enable identification. Names, places of origin, address, personal information or life stories, profession and numbers of children will not be used. Age and gender are only included in the description when strictly necessary and under the condition that this does not reveal someone’s identity. This will not limit my ethnographic account though, as my focus was on volunteers and their activities. Specific details about the refugees they worked with, would only have obfuscated the purpose of the project. Further ethical considerations are discussed below in the ‘ethics’ section.

The first group of five Syrian families arrived in May 2016 and was settled in central Durham. In November 2016, six families comprising 28 individuals, were settled in the South of the county. In June 2017 five families comprising 25 individuals were welcomed to the north, followed by the settlement of new families in the same town a year later. In October 2018 three families were settled in another town, and by the end of my fieldwork, in Spring 2019, another group had arrived, leaving one group, which was expected to arrive in the autumn 2019. Refugees came from different areas in Syria. They included practicing and non-practicing Muslims and Kurds. Their age range span across three generations, and their economic, occupational and educational backgrounds, as well as their English language proficiency, was equally varied; some were illiterate in Arabic, others held university degrees. Due to the eligibility criteria of the SVPRS, which prioritised diagnosable illness or injury (Fassin, 2005; Ticktin, 2006), many newcomers suffered from a medical condition. Refugees’ diversity presented a range of interest and needs (Vertovec *et al*., 2017, p. 7). They were offered furnished housing by the council and received fortnightly

benefits. As a condition of receiving financial support, newcomers were required to attend ESOL classes, or actively seek a job. An evaluative report published by the Durham County Council (2017) noted the achievements of some newcomers: A young person had secured a dental nurse apprenticeship; another young person attended an engineering course, another individual received a placement with the council, and one person took up a voluntary position at a hair and beauty salon.

'The Field'

As my study of the social phenomena of voluntary refugee support could not be "accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site" (Marcus, 1995, p. 96) but required me to follow people and their relationships across space, within the County of Durham, I adopted Marcus' (1995) approach by conducting a multi-sited ethnography. The geographical de-centredness (Falzon, 2009, p. 2) of refugee support occurred in physical encounters, but also in the virtual realm of whatsapp messages, which followed volunteers across space. When I started my fieldwork, refugees had settled in 5 locations across the County: Maplewood in central Durham, Wilburn, Greenwich, Richmond and Wishwell. By the time I terminated the fieldwork a new group of families had arrived and settled in Seaham and Peterlee. In each of these settlement areas English Conversation Classes were offered, however the conversation class in Maplewood closed in November 2018. At the time of writing, conversation classes and drop-ins in Seaham and Peterlee were in the process of being organised, but had not yet been launched. Due to the temporality and spatiality of conversation classes, this ethnography does not encompass a full account of refugee support covering all areas and initiatives in the county, and does not give equal attention to all areas of settlement, or indeed all initiatives. Instead, it is limited to the support provided in Maplewood in central, Wilburn, and Greenwich. This included participant observation in conversation classes and drop-ins in central Durham, Wilburn and Greenwich, as well as social gatherings in those areas. The initiatives in Richmond, Wishwell, and the currently planned initiatives in Seaham and Peterlee are not discussed in this thesis.

The reasons for this selection of field sites were primarily practical. Due to the short distance between my home, and the support provided in those specific areas, I could

spontaneously and flexibly move between the field-sites. Public transport to Richmond and Wishwell was irregular and inconvenient. Secondly, some activities in the other locations overlapped with the activities in Wilburn. I had the impression that refugees and volunteers from Maplewood, Wilburn and Greenwich were closely connected due to their proximity. The initiatives linked to the university and the community hall, formed a unique hub of support, which provided an ideal context to explore what volunteers in Durham did, as well as how and why they did it. Hence, I prioritised these sites over the more distant and disconnected locations. Thirdly, focus on these locations was not only a matter of choice. My involvement with these groups evolved organically through connecting with volunteers involved in these locations during the City of Sanctuary North East gathering. Lastly, it was in these locations that I rapidly developed a social network from which invitations to events, gatherings and informal go-along interviews happened.

Access

The Regional Gathering of the Durham City of Sanctuary North East was my 'gate' to the field. During coffee breaks I connected with volunteers and exchanged contacts. Claire, the leader of the class in Wilburn, was a key informant. She was my first point of contact after we met in the Regional Gathering, and invited me to join the conversation classes and drop-ins. I also found out about many gatherings, and the conversation classes in Maplewood and Richmond, via the Durham for Refugees student society Facebook page. It was through my attendances of gatherings, and by word-of-mouth, that I recruited most of the interview participants. The drop in and conversation class were the most effective way to connect with volunteers, to build trust, and to demonstrate my commitment to our shared intention to help refugees. Moreover, volunteers helped spread the word about my project, which led to meeting other volunteers who were willing to be interviewed.

The data collection encompassed a range of spaces that reached beyond physical encounters with volunteers. My 'field' of research was extended to the digital space. I was added to two whatsapp groups in which written texts between volunteers took place. I received messages inviting me to join an Arabic-English language exchange over coffee, and I was contacted by a volunteer who encouraged me via email to join

an anti-racism demonstration. These experiences inevitably shaped my understanding of how refugee support worked. Furthermore, although having "retrieved from the field" for writing-up, I continued to be involved by occasionally receiving messages and emails from volunteers. Due to the unpredictable ways ethnography unfolds, I accessed information that impacted my research, even though I had not been expecting this information, and I was not actively researching. This development blurred the boundaries of the 'field', and raises the important question: "where does the field begin and end?" (Clifford, 1990, p. 64). Challenging the traditional perception of 'the field' as a distant place separated from my every-day life (Thompson, 2014) my response to Clifford's question (1990, p. 64) would be that the field seemed to be everywhere I was. Certainly, it was not restricted to the spaces of social gatherings and interviews. Thus, I came to see it not as a physically bounded space, but fluid and adaptable.

Ethics

The ethnographic approach to the study of social phenomena creates various ethical challenges. Due to the distinctive mode of engagement with the research object inherent to ethnography, and the complexities that arise as the research unfolds in unpredicted ways, it is important to consider the ethical implication of the research and how the research activity and output might affect the actors involved. The fundamental ethical principle underlying my work is the advancement of knowledge whereby "doing good, not doing harm and protecting the autonomy, wellbeing, safety and dignity of all research participants" (Iphofen, 2013, p. 1) is of primary concern. This research was approved by the chair of ethics of the Department of Anthropology of Durham University, and followed the ASA and the EU GDPR. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss some of the ethical implications in greater detail, as well as the measures taken. I begin by outlining the purpose of the research, and its beneficiaries.

The practical purpose of this research is to qualify for a Masters degree. In this regard, I am the main beneficiary of the research. But the academic purpose lies in an improved understanding of how civil society initiatives to support refugees in County Durham work, and how those involved in support provision experience the

organisation of support, and their encounters with refugees. The aim is to contribute to anthropological scholarship through the publications that follow this research. The third purpose of carrying out this project is to contribute positively to support services for refugees by providing insights into the experiences and concerns of volunteers. Many volunteers expressed their interest in reading my research so that they could reflect on their activities, with the ultimate goal of enhancing refugees' wellbeing while maintaining theirs. Moreover, I intend to offer volunteers and the DCoS access to my thesis, and to provide them with a summary of the results. I would also be prepared to make suggestions for future practices, if called upon to do so. With this in mind, I hope to aid reflection and open new ways of thinking about and engaging in support. Ultimately, I hope to make a positive impact on volunteers' experience of volunteering. It follows, that this approach is likely to improve support for refugees.

The above discussion explained the aims of my research and the methods necessary to produce an in-depth understanding of volunteering in Durham. I now consider the measures I took to ensure the protection of all participants and others involved, from any foreseeable harm or damage my research activities might have caused. It was, of course, essential to make those I spent time with during volunteering aware of my research activity, to inform them about the purpose and process of my research, and to obtain consent from all parties. Although my research was not about the DCoS, as the ethnography unfolded the role of the DCoS in the provision and organisation of support for refugees was explored. As such, written informed consent was received from the Regional Coordinator of the City of Sanctuary North East, and from the Board of Trustees of Durham City of Sanctuary. Furthermore, although my research was not concerned *per se* with refugees' behaviour or experiences, I was nevertheless involved with them as a volunteer ethnographer. They appear descriptively, in the most general sense, whereby nobody's identity was revealed. A translator present at English classes, drop-ins, and other charity events translated my research activity. No questions or concerns arose, and everyone agreed to be involved in general observations. I took into account the likelihood that refugees felt isolated, might be experiencing social exclusion, or might be lacking in advantages. Alongside my commitments as a research student, I tried to support the refugees I encountered as much as I could.

I informed all volunteers that I was participating not only to support, but also to research with the primary intention to find out how refugee support worked, how volunteers engaged and interacted, and how they reacted to refugees' needs and requests. In effect, this required the continuous application for consent. During social gatherings I always sought consent from the organiser first. Whenever possible, I made a general announcement to explain my research activity, and urged participants to inform me if they did not agree to be involved in observations. Often, however, the social setting did not allow for such interruptions. Consequently, I addressed volunteers individually in order to obtain informed verbal consent. I offered a printed or electronic copy of an information sheet I devised for the purpose. Prior to every interview the research purpose and process was explained clearly, and verbal consent was always obtained. With the permission of interviewees, interviews were recorded with a recording device and subsequently transcribed. Travel costs to interview locations were reimbursed and refreshments were provided.

As I gained more insight into the local context and became aware of some people's readiness to practice violence against volunteers and refugees, I considered the possible harm caused by detailed ethnographic description of the locations of volunteering and the people involved. I consulted volunteers and the community hall about their experiences and opinions and we agreed that the safest way to proceed was to ensure that neither people nor locations were identifiable to avoid unlikely but possible racist attacks targeted at the volunteers, sponsors of volunteering activities and refugees. Therefore, I give only vague descriptions such as "North Durham" in line with the information about refugee settlement publicised by the Durham County Council (2015, 2017). Moreover, I use pseudonyms for areas in which refugees were housed and for locations in which volunteering activities were conducted to prevent the misuse of data for harmful and racist purposes. Also, individuals are anonymised and unidentifiable. They were given the option to be named or remain anonymous. All decided to remain anonymous.

All data from interviews and field-notes were handled with the greatest attention to confidentiality and anonymity, and were kept on an encrypted file, accessible only via password, which was known to me only. Participants understood that all the information they provided was confidential, to be used for research purposes only,

and that they could withdraw their participation and request the deletion of data collected about them, at any time. All participants had the opportunity to ask questions, and were offered a printed or electronic copy of the information sheet with my contact information on it. All those I approached agreed to participate in the research, and many expressed their gratitude for investigating this "important area".

The nature of ethnographic fieldwork demanded that consent was practiced as an on-going matter. Firstly, the negotiation of my varied roles as friend, volunteer and confidant demanded continuous negotiation of consent. As a complete participant I was fully involved in the work, and shared disappointments, frustrations and joys with fellow volunteers. Occasionally, some volunteers expressed their discontent about other members' work, and were upset about how refugee support in Durham was being delivered. I listened to these accounts and empathised. Such situations demanded "situated judgements" (Darling 2010, 2014) of the most appropriate use of the information that I acquired. If I was unsure, I approached the individual and asked how they would like me to handle the information they had shared. Moreover, due to my intense involvement as volunteer, my appearance and practices, I was "blending in" with the community I studied (Darling, 2011, p. 409). Consequently, my role as researcher easily "slipped from view" which demanded repeated reminders of my research activities (Darling, 2011, p. 409). Furthermore, my ethnography's emic approach implied changes in the research focus as research progressed. Consequently, I informed participants about the re-framing of the research focus and obtained permission for continuation of my research and confirmation of continuation of their participation in light of the slight changes in research focus.

Scholars who have acted as 'volunteer ethnographers' suggest setting "boundaries" to address some ethical considerations beforehand, and to guide negotiation in the field (Tinney, 2008). I followed the principle to never refuse to help. In the rare case, when my hand was forced, I prioritised my own wellbeing over home tutoring in accordance with safeguarding recommendations offered by the DCoS. Furthermore, I ensured that my research activities never diminished the support refugees received from volunteers. I also ensured that my participants prioritised helping refugees over engaging with me for research purposes. In these ways, I sought to ensure that my

activities did not implicate the services refugees accessed from volunteers. On the contrary, had I not entered into this research, it is unlikely I would have become a volunteer in Durham. It seems to me that due to this research, and my role as a complete participant, I added to the support refugees received. I not only volunteered in line with research needs but volunteered beyond my research demands. This way I could "give back" (Gupta and Kelly, 2014) to the community I studied and not only volunteered for my personal benefits.

Conclusion

This section has discussed the methodological approach taken in this ethnographic research. I have discussed the process of phrasing a research question and the ontological and epistemological demands, arguing for the appropriateness of an emic approach to study the unpredictable and complex processes underlying the provision and emergence of voluntary refugee support in County Durham. I have identified participant observation and semi-structured interviews as the most suitable methods to address the questions driving this research. It may be expected that large parts of this thesis will be descriptive, with the primary aim to 'open the world' (Carrithers, 2018) of volunteering in Durham to the reader. Due to the partial nature of ethnography, and the social processes inherent to the research encounter, this thesis is crucially informed by a "reflexive awareness" (Iphofen, 2013, p. 1) of my positionality in the field and the social relations I developed, all of which implicated the production, interpretation and analysis of data. I have offered reflections on my role as a complete participant and interviewer in the writing of field-notes and the creation of knowledge. I have considered the ethical implications of this project, as well as my involvement as volunteer ethnographer. Throughout this thesis I hope to demonstrate the value of an ethnographic approach to study volunteers' lived experience of refugee support provision. With this in mind, I now explore the world of volunteering in County Durham.

Chapter 1
Introducing voluntary refugee support in County Durham

While attempting to present the unstructured and disorganised, in a structured and organised manner, this chapter seeks to provide an overview of the activities volunteers performed, and the development of support services across three locations in County Durham. It is organised around 3 key features which I argue, defined the context and practices of volunteering for refugees in Durham. These key characteristics were: (1) The vast diversity of activities as a result of a diffused web of agents, (2) the absence of organisational markers to delineate organisational boundaries, and to mark an institutional authority over spaces, objects and people and, (3) the spontaneous improvisation of support. Exploring each feature, the ambiguous role of the DCoS and the non-institutionalised character of voluntary refugees support, will be revealed. This constitutes the context for further exploration of the volunteering experience in Durham in the ensuing chapters. Furthermore, the diffused, spontaneous and disorganised context of support provision discussed further in chapters two to four, elaborates on my initial concerns for the lack of structure and organisation in the DCoS. The observations I have made and present here account for my preliminary claim that my initial search for the charity's organisational 'structure' was informed by etic assumptions about how volunteering for refugees works. I had assumed that there would be an established institution. Adopting 'the native's point of view' demanded the re-framing of the research question, leading me to explore what volunteers do, and how support provision actually works.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the key spaces of refugee support; conversation classes and drop-ins, spread across multiple localities in County Durham. I apply the Nussbaum's concept of 'capabilities' (Nussbaum, 2011) and Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' (1986) to conceptualise the diverse support activities offered by volunteers within conversation classes and drop-ins, as well as beyond these spaces.

After exploring diverse support activities in Maplewood, Greenchurch and Wilburn, I discuss the material and symbolic environment in which local helpers performed the role of the volunteer. I argue that the spaces of volunteering were defined by the absence of organisational markers and institutional boundaries. The final section identifies improvisation as reaction to need, as a further characteristic of civil society support in Durham. Under the absence of an overarching authority it will be demonstrated that support for refugees depended on volunteers' flexible availability and willingness to spontaneously react to needs and demands encountered in unanticipated situations, whereby the tasks were not overlooked, documented or administered. These observations go to setting the context for the discussions on accountability, responsibility and authority of refugee support in chapter 3. Overall, this chapter shows that locals in Durham were generally ready to help in altruistic ways, and reacted spontaneously out of compassion as as they detected unmet needs.

Spaces and practices of refugee support

Volunteers and refugees gathered weekly in the informal settings of conversation classes and drop-ins to provide and receive support in the form of social, cultural and economic capital that increased refugees' social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986) and their capabilities to lead the lives they valued (Nussbaum, 2011). Many practices of support occurred in private spaces, such as home tutoring, gardening, fixing household items, and dropping off material donations, and remained undisclosed to the public and inaccessible to me as an observer. In social gatherings the identification of needs and concerns and consequent arrangements was moved from private homes and private whatsapp conversations to the open semi-public spaces. Conversation classes and drop-ins constituted the most regular and structured meetings among an otherwise diffused and irregular forms of support. The gatherings were organised by a number of "core" volunteers (Pearce, 1993, p. 49), who were members of the DCoS and informally became the leading volunteers in their respective locality, holding significantly more responsibility and conducting more demanding tasks, particularly with regards to the coordination of support activities, than the "peripheral" volunteers (Pearce, 1993) who attended the gatherings but played a minor role in organising them. Peripheral volunteers held diverse organisational affiliations. The informal leaders were Claire in Wilburn, Diana in

Maplewood and Emily in Greenwich. They arranged a venue in cooperation with managers of local churches and a community centre, and arranged teaching resources in cooperation with the LET charity. Anybody who wished to take part in social gatherings could, so long as their intentions were not harmful. The gatherings were held in community centres or church halls, accessible to the public but monitored by volunteers. For example, when a drunk homeless person joined our conversation class in a church hall, he was offered a cup of tea, but subsequently was asked to leave as he was disrupting the class.

What gave rise to these meetings were refugees' disadvantaged positions and needs, and volunteers' relational wealth in capital. Therefore, the encounter between refugees and volunteers was framed by inherent differences. Refugees relied on government and public support, and had limited possibilities of action that led to meaningful outcomes for themselves (Nussbaum, 2011, Preibisch, Dodd and Su, 2016). Newcomers generally spoke Arabic and little English, and had come from a Middle Eastern cultural background. Many were practicing Muslims. For these reasons, they earned suspicion and hostility in Durham. Therefore, refugees had significantly fewer opportunities in Durham. They were less equipped to find work, form social ties and develop a social network, than volunteers, who were fluent English speakers, residents of Durham, and part of the educated middle class, to mention just a few differences in their capital. Moreover, their abilities to practice their cultural habitus, religious and social, were limited. Through diverse volunteering activities volunteers transferred capital and created opportunities, which enhanced refugees "freedom to lead the kind of lives they value, and have reason to value" (Dean, 2009, p. 2). The next section introduces the diverse services offered in gatherings, or on a one-to-one basis, and traces their emergence. Volunteers and diverse groups such as the DCoS, the Community Centre, the County Council and various churches, all took part in the organisation and provision of support.

Central Durham to Greenwich

An important space of encounter between refugees and volunteers was the drop-in on Saturdays in a church hall in central Durham. It was a regular meeting point for all families which had settled in Maplewood, Wilburn, Richmond, and Greenwich, and

a space where volunteers met refugees. Numbers of volunteers and refugees varied. Sometimes, the drop-in attracted only three Syrians, while in other weeks up to 50 attended. Volunteer numbers fluctuated between 3 and 10. The church's caretaker set up a coffee bar in one corner and games for children in another corner. As a "space of care, welcome and generosity" (Darling, 2011, p. 409), the two-hour session served the creation of 'bridging' social capital, meaning connections between refugees and volunteers, and 'bonding' social capital, which are social connections among refugees (Coffé and Geys, 2007). In the informal setting of the church hall, volunteers and refugees had fun, joked around and met on equal terms (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019, p. 253). Often, these sessions also served to identify needs and organise support. For example, the first time the "Greenwich families", as they became to be known, attended the drop-in, Claire reached out to them and attempted conversation. She found out that at home, one of the families used to plant vegetables and was keen to continue gardening in their new homes. Consequently, Claire decided to help by taking them to a gardening centre. They exchanged phone numbers and arranged a time to meet. A week later, Claire, accompanied by Sara, a volunteer translator, drove them to a place to buy plant seeds. The drop-in also served to organise group activities and events, such as a fundraising dinner, a children's club, a reading budy scheme, and trips to York and Edinburgh. In the summer of 2019, a refugee lady expressed to Emily and myself that she would like to teach Arabic to the Syrian children. This was forwarded to trustees and discussed at a meeting. The drop-in was regarded the most suitable space to teach, and with the funding of materials by the DCoS, classes were planned to be held there. A year earlier, a trip to Edinburgh was organised following some Syrians' request. The drop-in is thus to be understood as a multi-functional space, which gave rise to and made possible many activities that supported refugee capabilities and wellbeing in a range of different ways. Rather than carrying out charity work that produced refugees as mere recipients of aid (Muehlebach, 2011) the gift in the form of time, organisational skill, advice, and language support created a space in which refugees were driving action.

In Maplewood, an area in central Durham, a conversation class was held in a room, separated by a glass wall from the main hall of St Paul's Church. It was the first conversation class in County Durham, run by Diana for the first group of refugees,

who settled in Maplewood in 2016. Due to the low attendance of refugees after two years, the class was closed in November 2018. Diana was a middle aged female resident of Durham, who had previously worked as a primary school teacher for children with special needs. I had joined the conversation classes in Maplewood during a time of transition. A few weeks after I began to attend as a volunteer it was closed down. Several volunteers but only few refugees attended the last classes, because they had settled and their English had improved. On the last day, there were no refugees, but seven volunteers came along and an ad hoc or 'informal' meeting (Brown, Reed and Yarrow, 2017, p. 10) took place. There, Diana, in consultation with the other volunteers, decided to close the class.

Also, during this final conversation class, Emily expressed the idea of starting a class in Greenwich. Over the next hour, we discussed what needed to be done to establish weekly gatherings in there, for the families that had arrived in October 2018. Despite the unusual circumstances, wholly unrepresentative of events in Maplewood in previous years, this final conversation class revealed how a new initiative in Greenwich could emerge from the idea of a single volunteer, as well as the subsequent efforts of many actors affiliated with diverse organisations.

The class in Greenwich was held in a church hall, free of charge. Due to her initiative and leadership Emily, also a member of the DCoS, became the informal leader and moved from her peripheral position to be at the core of the volunteer community. She was a retired careers advisor and had previously supported Diana's classes in Maplewood and home tutored children. Emily liaised with the church, with the Greenwich families to set a date, the council's key workers and the ESOL teacher to inquire about English levels. Volunteers in Maplewood and Greenwich communicated via a whatsapp groups which Diana and Emily administered. When Emily had set a date for the first class in Greenwich, she sent a message to our newly created whatsapp group with details about the class. She had gathered volunteers' numbers during the final session in Maplewood, and a few days later established a whatsapp group called "Greenwich Conversation". The whatsapp group was used to communicate attendance and cancellation, to discuss the programme and any issues arising from it, and to organise informal meetings at a café.

In the case of the newly emerging class, I certainly shaped the data I was attempting to collect (Trundle, 2014, p. 5). I had met one of the new families residing in Greenwich, at the Saturday drop-in in central Durham. They expressed their ambition to learn English, were very outgoing, and keen to engage in English conversation. Hence, during our discussion about whether there was a need for a class in Greenwich during the final class in Maplewood, I supported Emily's idea by making a strong case for the class. Due to the connection I had built with the mother of one of the Greenwich families, I became emotionally invested, advocating for the best possible support for her and her family. Hence, through my active involvement in the creation of new support initiatives, I participated in the creation of the phenomena I was researching (Trundle, 2014, p. 5). I am convinced, however, that the new classes in Greenwich would also have taken place in my absence.

The first class in Greenwich took place in a room in in St Peter's church, where men and women of the local community had their own gatherings, knitting, sewing, drinking tea and eating biscuits. The following conversation classes took place in a separate room, annexed to the main building. The church manager offered tea and coffee. Emily reimbursed the volunteers' travel and printing costs, in exchange for a valid receipt and explained that she would get the money back from the DCoS. However, membership of the DCoS was not required to participate in conversation classes, or to receive reimbursements. Usually six or seven adult newcomers attended with their children. Their English levels varied, as did educational backgrounds. Unlike the conversation class in Wilburn, where the class leader taught at the board, in Greenwich we worked in small groups on separate tables, to address differing levels. Just before the class started, Emily handed out some work sheets. Most of the teaching material was taken from a folder previously arranged by Diana in Maplewood and provided by the Learn-English-Together project of the Action-foundation charity, based in Newcastle. Emily also prepared individualised learning tasks. At around 11 am, the council's key workers visited the conversation classes to meet all Greenwich-based refugees, in order to sort out medical appointments, driving license exams, insurance, and any other issues, adding to the conversation class a drop-in character.

Wilburn

The second conversation class after the one in Maplewood was set up in 2017 in Sainsbury Hall Community Centre, in Wilburn. The class was held in a room with a white-board, where nine large tables were arranged in a U-shape. Two tables in the back were used as a bar, where tea and coffee was served. Unlike in the church halls in Greenwich and Maplewood, the DCoS paid room rent for the duration of the Wilburn class. Middle-aged and often overweight locals sat in the entrance of the community hall, next to an open canteen window, behind which young adults with Down syndrome worked in a kitchen. Claire, a retired local woman took the lead in organising the classes and trips. She had decades of professional experience supporting schools and families who had immigrated to the UK. She had been involved with the Wilburn group since their arrival in July 2017.

Initially well attended, as time went on, fewer refugees came to the class. As was the case in Maplewood, volunteers continued to attend weekly. Unlike Maplewood, where no alternative to conversation classes was offered, Claire decided to set up a 'befriending scheme'. With a voluntary translator, she visited newcomers' houses and inquired about the support they needed. She then matched refugees with volunteers who had specific skills, interest and availability. Claire was in contact with befriender-volunteers, and regularly exchanged information about their progress and needs, which she documented and forwarded to the chair of the DCoS. This way, Claire located the befriending scheme within the DCoS. Once again, this did not oblige volunteers to become members of the DCoS. Some of them where members of the DCoS, others were not. Others again, intentionally refused to become members of a charity.

Newcomers received a variety of support beyond the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing (Vertovec *et al.*, 2017, p. 7) and depending on their diverse socio-cultural background, health condition, education standards and progress in learning English, they had diverse needs. It follows that the support services befriender-volunteers delivered were varied and individualised. For example, volunteers offered furniture and clothes, helped families accessing their free bus passes and reading their utility bills, they helped with phone contracts, and made sure

patient transport to the hospitals was booked. If they could drive and had a care, they offered lifts to hospitals and GP appointments. Some provided lifts to schools, as well as educational support. Others gave lifts to football matches across the county, took families to Newcastle to shop at the Halal food store and to the mosque. Befrienders were also contacted whenever there were practical problems in the home. When, for instance, the wifi failed to work, a new refrigerator was needed, or a boiler was broken, the befriender-volunteers were informed about it first. They informed Claire about their activities, and if they were unable to fix a problem, Claire tried to find an alternative solution, or contacted the council's key worker.

A noticeable difference between one-on-one support in Maplewood and the 'befriending scheme' in Wilburn, was not the kind of support carried out by locals, but the organisation of the support. People from the neighbourhood offered material donations, home tutoring and transportation, among other services. However, in Maplewood these services were not part of an overarching initiative overseen by a volunteer. The 'befriending scheme' in Wilburn gave support practices a label and credibility, as part of an "official" programme. With Claire as self-assigned leader, the activities were monitored and recorded, and volunteers could signpost and ask for advice when it was needed. I gained an easy understanding of the one-on-one activities behind closed doors in Wilburn, because Claire was able to show me her written documentation. In Maplewood, the activities did not fall under an official scheme, and were not recorded. It was therefore more difficult for me to find out about everyday one-on-one acts of support carried out in private homes.

When the second group arrived in Wilburn, in May 2018, Claire decided to start the weekly classes again. To this day she leads a thriving conversation class. Every week, after dropping off volunteers including myself, at the community hall, Claire went to pick up a Syrian family that had difficulties in reaching the community centre via public transport. Meanwhile, volunteers would set up the materials for the class. Newcomers of all ages arrived and helped themselves to a cup of tea. The classes in Sainsbury Hall were held in a classroom style, unlike the classes in Greenwich. Claire taught at the white board, in front of the classroom, while three to five volunteers sat between the refugees, correcting misspellings and doing one-on-one tasks. Usually, about seven to nine refugees attended the class, but the numbers

fluctuated slightly. Their English levels differed, so did their educational backgrounds, down to their ability to read and write in Arabic. After the class, at 12 o'clock, a lady in formal business attire, in the stark contrast with the community hall's clientele entered the room. She was the council's employee for the Wilburn families and came to give refugees the opportunity to discuss issues such as medical needs, financial matters and legal advice.

In Wilburn in particular, the conversation classes served multiple functions beyond teaching of the English language; events and trips were arranged as well as individual one-on-one support. The community hall itself offered many events and programmes for the local community, and for Syrians in particular, including fitness classes, cooking classes for adults on weekends, children's cooking classes on a Tuesday evening, an entrepreneurial skills workshops on weekends, and an end-of-year Christmas party for the community. All of this was funded and organised by the community centre. Conversation classes were particularly useful to arrange times and locations for future events. The help of a translator ensured that everyone understood the organisational details. For example, Josh, who was a very involved retired trustee of the community hall and also member of the DCoS, arranged a visit to a clothes bank. He wanted to arrange for transport, and therefore needed to know how many would attend. He used the conversation class to canvass the group, and arrange times and locations for the pick up and drop off.

Having discussed some of the differences in terms of the setting and development of support in Wilburn, Maplewood and Greenwood locations in Durham, I will now move on to the transfer of capital at the heart of voluntary work in these locations. Conversation classes not only aided the improvement of language skills, but they constituted important spaces for meeting immediate needs, as well as aiding long-term 'integration' (Favell, 2015) through language learning, making social connections, and learning about local customs. The variety of support can be conceptualised in terms of different forms of capital, and as an enhancement of refugees' capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011) in a strange environment. Capital takes three forms: Social, cultural/symbolic and economic (Bourdieu, 1986). The latter refers to material means, which can also be turned into cultural capital such as language, taste, manners, academia, music, and knowledge. Cultural capital within a

society is not equally distributed between classes, ethnicities and genders. The display of cultural capital distinguishes people based on their social standing. Social networks, which provide resources, opportunities and advantages in society, constitute social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Firstly, a byproduct of attending conversation classes was the expansion of refugees' economic capital. A common occurrence was the ready availability of clothes, bedding and towels, donated by members of the local church community. Moreover, the community centre in Wilburn received food donations from a food bank, which was packed up neatly by a volunteer, and offered to refugees after every class. Secondly, newcomers also acquired social capital through conversation classes. They established social connections, which in turn were accompanied by material, social and knowledge gains. For example, after the class in Greenwich, Emily and I were regularly invited to a family's house for coffee. Although conversations were casual, they continued beyond the class, as conversational lessons in English, as well as a transfer of knowledge about the local area. Before Christmas, for instance, as we sat in their dining room, the family inquired about Christmas trees. Emily described a route to a place where they could find cheap trees, helping them significantly in the navigation of a strange environment. On another day, a Syrian mother and I cooked a Syrian meal together. She grabbed a kitchen towel to carry a pan, and noted in passing that she needed "a pair of oven gloves," a term I had taught her while cooking together. A few weeks later I gave her a pair of oven gloves. Similarly, Emily talked with her about interiors and curtains. The mother expressed her interest in sewing. Consequently, Emily lent her a sewing machine, thereby expanding the mother's economic capital. Another Syrian mother bonded with a volunteer who connected her with her own friends. They offered gardening tools, and a helping hand in the garden. This showed that the encounters in conversation classes often led to social connections, even friendships which, as well as material benefits, were likely to bring feelings of belonging and social inclusion, as well as create opportunities to lead a live they desire.

Newcomers acquired cultural capital in conversation classes by learning about British customs, traditions and local knowledge, which improved their ability to make sense of their social environment. For example, one class's theme was the UK

and its politics, demography and cultural heritage. We split up in small groups and spent two hours explaining the UK's main religion, cultural costumes and traditions. At great length, we introduced topics such as the royal family, the Scottish kilt, and the Durham Miners' Gala. As the first and second dates to leave the EU approached, politics was discussed more intensively with those who had obtained the English skills to do so and expressed interest. Another important general theme was "family". We often contrasted the similarities and differences between Syrian and English kinship relations and terminology. Moreover, when learning how to make appointments a volunteer explained that in the UK and northern Europe it was a gesture of politeness to arrive on time; unpunctuality, common to southern areas including the Middle East, was said to be downright rude. During a class on February 14th I found myself explaining Valentine's Day in Greenwich, and in early November the class leader in Wilburn explained the reason for wearing poppies. Furthermore, volunteers' engagement with refugees in classes every week, over a period of months or even years, enabled newcomers to acquire "embodied cultural capital", that is the knowledge, attitudes and abilities acquired by socialisation and thereby imprinted into a person's habitus. Thus, a regular commitment to conversation classes is likely facilitate settlement in Durham due to the economic, social and cultural opportunities accessed there.

To conclude, this section has summarised the organisation, development and diversity of support practices. We have seen that activities ranged from conversation classes, to informal gatherings, as well as one-on-one support, all of which enhanced refugees' social, economic and cultural capital. In these multiple activities newcomers occupied the role of the recipients of capital while volunteers attained the role of benefactor, making an inevitable contribution to the enhancement of capital that allowed newcomers to settle and navigate in their new social environment. However, refugees were never passive recipients, but actively sought out for help if needed, and making suggestions for future activities. The organisation of support encompassed multiple institutions, ranging from church halls, the DCoS, independent volunteers and donors, as well as a community centre, providing evidence for the disseminated web of actors across different institutions, which were coordinated by self-appointed leaders.

Unmarked working environment and missing institutional boundaries

This section discusses the uniqueness of the scarcity of markers in the domain of volunteering in Durham that enabled the demarcation from other institutions and determined accountability. I use the the term ‘marker’ to signify all signs, symbols, speech, rituals, peformances, and “enduring artefacts” (Davies, 2008, cited in Trundle, 2014, p. 4) such as material objects, registers or text, that that are associated with an organisational body and serve the construction of a community through drawing boundaries, delineating the inside and outside. As such, they help people to organise their social environment by identifying something as belonging to, or part of, a collective, which is understood as accountable and responsible for the observed. Markers are a material manifestation of membership and belonging. Institutional working environments, including social service providers and NGOs, remind employees, volunteers and clients regularly of the organisation they are involved with, through customised stationery, clothing and the brand marking of objects. The display of ID cards is a common practice in professional fields. Labelling serves to transform an objects’ meaning or a person’s authority. Wearing a neck-strap marked with the organisation’s logo, or having an ID card, signifies membership of that organisation. It marks somebody as someone. In other words, it makes a person visually identifiable. The key workers employed by the council who visited the conversation classes in Wilburn and Greenwich, for instance, always displayed their ID cards, enabling everyone, even the local community in the church hall who were unfamiliar with their role, to identify them as council workers. After the removal of an identification marker, a person is no longer clearly identifiable as member of an institution. In brief, these kinds of symbols perform the crucial function of marking an organisations’ people, spaces and objects and delineating them from the outside (Cohen, 1985).

Volunteers’ working environment offered few markers to delineate spaces, objects, people, or their roles. Unlike in the institutionalised and professional context of service provision it was rarely possible to identify the DCoS as being involved in the conversation classes or drop-ins. For example, in every conversation class a sheet

was passed around the room, which refugees and volunteers were asked to sign. The heading carried the City of Sanctuary's logo. I was given various explanations for the requirement of my signature. In Wilburn and in the Saturday drop-in, I was told that the list of names served as a record for the DCoS; while in Maplewood and Greenwich the signatures were apparently used to provide record for the Learn-English-Together project, the provider of English teaching materials. Another instance where I spotted an organisations' name as marker was on the stationery box in Sainsbury Hall community centre in Wilburn. Underneath a table a large box contained paper, pens, scissors, markers and small white boards. Claire had bought those items and said that the DCoS had reimbursed her. The box was labelled with a large "Durham City of Sanctuary" tag. Moreover, a thick folder brought along to the drop-in in central Durham, by one of the trustees of the DCoS, was another object that indicated DCoS ownership. These were the only visual signs that marked volunteering spaces as belonging to the DCoS.

Having mentioned the few marked objects there were, it is worth pointing out a number of items which were *not* marked and which costs actors other than the DCoS covered, revealing the often overlooked generosity of many people involved. Laptops and projectors used in conversation classes were the private belongings of volunteers. Volunteers also covered the printing costs for work sheets. Toys and games toddlers played with during gatherings belonged to the churches and community hall. Volunteers offered their own craft materials for a workshop at St Aidan's College, and paid out of their own pockets petrol for lifts to and from hospitals, conversation classes and shopping trips. Most notable of all was that none of the volunteers was identifiable as a volunteer. They wore no neck-straps, name tags, uniforms, merchandise t-shirts, or any other kind of marker to identify who was a volunteer and who was not, or to distinguish DCoS members from non-members. Volunteering demanded no institutional change to peoples' appearances. Volunteers dressed in comfortable every-day clothing. There was no door sign to indicate that a conversation class was taking place, nor was the opportunity to claim ownership of a physical space with an organisations' label ever taken up. This was significant, as it meant that volunteers' position was never indexed and consequently, they never symbolically entered or left their their roles as volunteers. One clear implication of

the absence of signs or markers was that new volunteers could not easily identify the organisation behind any given initiative, an issue discussed in chapter three.

The missing definition of institutional spaces or practices did however allow volunteers to join the team without having to cross barriers, and facilitated the quick inclusion of volunteers into their working environments. In fact, various other volunteers expressed an unawareness of the DCoS's involvement in the conversation class. The absence of symbolic markers meant that new volunteers who joined a class or a drop-in for the first time, did not feel like they were entering an institutional space or a delineated comuntiy, as would have been the case had markers been provided. Beth's involvement exemplifies how volunteers easily blurred into groups where no means of drawing boundaries between inside and outside existed. Uninformed about the conversation classes, she coincidentally encountered us during a craft workshop in the church hall. Joining our table and chatting with the Syrians, she blended into the group and was immediately addressed as "a volunteer". Notwithstanding that she was not a charity member, Beth was added to the whatsapp group by Emily without any formalities. This suggests that the DCoS was a largely invisible and undefined entity to volunteers.

Furthermore, the blurred group boundaries, the informality that characterised it and a non-hierarchical structure, allowed new volunteers to quickly find a place in the group without having to learn unspoken standards of behaviour, guidelines or any governing principles of interaction with refugees. In Trundle (2014, p. 82) noted the importance of displaying "markers of incorporation" in order to reduce newcomers' apparent outsiderhood in her study on volunteers in Italy. In Durham, however there were no such hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. Instead, enthusiasm was the only requirement to be part of the virtual volunteer group on whatsapp or the embodied group in class. There was no authority. Emily, in her informal and self-ascribed leadership role gave few instructions about the theme and focus of the class via whatsapp. Just a few minutes before the session started, she casually communicated her ideas to the volunteers and handed out worksheets. At that point we arranged who was working with whom. Everyone was encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas, and during the class each volunteer freely devised their own methods of teaching one-on-one. Classes were more hierarchical in Wilburn, due to

Claire's method of standing at the whiteboard to teach. There, volunteers were tasked purely with helping the refugees who sat next to them, with spelling and reading, as well as following any instructions given by Clair. No previous experience, expertise or membership was required to fully participate in classes, or to be regarded a "volunteer". As a result of the informality and absence of boundaries new volunteers did not stand out, but blended easily into the group of existing volunteers. The implications of the non-use of markers will be discussed further in chapter three.

Improvised acts of support

Volunteers were frequently confronted with unexpected requests for help, which demanded improvisation and led to the ad-hoc provision of support. Refugees' needs were most commonly identified during informal chats in drop-ins, or after conversation classes, or through one-on-one meetings carried out by befriender-volunteers. In this section I will provide examples where volunteers were willing to help spontaneously and most unprepared. I will then exemplify the importance of the conversation classes as a space, which gave rise to a range of initiatives, and served as the primary space to identify needs and arrange support.

Josh, a core volunteer in Wilburn had given his phone number to many newcomers and frequently helped with arranging transportation to and from hospitals. On one occasion, Josh told me, a Syrian patient had an appointment at 8 am, for surgery. At half past eight, while lying in bed, he received a text message from the patient stating that no ambulance had come, and asking what to do now. Josh jumped out of bed, he recounted, got dressed and hurried to their house, where he called the key worker. She suggested taking a taxi. So Josh called a taxi driver he knew, and ensured that the patient arrived at the hospital. They kept a receipt to get the money for the taxi reimbursed. Similarly, Sara was caught out while she was doing her shopping in Tesco. She was from a Middle Eastern country, had lived in the UK for many years, and spoke fluent Arabic and English. She received a distressed phone call from Claire, who was in hospital with a Syrian woman whose physical condition had rapidly deteriorated. She spoke broken English, which meant that nobody could understand her well enough to help. In recounting this incident to me Sara said, "I left the shopping and went straight to the hospital to help Claire". These two

incidents illustrate the demand for volunteers' spontaneous acts of support, as well as their willingness to provide it at a moment's notice.

While conversation classes were spaces of regular contact, because circumstances varied from week to week, classes had an irregular, unanticipated side to them. They did not simply serve as spaces in which the teaching of English was delivered, but often gave rise to spontaneous practices of support. During a conversation class in Maplewood, two retired local volunteers, Lisa and Emily, and four university student-volunteers including myself, gathered around a table, waiting for refugees to arrive. After a time, a young Syrian woman entered the room, and joined us for informal conversation practice. Her father arrived an hour later. His presentation was poor. He seemed exhausted and ill, and stuttered when he spoke. He explained that he had come from the GP, but was too tired to stay, and wanted to walk home. Without hesitation, Emily offered him a lift, but he refused. A sense of urgency and alarm replaced the relaxed atmosphere of the class. The man's daughter tried to explain the issue, and a university student-volunteer reading Arabic translated. The volunteers asked questions, interrupted each other, and discussed the best way to proceed. We came to understand that the unwell man had not received the medication he urgently required. Everyone was deeply concerned as there was clearly a need for immediate action. Emily suggested driving to the pharmacy to obtain the medicine without a prescription, but the unwell man's daughter declined the offer. Lisa, based on her experience of dealing with the NHS, suggesting speaking with a doctor on the phone, and explained to the daughter the function of the non-emergency hotline on 111. Eventually, the man's daughter agreed to be accompanied to the doctor's surgery after the class. We returned to our previous conversation and an hour later, volunteers, including the student translator, went with the man's daughter to the surgery, where they talked to a receptionist. It transpired that the man's appointment had been re-scheduled but due to a breakdown in communication the man had simply not understood. This was an illustration of what were frequently the spontaneous initiatives of volunteers to ensure refugees' wellbeing. While these spontaneous acts of help can be understood as an expression of the "impulse of philanthropy" as Bornstein (2009) calls it, volunteering weekly in conversation classes was not emotive but *zwecksrational* (Bornstein, 2009), directed

towards the objective of improving their English language skills and facilitating their settlement into the local communtiy.

The incident recounted above occurred in the first month of my fieldwork and marked a turning point in my understanding of refugee support in Durham. At that time, I was still grappling with my initial research questions concerning the organisation of support and the institutional arrangements that accompanied it. I was still searching for a 'structure' that defined relations between the people volunteering and formally ascribed roles with responsibilities. I expected to find recruitment strategies to divide tasks, a systematic means of reporting of issues and the documentation of volunteers' actions via channels of communication to a central administrative body. My first insights into the true dynamics of refugee support that day, revealed that the assumptions I had made were inapplicable to the circumstances on the ground.

The spontaneity required of the volunteers was characteristic of voluntary support in Durham, and differed notably from the kind of support which is pre-arranged and bound to set times. It is worth pointing out that volunteers did not report unusual events to a third party, or to the DCoS; nor was there a system in place for following up incidents of this kind. There was no central administration where information about volunteers and refugees was collected. As such, there was no medium that allowed the charity to track volunteers' actions and refugees' needs. Instead, all useful knowledge was restricted to the individuals who witnessed refugees' struggles in their daily lives. Given that there was no administration in place to collate and analyse this data, it was virtually impossible to allocate specific tasks to those willing to help. Wanting to help, beyond teaching English at set times once a week, demanded that volunteers improvised their support wherever and whenever they encountered refugees, or learned of their needs. Instead of following planned and structured procedures, volunteers' actions were guided by their concern and care for refugees' wellbeing, which triggered spontaneous reactions in the form of initiative-taking.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the practices and spaces of volunteering in Durham. Three key features were highlighted, which distinguished civil society initiatives to support refugees in Durham from more institutionalised settings of support provision. Firstly, I showed that a web of many agents made possible a vast diversity of support activities, across multiple sites in County Durham. Then, I discussed the absence of signs to mark an institution's space, people and practices to help volunteers orientate themselves in the network of overlapping organisations, groups and initiatives. While there were regular weekly gatherings, support for refugees depended not only on volunteers' availability, but their willingness to react spontaneously to sometimes urgent needs and demands, without any strategic planning or institutionalised processes in place. Conversation classes were set up, and volunteers became involved. But there was no guiding agenda, strategic planning, structures or formal procedures underlying the support being offered. On the contrary, support relied on word of mouth, serendipitous encounters and improvised initiatives. Thus, the disjunction between my initial assumptions about the characteristics of refugee support, and the reality of how that support came about, became increasingly obvious.

The issues discussed in this chapter raised new questions about how volunteers experienced being part of a volunteer-led support initiative in Durham. The following chapters explore different aspects of volunteers' experiences. The willingness of volunteers to engage in the ways that I have described, demands careful consideration. The next chapter investigates *why* volunteers became involved in the first place, and discusses their narratives against existing theories on the reasons people are drawn to charitable action. The third chapter addresses the implications of the above described unmarked environment on volunteers experiences of the organisational setting.

Chapter 2
Motivational narratives

Having discussed the practices and spaces of volunteering, this chapter focuses on the rationales volunteers provided in their narratives to account for involvement. A focus on motivational talk reveals the resources and concepts volunteers employed in their rationales (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019, p. 252). Narrative allowed volunteers to make sense of their involvement, frame their activities in a specific way and justify their actions using a broad set of resources (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010, p. 421). The understanding of culture as tool-kit or repertoire "of things learned, including mental schemes and images, values and attitudes, dispositions, forms of speech and organization, narratives, and commonplace knowledge" (Carrithers, 2009, p. 4), offers the possibility for framing voluntary engagement in refugee support in a variety of ways.

It is important to note that these narratives do not reveal why people volunteer, but about *how volunteers justify* why they volunteer. The purpose of this chapter lies not in the attempt to uncover the "truth" about why people engage in altruistic activities, as previous research has done (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010, p. 420). Instead, of concern are the tools and strategies volunteers employed in their production of explanations to account for their activities. The stories were produced in retrospect, physically and far removed in time from the moments they became involved, and their practice of volunteering. The construction of "post hoc justifications" (Carrithers, 2005, p. 441) depends on what narrative style and motives the narrator deems appropriate in the specific social situation (Musick and Wilson, 2008, p. 71). Post-hoc narratives are also a product of reflexively "making sense of the past in a narrative form relevant to the present" (Trundle, 2014, p. 20).

Analysis of such narratives allowed me to gain an insight into the resources circulated amongst actors involved in support initiatives, and provides a picture of the stage of institutionalisation of volunteering in Durham. As such, I am particularly interested whether narratives reproduced tropes of suffering, pity, and responsibility, as present in mobilisation efforts that aim to produce active and humanitarian

citizens, and if volunteers employed narratives that indicated the effective communication of the charity's values, purpose and objectives. In the previous chapter, I noted the absence of symbols and signs to mark spaces, people and their practices as belonging to the DCoS. Now I explore whether volunteers' narratives contained markers in the form of speech patterns and phrases that can be linked to the Durham City of Sanctuary. An example of such marker would be the characteristic phrase 'culture of welcome' as stated in the charity's mission statement. If an organisation's purpose was well articulated and communicated to its members, their accounts on why they involved in volunteering would be expected to reflect these.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that narratives were inconsistent and diverse and showed no indication of reproducing refined organisational rhetoric or discursive narratives about responsibility or suffering, and were beyond any preconceived ideology. I argue that the lack of 'humanitarian rhetoric' suggests that volunteers' engagement cannot be linked to narratives that seek to mobilise volunteers into becoming 'active citizens' by fostering a 'neoliberal morality' (Muehlebach, 2012), suggesting that existing scholarly work on volunteer involvement over-emphasises the role of discursive technologies in guiding people's behaviour. Particularly notable was the the scarcity of reference to the refugees' condition in their narratives, challenging the theory that the production of recipients as suffering victims is central to mobilisation efforts. In fact, most volunteers found reasons for involvement in their own life circumstances. I suggest that the present diversity indicates an individualistic volunteering style (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003) which can be linked to the non-institutional character of refugee support presented in the previous chapter and, in particular, might be due to the absence of an organisational body providing tools and resources to fabricate shared narrative among volunteers.

The reasons given to account for volunteers' involvement were not offered as single rationalisations, but were spread across different stories. In diverse situations, volunteers considered distinct episodes of their lives to emphasise the 'rationality' (Linde, 1993) of their actions, and to add 'coherence' (Linde, 1993) to their activities and the course their lives had taken. Although separated and ordered by theme, the

examples given in the following pages do not stand on their own, but appeared in combination. I present a selection of narratives to demonstrate the range of explanations given. These explanations are organised thematically in order to emphasise the heterogeneity of volunteers' narratives. The first section discusses volunteers' various paths of involvement, and suggests that the absent public profile implicates the reliance of word of mouth and informal channels of involvement. The second section explores narratives that are primarily self-orientated and, apart from the section on "deservingness", focussed on personal circumstances, interests and benefits from volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

Word of mouth

Information about refugees reached most volunteers-to-be unexpectedly, during informal conversations and serendipitous encounters. Because of the predominant absence of information about the arrival of Syrians, and the lack of planned support in Durham, information about refugees, their needs, and even opportunities to volunteer, were accessed informally, usually through word-of-mouth. The importance of word-of-mouth in local people's paths to volunteering is reflected in multiple stories. For example, Carmen was a retired lady who attended the weekly conversation classes in Wilburn. She was resident in Durham and member of an international women's group where she found out about the DCoS. In her words, a friend approached her "…and said you might like this, so we went together to the conversation group in Wilburn.". Thereafter, Carmen remained involved. Maria, also retired, and a resident of Durham, who helped in conversation classes in Wilburn, recounted her coincidental involvement in this way: "Claire used to be my boss and I saw her after I retired. She told me about what she did and I asked, 'Oh could I be of any help?' So she said yeah sure, come along.". Likewise, Diana, who led the conversation class in Maplewood, identified word-of-mouth as the foundation for her involvement:

> "My husband was at the recycle bike shop and met a guy who was in the DCoS and said, 'You know there is a meeting'. I didn't even know we had Syrian refugees. But I thought it was interesting, I

> have time, I could do that. He said come along to this meeting and I did."

At the meeting she realised, "I could do a lot here and I just started the conversation groups". Lisa, widowed and retired, said, "About a year ago I got invited by a friend to go to a *Taste of Syria* at St John's College and I thought - I tell you what prompted me, it was Iram. She read a poem in Arabic…I was so touched by it. So I thought, I can do that, I can help these people with English.".

This shows that volunteers' entrance into the domain of volunteering occurred through informal encounters with friends and acquaintances, and the opportunities they opened (Paoccinin 1995, p. 166), followed by spontaneous reactions to participate. This mirrors findings of previous research, which highlighted the importance of social networks to predict participation (Hodgkinson, 1995) and the centrality of specific opportunities or stimuli that pushed people to translate pro-social values into pro-social practice (Janoski, Musick, Wilson, 1998, pp. 496-497). Thus, like Paolicchi (1995, p. 166) illustrated, the entrance into volunteering was linked to the contributions of crucial actors in the social environment in which one was situated. It is important here that there were no formal procedures in place to recruit volunteers, nor to become a volunteer. The path into volunteering was not formalised or regulated, but informal as volunteers brought along their friends who at a later point might introduce their friends to volunteering. Given the informality, not everyone who engaged was a member of the DCoS. Some were members of the community centre and/or the DCoS. Some were members of the church. Others did not belong to any organisation.

'Because how can I not?'

When reflecting on their reasons for joining the volunteer force, some volunteers described offering their support as the most obvious and inescapable reaction, which did not demand justification or explanation. Some pointed out that they had not thought about why they volunteered, and were never asked to provide a justification. The triviality of an explanation, and the apparent absence of self-persuasion (Nienkamp, 2009) suggest that they acted out of deeply felt predispositions and

indicate support provision to be a naturalised and taken-for-granted reaction. Such obviousness and the emotional immediateness of helping, while lacking a philosophical motivation, or doctrines of humanism, account for the messiness of many narratives, as well as volunteers' spontaneous production of justifications during our conversations.

Some volunteers offered an explanation in the form of a comparison. They disapproved of inactivity. Fundamental to this argument is the stark contrast between helping and not helping, which is to say, getting involved or not getting involved (Carrithers, personal conversation, 21 August 2019). A retired woman reasoned that due to her capital and awareness of the impact her help would make to the other's situations, helping became the only possible course of action. She explained it in this way:

> "You find yourself in situations where you can't ignore it, where you have to do something … When you realise that that person is more vulnerable than you are, and I know that I could help if I stayed, but if I left it could cause a lot of problems, there is no choice for you.".

Another volunteer reasoned similarly, making a comparison with the perceived impossibility of inaction: "Just watching Syrian refugees arrive, how could you not help? How could you not do something?". The concept of habitus captures the ineluctability of helping others, and accounts for the obviousness through the cultural morality adopted through the process of enculturation. However, this suggests that the act of helping is an expression of adherence to deep structures of thought that are implemented by growing up in a society. However, as the quotes showed, volunteers faced various possible courses of action and demonstrated an element of choice. Looking at choice destabilises the moral certainty (Archetti, 1997, cited in Trundle, 2014, p. 183), inherent in behaviour guided by cultural predispositions (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440). Thus, these narratives rather indicate that moral agency is at play (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440), which allows volunteers to exercise and reason independently from cultural schemas and learned morality.

‘Because I can.’

Although support provision was spontaneous and obvious, explanations demonstrated one important condition for helping: that given their circumstances volunteers could afford to help. Volunteers’ available resources were a crucial determinant for their involvement (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010). In conversations they frequently evaluated their life circumstances in terms of time, finances and means of transportation, and concluded that they could afford to support refugees as volunteers.

In particular, those who were retired or did not work full-time referred to their availability of time (Trundle, 2014, p. 64) as a decisive factor that accounted for their voluntary engagement. A retired lady explained, “I'm kind of rich in time and poor in money. I'm on a pension, I have to watch the money, but I do have time.”. Similarly, Diana noted her availability of time: “I have time, because I left teaching, so I thought it’s a good thing to do.”. Another resource that was stated recurringly as a reason for engagement with refugees was the abundance of material and financial resources, which opened possibilities to provide transportation. Several volunteers reasoned, “because I have a car I thought I can offer lifts”. Such circumstance-emphasising narratives constructed the volunteer as central character of the narrative; a retired person who had time and a car available. The recipient’s character received little attention and remained unspecified. The narrators found reason for involvement in themselves and in their situation (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003), rather than locating their reason for involvement in an external source, such as refugees’ needs, the political environment or complex philosophies or ideological concerns. These practical explanations did not offer insights into volunteer’s perception and understanding of refugees, nor about their larger mission, but illustrates the simplicity and practicality of voluntary engagement; if they found themselves in suitable circumstances and had the resources that enabled them to offer support, then they did. If circumstances and resources did not allow voluntary engagement, then they would not have.

‘Because I make a difference.’

Beyond reflecting on personal resources, a common narrative I encountered was volunteers’ description of their ability to “make a difference”. This argumentation continues to leave the beneficiaries as unspecified characters, while emphasising one’s own qualities and skills (Paolicchi, 1995, p. 168). One example for the self-ascribed value was a comment by a retired university professor, who volunteered in conversation classes in Wilburn, and later moved to offer his services in Greenwich. He said, “I feel useful as a guy there because in the first group the men stopped coming, and I wondered if this had something to do with the lack of male teachers.”. Here, the speculation was that the volunteer had made a difference due to his male gender in a female dominated sector. A university student, Cat was more certain of her value, due to her skill as Arabic speaker and her ability to understand refugees’ language and culture. She volunteered mainly in conversation classes, but also helped shopping, organising events and translating at the doctors’ surgery. She explained that the reason for her attendance in conversation classes, and her plan to set up an English-Arabic language exchange between students and refugees, was “[…]because it would be nice for someone who had to leave their country, to meet someone who is appreciative and aware of their culture, and speaks their language, who isn't ignorant of the existence of their culture.”.

Moreover, she described her activities as a positive contribution to their lives, based on her projection of what she imagined they were experiencing. With the statement “because it would be nice for [the refugees] to meet someone who is appreciative of their culture” Cat was imagining the situation they might have experienced, as well as the benefits she might have been able to offer. The ability, skill and readiness to put oneself into someone else’s shoes was a recurring justification for volunteers and seemed to be thought of as an important asset. Although the character of the recipient had acquired clearer form, being “someone who had to leave their country”, refugees, in this style of reasoning remained relatively undefined. Information about refugees’ needs, suffering or life conditions, were not used to justify why Cat had wanted the help.

Similar to Cat's emphasis on her ability to contribute, Carmen conferred significant value on her skills as retired community worker, and her extensive experience in the public sector. Unlike most volunteers who felt they could make a difference by "just having a conversation with these people, and showing them that they are welcome in the community", as one young female volunteer said, Carmen only recognised contribution and value in the application of her skills set (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy, 2010, p. 421), as opposed to a form of socialising. In the event that she could not apply her skills, she did not see a desired impact and was unwilling to attend. Dismissing the value of socialising and engaging with refugees in a non-functional or purpose-driven way, suggests drawing a distinction between the "social impact" and the "functional impact". While the "social impact" prioritises the impact made on refugees' personal, emotional and social aspects of life, including feelings of self-worth and belonging, addressed by 'emotional support' (Thompson and Pitts, 1992), a "functional impact" is caused by enacting 'information' and 'instrumental' support (Thompson and Pitts, 1992), prioritising the knowledge and problem-solving skills that are needed in everyday situations. Carmen's statement demonstrates her desire to make a "functional impact" at the expense of any "social impact" she might have made, but was unwilling to make.

> "[B]ecause of my advisory skills on different benefits and lots of different things: consumer rights, housing…it would have been helpful if I could just read the letter and get in touch with the different organisations. But because I don't speak Arabic I just thought going to the drop-in session is not something where I can be useful, so I don't go there anymore."

Carmen decided to stop attending the drop-ins because she did not identify a "functional impact" resulting from her presence, nor could she apply her skills, demonstrating a strong concern for her own professional skills (Paolicchi, 1995, p. 168). Her inability to speak Arabic meant that her experiences and knowledge could not make the difference she wanted to make, in order to be able to justify her attendance at the drop-ins. This shows the importance volunteers can ascribe to the contributions they imagine being able to make and the objective-driven nature of her

involvement (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 178), leading to disengagement if the involvement does not demonstrate satisfactory impact.

Justification of voluntary engagement based on the impact, shifted the focus from the previous emphasis on *themselves* and *their own* circumstances to an external reasons; namely the difference that can be made to somebody else's life. Nevertheless, as attention remained on the benefactor's personal capacity to trigger change, it left the refugees' circumstances, such as living conditions or the political context largely unmentioned. Furthermore, these kinds of explanations did not account for *why* they wanted to make a positive impact on refugees' lives in the first place. All of the making-a-difference narratives treated the act of helping as an unquestionable, obvious and natural response to a crisis. In other words, the above explanations show that participation in support was justified with reference to the value volunteers ascribed to their own capacities (*their* experiences, *their* skills, *their* qualities, and *their* knowledge), whereby the reason why they wanted to contribute to apply these skills in order to cause change in refugees' lives was not considered.

Deservingness

Several volunteers produced narratives that transformed the previously undefined recipient into a deserving beneficiary, by incorporating their perceptions of refugees' situations, and descriptions of their personality into their justifications. They identified explanations beyond their own circumstances, but in terms of beneficiaries' deservingness (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016). Elisa, a retired lady who was active in the community centre in Wilburn said, "I try to help because they are so nice.". She repeatedly mentioned the positive qualities of the newcomers, which in turn provided her with reasons to support them: "They don't deserve what they have had…they are just so generous and caring, and such lovely people who have had such a bad time. They are lovely, they deserve a lot more.". By comparison to the previous situational justifications it is notable that throughout her narrative, Elisa did not once describe her own circumstances and resources as a reason for her involvement, but offered information about the recipients: "Tthese families have all got something in life, and now they have got nothing. And I think it's so important to try help them out and get them on the ladder.". Elisa expressed her understanding of

the refugees’ plight as sudden, unjustified and undeserved. In her opinion, this qualified them as deserving and righteous recipients of support.

As she continued, Elisa further delineated refugees in Durham by distinguishing them from other refugees. Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris (2016) described the process of the production of ‘radical alterities’ with the “…aim of defining the Self relationally, in its supposed drastic difference from the Other.”. In Elisa’s narrative we locate the production of drastic difference; not to define the Self through its difference to the undeserving ‘illegal migrant’, but to define the deserving subject through its difference to the undeserving. Elisa’s explanation of her work as aiming to “knock down barriers” in the community, illustrates the production of alterity. She argued for the need of such efforts “…because a lot of people here see all the people in the boats trying to smuggle themselves into the country, but these people came in the right way.”. Two types of people were being marked out: “the people in boats” and those who came in “the right way”. The phrase “came in the right way” suggests that Elisa adopted the categories produced in public discourse (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016), which distinguished between the globalised subject and the migrant subject, with the focus on legal status (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris, 2016). The refugees she supported could be perceived as “legal“ and therefore acquired the right to “exist beyond national boundaries“ that defines the globalised subject (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris, 2016, p. 3). By contrast, the “people in the boats” fell into the category of the “illegal migrant” who was denied mobility (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris, 2016, p. 3) and was dismissed as undeserving of support due to their disregard of legal frontiers perceived as criminal action. Elisa elaborated further on the qualities of the receiving refugees by distinguishing them from those who were undeserving:

> “They are so so nice and lovely people, not all of them are, but these are lovely people…coming and meeting people who have done it a proper way, they haven’t just tried to get over in a boat escaping, it’s different.”

This quote among others, illustrates that the discourse around the reporting of the ‘refugee crisis’ provided markers of difference, and served Elisa as a “convenient story-seed” (Knight 2013, cited in Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris, 2016, p. 7) around

which alterities could be constructed to distinguish between categories of individuals (Fassin, 2005). This construction of differences was central to her justification for being a volunteer. She accounted for her support through the strategic predication (Fernandez, 1986, p. 8) of refugees as deserving recipients of care.

Personal gains

‘Because they are from the Middle East.’

Unlike previous narratives, two academics demonstrated their efforts to delineate the characters of the refugee *and* themselves in order to justify support provision. Developing both characters was necessary, because one of the reasons for voluntary engagement, amongst others, was the personal gain that could be derived from the volunteering experience, due to the *particular* character of the recipient. As the gain was directly linked to the character of the refugee, as well as volunteers’ personal interests and experiences, the development of both the “I” and the “they” produce a coherent story.

Adrian, a retired university lecturer, and Cat, an undergraduate Arabic student, identified characteristics that qualified refugees as recipients of their support. Unlike Elisa, however, refugees were not produced as deserving recipients, instead, they were stereotyped as members of a population that was attractive because of their socio-cultural and geo-political circumstances. Reflecting on her engagements with the Middle East, Cat explained the joy and benefits of volunteering for refugees from the Middle East:

> “I'm feeling quite tied to the Middle East at the moment. It's a place in my heart. I lived there and my closest friends are Palestinian. I talk to them every day on the phone, and I feel a little bit closer to them when I volunteer. There's like a feeling of almost attachment, even before knowing the people just knowing that they come from a place as near to my heart.”.

It emerges that she supported refugees who had come to Durham *because* their country of origin coincided with a place near to her heart. Had they not been from the Middle East, she admitted, she would have felt less inclined to participate in volunteering. She also noted the positive emotional gain of volunteering; it allowed her to reconnect with a people and culture that she was very fond of, which shrank the distance that lay between her and her friends. This correlates with Beyerlein's and Sikkink's (2008) observation of volunteer involvement after 9/11 that people whose regional identity coincided with that of the victims were more likely to volunteer because they identify with the people most affected. She expanded further that working with people form the Middle East not only made her happy, it gave her other benefits in terms of gain in practical skills (Clary *et al*., 1998; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). Her evaluation that volunteering is "a good experience. I think it's good for my language, it's good practice.", reflects the self-orientated reasoning focussing on her personal development, rather than refugees' development.

A retired anthropology lecturer, Adrian, also provided insights into the enhancement of his personal life through working with Syrian newcomers. He held a strong academic interest in and personal fascination with Middle Eastern cultures and Islam. He liked Syria, "[It] seems so civilised, and the mosques and minarets and the coffee house culture". Volunteering in conversation classes allowed him to "…get a snapshot of Middle Eastern culture…" and "to capture the essence of a culture and people" when his own circumstances and the political situation did not allow to travel there. Commenting on a trip to the beach with them, he elaborated on his impression of the Syrians, "They are very generous…very hospitable, and that's very nice…That's one of the reasons why I volunteer, because there is that kind of inclusion in a community.". He described this community further, noting that "…they may have lost huge amounts, but they've certainly got a group ethos of hospitality and inclusion.". Evidently, he experienced joy and satisfaction through providing support to Syrians and describes their social qualities in detail, as these were decisive for his involvement.

Another University student, Charlie, also explained her involvement with reference to the Middle Eastern origin of the refugees, and the career benefits (Wuthnow, 1995, Wilson and Musick, 2003) she gained from engaging with people of that

region. She explained that she was interested in starting a career in post-conflict restructuring, and wanted to specialise in Middle Eastern conflicts. She reasoned that it would be beneficial to meet people from the Middle East, and therefore decided to volunteer with Syrians. A goal-oriented and career-related motivation has been noted by Clary and colleagues (1998), and suggests an individualistic approach to volunteering that focuses on self-realisation and personal development. Given her ambition and career-oriented explanation for participation, it is likely that employability and CV-fitness were motivators for her engagement.

Thus, similar to Adrian and Cat, the driving force behind Charlie's involvement was her interest in the Middle East, and the benefit she gained from meeting Syrian newcomers *per se*. These narratives showed that the background and culture of the refugee played a significant part in some volunteers' justifications. Narratives identified newcomers as members of a region of the world that was being valued in its own right: the Middle East.

'Because it helped me.'

The next examples of retired and widowed women from Durham illustrate a benefit volunteering offered, which was not linked to refugees' background. Rather, these narratives focussed primarily on volunteers' own life circumstances, as well as their mental make-up as individuals. For example, the leader of the conversation classes in Wilburn explained her increasing involvement with reference to the emotional benefits she gained from volunteering:

> "My husband died suddenly, about 7 months ago. Up till then I didn't do as much, because we did many things together. Now I actually found it helpful for me to just do things. I wanted to do volunteering because it gave me something to think about, take my mind off. I'm missing all these things we used to do, so *it helped me a lot*. I don't feel as if I was particularly altruistic, because I got as much from helping them as they got from me." [my itallics]

Lisa, a retired lady who taught in conversation classes and home-tutored refugees, offered a similar explanation. During our conversation she mentioned her retirement as a reason for volunteering and on a side note said, without further elaboration, that her husband had died a year before: “So I thought I was going to do volunteer work.”. Several hours after our conversation, I received a text from her stating, “Working with the families gives me purpose in life, something I have had to find since I was widowed.”. These were just two examples of many narratives that emphasised the positive contribution volunteering made to volunteers’ lives, especially to those who had experienced loss or grief, and support previous studies that have highlighted the positive impact volunteering can have on the physical and mental wellbeing of volunteers (Wilson and Musick, 2000, 2003). Indeed, the emphasis on volunteering as ‘help’ shows that volunteering can be a way of coping with life (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, p. 174).

Apart form Elisa’s justifications drawing upon tropes of deservingness, the self-centred nature of most narratives was evident. Such focus on the self and one’s personal circumstances, rather than the recipient’s, corresponds to the biographical frame of volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003) and might be linked to the shift from ‘collectivistic’ towards ‘individualistic’ volunteering, observed by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) under ‘reflexive modernity’ (Beck, 1994). Given the frequent reference to the benefits gained through volunteering, Derrida’s concept of the “pure gift” (Bornstein, 2009) seems inapplicable to describe volunteers’ charitable acts. Many scholars have noted the self-interested aspect of charity and philanthropy (Andreoni, 1990; Bakalaki, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012). Andreoni (1990, p. 465) coined the term “impure altruism“ to highlight the egoistic-diven nature of charitable giving. Self-interest, however, need not be in tension with altruism (de Jong, 2011), as altruism is not inherently selfless but can entail altruistic action that simultaneously benefits oneself (Sandri, 2018). Finally, I note, that personal gain was never stated as sole justification for volunteering, but always constituted a component within a web of narratives that offered various reasons for voluntary activities.

Missing organisational rhetoric

Investigation of volunteers' narratives revealed that the reasons volunteers gave for their voluntary work did not correspond with the DCoS's mission. To recollect, the essence of the charity's mission statement was the creation of "a culture of welcome […] celebrating refugee's contribution […] Challenging hostility". Rationales referred to the availability of resources, personal interests and needs as well as notions of deservingness, and were deeply embedded in volunteers' life situations, all of which indicates that volunteers had not undergone an 'organisational socialisation' (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008) that would lead to the incorporation of the organisation's mission. Instead, in light of the above narratives, it can be argued that the charity's own agenda had a minimal impact on the reasons why people volunteered and how they made sense of their involvement. The absence of resonances between volunteers' explanations and those of the charity are likely to have been influenced by the low public profile, poorly used channels of communication, and absence of strategically planned rhetorical efforts with the aim to convince any audience of the charity's mission. In fact, there was no evidence of efforts bring the impulse to give "under rational control" (Mead, 1969, quoted in Bornstein, 2009, p. 623), to manage and produce volunteers, or ensure volunteer capacity in the future (Bornstein, 2009). Consequently, the charity did not provide volunteers with resources to make sense of their work, or to reflect on why they were volunteering. Examples of practices that could create resources would be rhetorical work at gatherings in the form of persuasive text in emails and newsletters, as well as in public resources that emphasise the value and contribution of individuals to the common goal, celebrate a shared mission and principles and highlight achievements. Therefore, diverse resources were activated to creatively compose justifications, which made no mention of the DCoS.

Non-institutionalised motivations

Parallel to this, the narratives offered by volunteers did not support the scholarly proposition that volunteers engage in humanitarian work due to intentional narratives inciting them to offer their free labour, and suggests that existing scholarly work

over-emphasises the role institutional rhetoric plays in guiding peoples' altruistic actions. Numerous critical scholars (Rajaram, 2002; Fassin, 2007; Chouliaraki, 2012; Muehlebach, 2012; Barnett, 2014; Malkki, 2015) have linked humanitarian engagement with the intentional rhetoric in the form of visual, verbal and written language that produces narratives which serve to strategically mobilise the public to engage in unpaid humanitarian work. In Durham, however, volunteers' engagement could not be linked to mobilising narratives, implemented by an institution. On the contrary, their engagement was spontaneous and often detached from coherent justifications. As I have shown, many volunteers did not question their engagement. They did not adopt a moralising stance, nor did they reproduce 'humanitarian rhetoric' to justify their initiatives, as Muehlebach's work (2012) would suggest. In many situations, it seemed that only during our conversations did volunteers begin to reflect on their actions, and only then did they start to articulate a narrative to justify them. This would indicate that volunteers had no strongly set narratives in mind, and therefore were unlikely to have acquired narratives from an external source, which could be reproduced on demand.

This questions the direct link that has been proposed, according to which narratives and visualisations of suffering and victimhood have been employed extensively to mobilise the public to engage in charity. Such strategies to encourage active civic engagement, have been critiqued widely, making the point that the recipients of support become the subject of emotions rather than politics (Muehelbach, 2012; Rozakou, 2012). The volunteering ethos has been critiqued as a form of neoliberal governmentality reproducing a neoliberal bio-political regime. Yet volunteers' justifications varied widely, and consisted of a combination of personalised reasons, related to their psychological state, personal interests and practical circumstances. Volunteers' personal situations and life circumstances have not received enough attention from scholarship that gives discursive practices of knowledge construction primary responsibility for the involvement of volunteers. While the available data does not allow us to infer much about the impact of the discursively constructed narratives of refugees on volunteers' processes of reasoning, it does suggest that the main resources volunteers used to account for their activities were self-orientated. The variability, the situational and personalised character of their argumentations, as well as the deferral between action and justification, suggests that there seems to be

no institutionalised processes of persuasive work underlying volunteers' charitable activities and refugee support. Therefore, Durham did not provide a site for the creation or reproduction of Muehlebach's 'moral neoliberal' (2012).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various themes that emerged from volunteers' narratives as they developed accounts for why they engaged in volunteering for refugees. The examples provided formed parts of multiple and mutually inconsistent narratives, which contain a range of rationalisations. It is important to remember that none of these justifications stood on its own (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991) but they were part of various stories embedded in a range of interlocking resources. Combinations of diverse motives, which appeared under various circumstances allowed volunteers to produce different explanations for their activities at different times. The fact that Lisa sent a text message to me a few hours after our interview, illustrates that narratives were produced retrospectively (Carrithers, 2005, p. 441) and were not static, but subject to change across time and space. I have therefore been reluctant to search for any underlying reasons for voluntary engagement, but have tried instead to illustrate the heterogeneous nature of volunteers' narratives as they attempted to account for their involvement. Thereby, I gained insights into the way volunteers made sense of their actions, giving them ownerships for their actions, rather than searching for an explanation for their behaviour beyond their rationales.

In summary, I have suggested that the variation across volunteers' narratives was linked to the non-institutionalised setting of support provision. Many volunteers seemed to have had no explanation prepared, but produced their narratives to account for their involvement post-hoc. This suggested that volunteers were ready to improvise in an altruistic way, which arose independently of any preconceived ideology or a designated organisation's mission. At its conclusion, this chapter addressed the applicability of existing theories and critiques of humanitarianism, and argued that due to the divergence from dominant public narratives offered by humanitarian institutions, existing critiques on humanitarianism did not accurately reflect civil society engagement in Durham. The predominance of self-orientated rationales corresponds to the shift towards 'individualistic', self-interested and 'goal-

orientated' volunteering, liked to the process of individualisation (Beck 1994; Hustinx, and Lammertyn, 2003). Therefore, volunteering practices acquired meaning detached from community and collective purpose. Scholars have identified a shared ideology or a common goal and purpose as key features to develop ties (Yarrow, 2011) and establish communities (Cohen, 1985). In the discussed narratives no collective purpose was identified that would hold together a community (Trundle, 2014, p. 68) based on a shared mission. This suggests that volunteers might not identify with a collective volunteer body. The next chapter will explore this issue in more detail.

Chapter 3
A fragmented volunteer community

So far, I have demonstrated the un-boundedness and spontaneity of support practices (chapter one), diversity of volunteers' paths of involvement and the variation in narrated rationales to account for involvement in volunteering (chapter two). This chapter continues to be concerned with diversity, with regards to volunteers' understandings of accountability and responsibility of who is in charge. Analysis of how volunteers narrated their perception of the organisation of refugee support reveals their conception and production of social categories and indicates a fragmented community. Following Cohen (1985) I approach community as "a system of values, norms and moral codes which provides a sense of identity within a bounded whole to its members" (Hamilton, 1985, p. 9). A community is constructed through commonalities among the members of a group, which are bound to each other through something they have in common and through their shared difference to the other entity (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). Therefore, volunteers who experience feelings of belonging to a community are expected to express such by drawing upon resources that indicate commonality and boundedness and by the use of collective nouns (Storch, 2005, p. 308) and generic pronouns (Carrithers, 2008, p. 165).

Chapter one illustrated the chaotic, decentralised and unbounded nature of voluntary support in County Durham, lacking a formal organisation of activities and community markers. Narratives in chapter two demonstrated the absence of a shared motivator in volunteer's narratives in the form of a shared ideology (Yarrow, 2011), a common goal or a vision (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019) that would serve to establish a sense of commonality (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019). Implications of these observations are shown in this chapter in a two-fold way. Firstly, resulting from the absence of markers to demarcate an institutional body accountable for the organisation of voluntary activities, volunteers seemed to have different conceptions of how volunteering activities were organised and of who was in charge. Secondly, volunteers' comments about the operation of the charity and the organisation of activities revealed a fragmented volunteer body.

Interested in the categorisation of their social worlds, I pay particular attention to volunteers' rhetoric (Carrithers, 2008) as they described the organisation and operation of volunteering activities. I trace how volunteers rhetorically constructed social categories and how they positioned themselves in relation to others by exploring the strategic predication of 'us' and 'them' (Carrithers, 2008). Volunteers' "rhetorical agency" (Carrithers, 2008, p. 168), implied in the rhetorical choices, provoked a strategic movement of the audience's mind (Fernandez 1986, quoted in Carrithers, 2008, p. 163) towards a particular understanding of the social arrangements of volunteers in Durham. Volunteer use of pronouns went beyond the unremarkable and routine segmentary arrangement of pronouns (Evans-Pritchard, 1940), typical to a change in the context of speaking (Carrithers, 2008, 2009b) but revealed a remarkable effort to categorise volunteers and to draw social boundaries along lines of differences that distinguish one group from the other.

The first section highlights conceptions and statements about volunteering activities that ascribed responsibility to the DCoS charity and talked of volunteering activities as a collective project. The second section reveals that accountability and responsibility for activities and their organisation was not self-evidently ascribed to the DCoS. In fact, many volunteers asked 'who is in charge', demonstrating an unawareness of the role of the DCoS and the contradiction to the impression given that volunteers belonged to the DCoS. This confusion about responsibility reflected a lack of organisational boundedness and transparent operations, and might be linked to the absence of institutional markers. The final section presents the case of two volunteers; Diana and Emily, and how they commented on their volunteering experiences and thereby revealed not only a different understanding of accountability and responsibility, but also engaged in the re-drawing of group boundaries, in a way that reveals a fragmented volunteer body and opposes the idea of a community. Boundaries were not drawn along membership to the DCoS, but rhetorical work constructed lines along differences with respect to activities. In these narratives volunteers did not identify with the DCoS despite their membership. Therefore it was possible that members of the DCoS, conducted activities that were not affiliated to the DCoS, however, perceived by some as DCoS project. The shift in positionality in relation to the DCoS, and the inconsistent organisational boundaries drawn by volunteers challenge the distinction made by scholars between *formal* volunteering

as bound to an organisation and *informal* volunteering as altruistic activities independent from an organisation (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009; Kalogeraki, 2018). The missing feelings of belonging to a larger volunteer community, discontent and a move away from the DCoS charity, suggest that instead of understanding refugee support in Durham as collective action driven by experiences of shared commitment to a cause (Eckstein, 2001; Trundle, 2014, Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019) volunteers' activities can better be understood as individualistic experiences, as chapter two has suggested, driven by individual motivators and embedded in individual's life situations (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

Collective action

At the Regional Gathering of the City of Sanctuary North East, the Durham City of Sanctuary group presented their activities and ascribed accountability and responsibility of several initiatives carried out by volunteers to the DCoS. They said, "*We* run conversation classes", "*We* did a trip to South Shields", "*We* make welcome bags", "*We* have a befriending scheme". 'We' implied the DCoS, which in this context was equated to the body of volunteers who participated in these activities. The presenters perceived themselves as part and as representatives of that volunteer body. Similarly, a DCoS trustee explained to me "…what *we* do, is go to houses and ask what the families would need in terms of help with documents, language, or driving lessons…English language and drop-in sessions are the basic long term services *we* provide" [my emphasis]. Again, 'we' referred to the charity as a collective of volunteers as well as an organisational body. She communicated that these activities were part of the DCoS projects and therefore, gave credits for these activities to the DCoS as bureaucratised organisation.

Also, volunteers who worked on the ground with refugees employed similar notions of unity in their narratives. I offer an example from the charity's general meeting, which took place at a venue of Durham University, late in April 2019. The meeting was attended by about 13 people; some trustees, a Syrian mother and her daughter from Wilburn, some Syrians from Richmond, as well as Diana, Claire and Emily, the three "core" volunteers (Pearce, 1993), and leaders of the conversation classes. When the agenda moved to "any other business", after the treasurer had presented a novel

‘code of conduct’ as part of a new initiative to formalise volunteering, Diana spoke up. She informed that the County Council had expressed an interest in accessing and using materials that she and another volunteer, who had left the DCoS, had developed. She emphasised that they had spent a great deal of time and effort creating these materials and, although willing to pass them on, she wanted their work to be accredited. She suggested printing the DCoS logo on the front page as a way to accredit their work. In this instance Diana framed her work as “group resources” (Eckstein, 2011, p. 829) and identified as *belonging to* the DCoS. Her suggestion to print the charity’s logo as a means to accredit the work *she* had done indicates that she perceived her work to be carried out in the name of the charity. Thus, when she said “I think they should acknowledge *our* work”, Diana positioned herself *within* the DCoS and expressed her allegiance by referring to the work as a collective achievement under the name of the DCoS, rather than as action carried out by her and her colleague. Thus she drew rhetorical boundaries that separated the “us”, including the charity and her, from “them”, the County Council.

Another instance also demonstrated that a volunteer gave credits exclusively to the DCoS for the conversation class in Greenwich. When asked by Beth whether the DCoS was “behind” the Greenwich conversation class, Emily responded without hesitation “Yes”. She told Beth that the charity had been set up by S.F. when the first group of Syrians arrived, and had been inspired by S.F.’s experience with the Oxford City of Sanctuary. She explained that she only became a member when she realised, “…that that was where everything was going to happen. Rather than a random collection of people, everything would be centred on the City of Sanctuary, and then I got involved.”. Here, Emily made the DCoS appear as a major driving force for voluntary refugee support and expressed her belonging to the charity. These examples reinforce the idea that volunteers identified themselves with the DCoS, and embodied the charity. This would qualify their practices as formal volunteering, carried out in or for an organisation (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 346, Kalogeraki, 2018, p. 170).

The understanding of voluntary refugee support as a collective action under the rubric of the DCoS was also prevalent among ‘outsiders’. By outsiders I mean people who were not active volunteers nor members of the DCoS, nevertheless they

encountered volunteers and Syrians on various occasions, and were indirectly involved with support initiatives, for example, managers and employees of community centres and churches, which hosted the conversation classes, drop-ins and events, or people employed by the council who were in communication with the charity's trustees. In the encounter with 'outsiders' in these locations, volunteers were always addressed and perceived as volunteers *from* the DCoS, and their voluntary work was placed within the domain of the DCoS, irrespective of volunteers' membership status and the tasks carried out.

For example, when I was the first person to arrive at the conversation class in a church, the manager welcomed me and asked, "Are you from the City of Sanctuary for refugees?", and I said that I was. Emily introduced our group to others as being "…from the Durham City of Sanctuary" to a church member, although in some weeks not even half of the volunteers were DCoS members or knew what the DCoS was. Introducing oneself as member of a registered charity increased volunteers' credibility, but also increased the likelihood that they would receive support from organisations, individuals and sponsors, such as the church (Walker and Russ, 2011). Consequently, the church perceived the conversation classes and drop-ins as an event *hosted by* the DCoS. The understanding that the volunteers were *from* the DCoS, also created the misconception of a homogenous volunteer body.

Similarly, I was introduced to the manager of the community centre Wilburn as "a volunteer from the DCoS". I attended a Christmas party in the community centre. There were three volunteers from the conversation class who attended; two DCoS members and one university student who was not a member. The centre's manager privately invited us to the party after a class in the community centre. The DCoS was not involved in the matter and no other charity members were invited. At the party, I perceived myself as a community member, volunteer helper and as researcher rather than a representative of the DCoS. The other volunteers also saw themselves as helpers and community members, but did not perceive their role at that occasion to be linked to the charity. Nevertheless, we were introduced and known as *being from* the DCoS.

A final example of collectivist notions that embraced all volunteers under the term DCoS, is given by a speech by a councillor from a constituency in Durham at the "Stand Up To Racism County Durham" event in Durham City. The event was organised in collaboration with the Durham for Refugees Student Society, and joined by the Stories of Sanctuary community choir. During the event the documentary "Calais Children: A Case To Answer" was screened, and several notables were invited to discuss migration issues and take questions. The councillor spoke about various measures taken by the Council to support refugees, through the foundation of the Durham Humanitarian Support Partnership. She mentioned the "outstanding support by external partners", and emphasised in particular the efforts from local voluntary teams involved with refugee families such as the Durham City of Sanctuary. Referring to the DCoS repeatedly, the counsellor explained, "the DCoS is an organisation which gathers volunteers and organises local and weekly gatherings in Wilburn. They give massive support in the area.". Due to the lack of means to differentiate members from non-members, the councillor's comments had added to the inaccurate supposition that local support groups consisted of people who *belonged* to the DCoS. Furthermore, she said that the DCoS "gathered volunteers and organises weekly gatherings", referring to the DCoS as organisational body, which was accredited for the work of gathering and organising. However, as I showed in chapter one and two, no efforts on part of the charity were directed to gather or manage volunteers. There were no recruitment strategies in place, nor did the charity maintain a public profile to attract volunteers.

She further elaborated, "*They* provided goods for the families, *they* hosted welcome events, and *they* provided interpreters, and organised conversation groups and befriending opportunities." Her use of the word "they" reflected the perception that the DCoS consisted of a volunteer body, which was collectively accountable for the provision of support. All individual volunteers were embraced under the label DCoS and addressed collectively. No differentiation was made between volunteers who were charity members and non-charity members. The boundaries of the DCoS collective were thus, not drawn along the lines of membership, but along the lines of voluntary engagement, however, unintentionally, as the councillor seemed unaware of the mix of volunteers and their diverse institutional affiliations.

All of these instances gave the perception that an organisation, the DCoS, rather than individuals, initiated, managed and coordinated (Eckstein, 2001) voluntary refugee support in Durham. The next section will show that not all volunteers shared the conception of unity under the umbrella of the DCoS, and some volunteers' experiences opposed the view volunteering for refugees was a collectivistic action. In the following accounts, the role of the DCoS as presented above was challenged and appeared to be much more ambiguous than initially assumed.

"Who runs the class?"

On different occasions volunteers posed the question 'who is in charge?', illustrating unawareness of the DCoS and its supposed role, and shows that unlike suggested by the statements above, not all volunteers felt like they were belonging to the DCoS simply by attending conversation classes. This confusion about responsibility expressed by volunteers reflected a lack of organisational boundedness and transparent operations. For instance, after she had participated in conversation classes for several weeks, Beth, a middle-aged woman who had participated in the church's craft morning and joined our conversation class when she realised we were teaching English to Syrians, asked during a drive from Greenwich to Central Durham: "Is the City of Sanctuary behind this, or how does it work?".

A similar question was posed while I was setting up the materials for a class in Wilburn with Dareen and Elisa. Dareen had been involved as interpreter for several weeks, and was a member of the DCoS. As an active member of the community, Elisa spent much of her time in the community centre, and had been involved in befriending and helping Syrians, since their arrival in 2017, but she was not a member of the DCoS. Meaning the conversation class, Dareen asked, "Who is responsible for this?". The question triggered a discussion about whether the DCoS was in charge, and what they did (or did not do) in terms of communication, insurance and organisation. Again, on a bus journey from a conversation class to City Durham, a university student volunteer who had volunteered for some weeks and found out about the class through a facebook post by the Durham for Refugees society, asked who exactly was in charge. Some volunteer had never heard of the DCoS charity like Maria, who stated "I didn't actually know I was volunteering with

the City of Sanctuary" until it was mentioned by someone who identified the conversation class as a DCoS initiative. These instances showed that it was not clear which organs were accountable for the organisation of conversation classes and questions the collective-nature of volunteering.

Such failure to identify the DCoS as responsible body is likely to be linked to the absence of markers designed to delineate members and their activities as belonging to an institutional body as shown in chapters one and two. The environment characterised by the absence of verbal, symbolic and material markers to indicate the boundaries of organisational spaces meant that volunteers were unsure who was in charge of the classes. The next section analyses volunteers' alternative interpretations of who was behind voluntary activities. They reveal volunteers' experiences of detachment from the charity, which contradicts the conception of collective action under the DCoS.

Individual Action

Narrating their lived experiences of volunteering, local helpers expressed opposition to the above recounted conceptions of unity. I provide snippets from conversations with Emily and Diana to exemplify how those who prepared, organised and taught conversation classes, organised trips and events, and dedicated time and effort to provide individual support, did not hold the conception of their support activities as a collective action under the label of the DCoS. In fact, in private conversations their position in relation to the DCoS shifted and revealed that, contradicting their above statements, they did not identify themselves as DCoS, nor did they share the perception that the DCoS was responsible for the classes or that their work was part of the DCoS project. First, I explore interpretations of accountability and responsibility. Then, I discuss how these interpretations redrew group boundaries and revealed a fragmented volunteer body, rather than a collective as suggested above.

One afternoon Emily dropped off some materials for the newly established conversation class in Greenwich at my house. Due to family commitments she had asked me to lead the class. Above, I presented Emily's answer to Beth's question, that the DCoS was "behind the conversation class" ascribing the DCoS a position of

authority and responsibility. However, during a private conversation at the car part in front of my house, she offered a different version of the charity's role. I asked if the DCoS knew about the recently set up class. "Probably not", she said. "I have never told them about it, and they never asked or offered support.". When I asked whether she had considered reporting about the class, she said, "Whether *they* know or not, it doesn't make any difference to us anyways. So why should I bother?". She added, "I am sure we already bore you with our complaints", and we redirected our attention to the English work sheets. When I asked Emily who she thought was in charge of the conversation class in Greenwich, she said, "I, I would say I set it up and I organise it.". Clearly, Emily did not hold the DCoS accountable for the existence and running of the class in Greenwich. On the contrary, she experienced no support from or connection to the DCoS, and saw her voluntary work as independent from and unaffected by the charity. This gives the impression that the conversation class had nothing to do with the charity. Emily's rhetoric on this occasion, revealed a significant contradiction with her previous statements, that everything was "centred on the DCoS" and that the DCoS was "behind" the class.

Similarly, Diana's statements were in contradiction to the claims presented above, that conversation classes were being run under the authority of the DCoS. She emphasised that the activities she was involved in had originated out of her own initiative, and that she had not received any support from the charity either. "I started the conversation groups, I took the initiative," she said, and further elaborated,

> "Then they say 'we are running conversation classes', but they have never been to the any class, and they don't ask me about it…[T]he DCoS don't really do anything. I bet they will take credit for it, though.".

Several weeks later, we rearranged tables for the class in the church in Greenwich, when I told Diana about having been in touch with some trustees. She picked up on that comment and continued complaining, "They do nothing…we are here because we organise it, but that has nothing to do with them.". She went on with some passion,

> “Really, wouldn’t [the conversation class] have happened without the DCoS? Claire just does her own thing, and we do ours. We would still be here, teaching and helping if the DCoS didn’t exist. The charity makes no difference to us.”

With these statements she opposed the perception that her work was associated with the DCoS. Unlike her above statement during the charity’s general meeting in which she located her work of collecting materials within the realm of operation of the DCoS, she discredited the DCoS with the argument that “*they* have never been to the any class, and *they* don’t ask me about it…[T]he DCoS don’t really do anything”. She suspects that despite having nothing to do with the conversation class “…*they* will take credit for it”. However, she claimed the credits for the conversation classes in Maplewood by referring to them as “*my* class” because she had “set it up, led it, and organised it”. Disconnection to other parts of the volunteer body made it difficult to experience volunteering as a collective action (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019). What drove her voluntary engagement were thus, not the feelings of belonging to a greater community (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019), but her confrontation with refugees’ needs.

Redrawing the boundaries

Not only did Diana and Emily refuse to accredit the DCoS with accountability or responsibility for the conversation classes, but they also rearranged group boundaries, created new social categories and repositioned themselves in relation to the DCoS. One’s positionality in relation to others is never stable but mutable and plastic (Carrithers, 2008, Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Depending on the context, one builds temporary allegiances with some, constituting an arrangement of ‘us’, which changes as different social constellations arise (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Boundaries, are therefore, never fixed but they can be erected and maintained through the construction of symbolic markers, such as values and purpose that bind people together. Narratives in chapter 2 indicated an absence of such key features of community building, suggesting a possible absence of feelings of shared belonging to a larger body. Although mutability and shifting allegiances are a fact of social life (Carrithers, 2008, Evans-Pritchard, 1940), the way volunteers’ rhetorical work

produced internal group boundaries is significant as it sheds light on the ways volunteering is experiences as an individual rather than collective action (Wuthnow, 1998, Putnam, 2000).

Previously, Emily and Diana had expressed belonging to the DCoS, and regarded the conversation class and the work they put into it to be encompassed by the DCoS. However, discussion on the (in)activity of the charity revealed differences, discontent, and a lack of activities, performances, symbols (Eckstein, 2001, p. 829) which triggered some volunteers' disassociation from the charity and erection of group boundaries. With the play of pronouns (Carrithers, 2008) and the identification of differences, they drew lines that marked an alternative conceptualisation of the volunteer community.

To illustrate, I return to the above quotes. Emily and Diana inserted the pronouns 'us' and 'them' in their accounts of volunteering organisation. The inchoate "they" was developed into a delineated character in the context of speaking. Emily said "*they* never asked or offered support… Whether *they* know or not, it doesn't make any difference to *us* anyways". Diana, complained in similar vein "*they* have never been to the any class… *we* are here because *we* organise it, but that has nothing to do with *them*". Informally gathered around a table, in a poorly attended conversation class, disappointments and unmet expectations of the charity were disclosed that filled the DCoS-category with meaning. Diana expressed her frustrations with the Durham City of Sanctuary charity. "*They* never do anything" she complained, "or have you ever heard anything from *them*?". I noted that I regularly received emails from them, and she said, "Yes, emails forwarding events that other people have organised. Tell me, what have *they* done?".

Here, the narrators position the 'they' in opposition to 'us'. In the context of our discussion 'they' was used to refer to the DCoS. I asked if the DCoS knew about the class, and Emily responded 'they' never asked. In these instances 'us' was not part of the DCoS and the 'DCoS' did not encompass the whole volunteer community but the DCoS charity that was understood to be embodied by the trustees of the charity. The trustees were mainly involved in the bureaucracy and administration of the charity rather than working directly with refugees. As Emily and Diana complained about

the absence of group resources, in the form of labour and support (Eckstein, 2001, p. 829) we learn that 'they' are a group of people who "have never been to the any class", who "never asked or offered support", and who "never do anything". Although Emily and Diana were members of the charity, they excluded themselves from the DCoS-charity-category. Including only the trustees in the DCoS-category was a rhetorical move that marked themselves off the charity and delineated 'us' as separated category characterised. Referring to 'they' evoked the idea of the trustees as collective whole, bound together by their inactivity. 'Us' embraced those who attended classes and offered support in running them. Thus, the 'us' category was marked by its opposition to and disagreement with 'their' (in)actions.

The strategic predication of 'us' and 'them', during a discussion about activities and the future development of the DCoS, Diana further develop the inchoate situation into a situation of two opposing entities. With an intra-organisational comparison, Diana developed the inchoate pronouns into generic predications, "I am a doer," she said. "I don't like people who talk. Academics, they are *talkers*…the sort of people who become trustees are middle-class who like to talk about stuff.". With this comment the 'they', who we already knew were the trustees of the DCoS, were developed into a defined 'type' of person (Carrithers, 2008, pp. 166-167): academics, middle-class people, and talkers. Diana defined herself as a 'doer' with a dislike of 'talkers'. The attendance of classes, and the direct involvement with refugees in their daily lives distinguished the 'doers' from the 'talkers'. As the „doers and the talkers engaged in no shared activities, they could not bond over common experiences and build upon commonalities. These particularities and details about the characters served to move the mind of the audience to adopt understanding of the volunteer body as a fragmented.

This shows that some volunteers' lived experiences were shaped by feelings of disappointment and discontent, feeling un-support, unvalued and un-acknowledged, rather than experiencing volunteering as carrying out a collective mission. Consequently, the way Emily and Diana narrated their experiences showed that although being members of the charity, they did not seem to perceive themselves to embody the charity, but volunteered in their own names. Therefore, conversation classes can be understood as initiatives taken by *them-selves* rather than by *them-as-*

members of the DCoS as in their previous statements in the first section and could be placed in the category of 'informal' volunteering, unaffiliated with an organisation. Two initiatives illustrate the shift towards carrying out volunteering as independent actors instead of performing in their roles as charity members.

I have noted previously the charity's intentional public invisibility in order to reduce the risk of hate crime and hostility. Diana, called it the "ethos of don't share with anybody" and questioned "what's the point in having a charity?", followed by complaints: "*They* don't publicise. *They* don't give positive images about anything. The website is rubbish. If you don't have that, how do new volunteers or people who are interested know?". She criticises the absence of a public profile at the expense of losing valuable volunteer support. Moreover, she criticises that without tackling the roots of exclusion and hostility, no changes would be evoked, an argument that corresponds to the often stated critique of charity treating symptoms but failing to address the roots of inequality and exclusion (Theodossopolous, 2016, Eliasoph, 1998). Diana stated "I think its crazy. We obviously have people, it's in the news all the time…we can't keep them hiding…they are in our communities, they are part of us, they are friends, neighbours. It shouldn't be seen as a risk, we have to battle that". Indignant at the lack of positive coverage, she regretted that the DCoS had "gone along with the hush-hush approach" and refused to submit to the charity's strategy. Together with another charity member and two Syrian newcomers she contacted The Northern Echo newspaper, which consequently released an article titled 'Welcoming Syrian refugees should be source of pride for region'. Clearly, in this instance, Diana and a fellow charity member did not act in the name of the charity, nor did the charity take credit for the actions taken. They acted as independent agents disaffiliated from the charity.

The second case illustrates similar independence and disaffiliation from the charity. Responding to refugees' request, Diana organised a trip to Edinburgh in 2018. She recounted,

> "When [the refugees] come to me and say can we do a trip, I say 'yes'. I don't even get in touch with the charity, and just do. You want to go on a trip, then we need money, so let's

> make a fundraising event. We raise money, we buy the tickets, and we go".

She arranged a dinner to fundraise money to cover travel costs to Edinburgh. The church where the drop-in on Saturdays took place offered their hall as a venue, and the Syrian families cooked a three-course meal for 70 people. After the meal, there was Syrian music and dancing. Tickets were £20 per person, which was enough to cover the return journey by train for the whole group. As her comment "I didn't even get in touch with the charity" indicated, the event happened entirely independent from the DCoS, and Diana acted as a voluntary organiser but not as a charity member.

The newspaper publication and the trip were initiatives taken in response to the perceived inactivity of the charity, rather than being encompassed by the charity. In these cases the organiser did not identify herself as charity member, but excluded herself from the social category of the DCoS. This suggests that had initiatives come from the trustees, they would more likely be viewed as owned by the DCoS. However, as no such plans or initiatives seemed to have existed, it was local people's efforts that gave rise to activities, resulting in volunteers claiming ownership.

However, such categorisation of the social environment and understanding of accountability was not consistent across the volunteer body, as the particular case of the trip to Edinburgh in 2018 revealed. Sara, a volunteer translator, located Diana's work within the domain of the DCoS project. She deemed the DCoS responsible for organising and carrying out the trip. Having overheard that the trip took place but having received no information about the event, she expressed her impression that "[t]he DCoS is for certain people only" and excluded others, like herself. She described the organiser of the event as "somebody *from* the [City of] Sanctuary for refugees". Although Diana was a member of the DCoS, she had not organised the trip in the name of DCoS. Nevertheless, Sara associated her and her work with the charity. Hence, she drew group boundaries with reference to the perceived channels of communication from which she felt excluded. In her view, the DCoS trustees and Diana were part of the DCoS category, while she located herself outside.

She felt unappreciated by the charity and told me about her distinct volunteering experiences with a City of Sanctuary in the South of England. There, she felt valued by fellow volunteers and the volunteer leader, particularly after having received a certificate that acknowledged her voluntary labour, and was invited to an event for volunteers hosted by the town's mayor as an expression of gratitude (Eckstein, 2001, p. 836). These were symbolic performances that not only acknowledged her work and made her feel valued, but reinforced a "community linked sense of self-worth" (Eckstein, 2001, p. 841). However, here "they don't do it, they don't appreciate", she said and expressed her desire to be acknowledged as valuable member of a community (Clary *et al*., 1998. p. 256). Misunderstanding the trip as a project carried out by the DCoS, she was disappointed, felt unvalued and developed the understanding of the DCoS as a group "for certain people only" that did not include herself. This illustrates that volunteers' across the community did not categorise their social world consistently, and that various perceptions of who was accountable existed. Such inconsistencies had caused misunderstandings in the past, which were likely to fuel conflict, disappointment and disengagement, as volunteers did not receive any acknowledgement from those they *thought* were in charge, and could go away thinking their work was not valued.

Given the shift between acting as independent volunteer and as DCoS-volunteer, as illustrated by Diana and Emily, and considering the different conceptions of who was in charge of volunteer activities, such as the conversation classes and the Edinburgh trip, the distinction between *formal* and *informal* volunteering (Ganesh and Mcallum, 2009, p. 346, Kalogeraki, 2018, p. 170) cannot be accurately applied to volunteering in Durham. In fact, such volunteering categories fail to consider the overlapping and shifting nature of social boundaries and the often chaotic organisation of the third sector, under the lack of resources to establish clear roles and responsibilities, to draw institutional boundaries and designate spaces through the production of symbols.

Conclusion

To summarise and draw a conclusion from the discussion so far, the informal and non-institutionalised context of volunteering for refugees in Durham gave rise to a

dispersed and diffuse volunteer body. The ad-hoc, flexible, and disorganised nature of volunteering in Durham did not give rise to a collectivist-rooted volunteering. Depending on their position within the dispersed network, volunteers' accessed different information, had different experiences and developed a subjective understanding of the social world of volunteering. Consequently, volunteers provided various, even contradicting narratives about who was in charge. In particular, the role of the DCoS and volunteers' relations to it appeared to be ambiguous.

First I offered narratives that perceived volunteering as collective action under the DCoS. Volunteers associated themselves with the charity and located their activities within the realms of the DCoS, suggesting an understanding of volunteering as collectively organised and overlooked by the DCoS. However, such conception of accountability and group belonging was not consistent across time and space. In fact, volunteers wonder about who was in charge and alternative interpretations about responsibility and liability revealed that the DCoS was not an established authority, rather it occupied an ambiguous position in the volunteer environment. When commenting on their lived experiences of volunteering, volunteers classified the social world of volunteering in Durham inconsistently. They drew boundaries not between the volunteers and the non-volunteers, as would be the case with collectivist-volunteering in which volunteers felt tied to a volunteer community (Eckstein, 2001; Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019). Instead internal boundaries produced intra-group categories. In particular, we have seen that in circumstances where discontent was being expressed, volunteers' rhetorical efforts erected boundaries and delineated different 'types' of volunteers: 'doers' and 'talkers'.

Taking into account the diverse rationales in volunteers' motivational narratives presented in chapter two, suggests that, rather than viewing volunteering as community effort to support refugees, volunteering in Durham is an expression of individual's interests to help refugees, whereby the meaning and content of volunteering activities are produced in interactions and interpretations (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) of volunteering activities. The diversity of interpretations and the fragmentation of the volunteer community were embedded in a context that lacked community markers, symbolic and material, which might have had the capacity to create a

stronger sense of community feeling based on a shared mission. In Durham however, where the charity felt compelled to maintain a low public profile, organisational rhetoric, including the dissemination of its mission and values into practical activities, was absent. Moreover, where no markers served volunteers to orientate between overlapping institutions, no shared understanding of who was in charge of refugee support could be fostered giving rise to loose organisational ties (Wuthnow, 1998). Therefore, the contradictory understandings of who ran gatherings, and the construction of sub-groups along lines of difference within the volunteer body can be understood as another implication of the diffused and improvised character of refugee support in Durham.

Chapter 4

Negotiating engagement and detachment

So far I have described the non-institutionalised forms of refugee support in County Durham. I presented a diversity of rationales as to why volunteers participated in refugee support, and highlighted the inconsistent perceptions of who was in charge. Such heterogeneity is fundamentally linked to the unique context within which volunteering occurred. The absence of a formally established non-governmental organisation to support migrants and a lack of public engagement in a culturally homogenous and deprived community shaped the diffused, spontaneous and informal provision of support. In a continued exploration of volunteering as a situated practice, this final chapter investigates the un-established and undefined role of "the volunteer" by exploring the diverse approaches volunteers enacted in their interactions with refugees. I pay attention to volunteers' rhetorical work to inquire about the cultural resources activated in response to a particular recurrence: The proposition by refugees that volunteers should depart from the public sphere of support provision, and enter into the private sphere of personal relations (Fortes, 1970). As volunteers' habitus did not suffice to interpret refugees' proposals, nor to guide their reactions, they were required to improvise, leading to various forms of engagement. In this way I investigate how the role of the volunteer was enacted in different ways.

Like the narratives produced to account for their involvement in voluntary support in chapter two, negotiating relationships with refugees reflected a disconnect with the DCoS. Although the DCoS produced some written guidelines including the 'volunteer agreement', safeguarding procedures, and more latterly, a code of conduct, these found little mention or application in practice. Many volunteer never accessed these writings. This inaccessibility is reflected in the widespread absence of indicators of charity guidelines and policies in volunteers' narratives. It is suggested that the absence of any training, the inaccessibility of written guidance, as well as the non-existent communication of expectations, obligations, and rules of volunteering, is linked to the diverse forms of engagement that occurred with refugees. All of this

resulted in the social category of “the volunteer” being an open and adaptable one. Therefore, those who engaged in voluntary work, and ascribed to themselves the label of “volunteer”, did so with diverse understandings of what the role of the volunteer implied and demanded (Lechte, 1994, p. 64, Chandler, 2007, p. 79).

I start by introducing the ‘landscape of possibilities’ under the ‘gap of common sense’ in a multicultural context. In the main section I discuss volunteers rationales with regards to engagement in and detachment from refugees. They are organised around two main categories: First, those rationales which suggested a more personal engagement with refugees; second, those rationales which lead to disengagement or detachment. In conclusion, I comment on the adaptable and variedly practiced role of the volunteer.

A landscape of possibilities

As highlighted in chapter one, in the informal context of conversation classes and drop-ins, there were no hierarchies in place, and new volunteers who informally joined the class were not informed about any code of conduct or rules that shaped volunteers’ or refugees’ behaviour. Under these informal circumstances, situations arose which challenged the newcomer’s role as recipient, and the volunteer’s role as giver. In Chapter One I conceptualised volunteering as the provision of a service which transferred cultural, as well as social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), in order to enhance refugees’ capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011). In that conceptualisation volunteers took on the role of giver, while newcomers were recipients.

These social roles however, were not stable. Drop-in and conversation classes first seemed like spaces in which “cross-class, unidirectional forms of giving“ (Bowie 1998, pp. 469) took place. However, as my engagement in the field progressed, these spaces reavealed the emergence of socialities that opened opportunities for re-nogtiating subjectivities and re-building social identities (Darling, 2011) whereby social roles were reversed (Vandevoordt, 2017). On various occasions, newcomers invited volunteers to move away from a public space and enter the private sphere of their homes (Fortes, 1970). As refugees practiced hospitality and shared their spaces,

time, and food, they created a temporary microcosmos in which they produced novel forms of agency. As refugees changed their position vis-à-vis volunteers, they transformed themselves from recipients of support into providers of food (Vandevoordt, 2017, p. 609) and challenged the unidirectional assumption implied in much care-giving practices (Lingler *et al*., 2008).

My own experiences of these kinds of encounters illustrate the ease with which refugees could and were willing to engage with volunteers. For instance, during one Saturday morning in the drop-in, I met a Syrian woman of similar age to myself, who had recently moved to a small town in Durham, and spoke hardly any English. We sat around a large table in a church hall and fell into conversation. After about half an hour the woman asked for my phone number and my Facebook profile. Astonished and unprepared, I cast around for a few nervous seconds, struggling to formulate an appropriate answer. With the "unremitting tempo of events" (Carrithers, 2005, p. 441) there was no time to think. Reasons for and against giving away personal contact details crossed my mind, but there was no time to pause, process, or even negotiate an answer. I improvised, saving my name and phone number to her phone. A week later I received a whatsapp message inviting me to her home for a meal in celebration of her child's birthday. I wondered about her motivation for inviting *me* in particular. I was surprised and hesitant, because I had only met her once, briefly. I accepted the invitation. A few days later I found myself in her living room, and observed her worriedly piling four slices of different cakes on my plate. Having entered the "moral universe of the host" (Rozakou, 2012, p. 565) I wondered what the 'right' reaction would be: Ask for less? Take the plate of cake slices, but don't eat it all? Would that be rude? Ask for more, to show politeness? An hour or so later I found myself sitting on her bed, my eyes closed. She applied makeup on my eyes. Unexpectedly, she pulled a big, glittering heart-shaped necklace out of her drawer and placed it in my hand. She asked, "You like?". I told her it was beautiful and returned it to her, but she insisted that I should keep it. Receiving hospitality, slices of birthday cake, and a gift, from someone who I had only met once, and who had so much less than I had, was as troubling as it was joyful, and went totally against my implicit assumption that volunteering does not imply a counter-gift (Fassin, 2007, p. 512). It was a situation that left me "speechless and confused, without a ready interpretation of what has happened" (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 3).

Carrithers' (2009b, p. 49) description of social life as constantly mutable and full of emergencies that demand reaction, captures well the essence of the quandaries that often arose in relations between volunteers and the recipients of their services.

Removed from the situation, I found myself wondering whether I had behaved appropriately; or if not, what the appropriate responses would have been. Because of my multiple social roles, being a volunteer, a postgraduate research student, a political and moral person, an English speaker, 'solidarian' (Rokapolous, 2016, p. 144, Rozakou, 2016, p. 189) and charity member, amongst others, a large repertoire of resources was available to me to activate. Naturally, I faced conflicting interests between the social roles I occupied, which suggested a multiplicity of 'right' responses. Reflexion on my processes of reasoning suggested to me that there was no readily available script, previous experiences or guidelines that devised reaction (Paolicchi, 1995, p. 162, Carrithers, 2005, 2009a). I was moved to ask other volunteers whether they had encountered similar dilemmas, and found that I was not alone. Numerous volunteers had been through similar situations where they had been offered hospitality and had to improvise and justify the decisions taken.

It is important to emphasise my role as complete participant ethnographer in this particular case of knowledge production (Trundle, 2014, p. 5). My experiences as volunteer in Durham had made me aware of the difficulty in negotiating how to engage with and react to refugees, and the challenges inherent to volunteering in an informal and non-institutionalised environment, where no rules or instructions helped to define my role, or guide my activities. Thus, the questions I asked and the data I collected were informed by my own experience and reflective efforts as volunteer.

The response that followed refugees' offers to leave the formality of a public setting, was usually one of astonishment, wonder and indecisiveness. Such response can be understood as an expression of a 'gap in common sense'**.** Common sense are things that are assumed to appear natural and obvious and entail general agreement (Simpson, unpublished). Simpson uses the example of the obvious and shared understanding that one doesn't put a hand in the fire – it is common sense. It entails an aspect of common-ness, that everyone experiences and reasons in the same way. Thus it is not one alone to whom things appear obvious and natural, but this

sensation is shared by others. However, not only “scientific facts”, like a hand in fire, include consensus, but also culturally learned things that are shared amongst members of a socio-cultural group and thought to be true, which are not questioned but taken for granted, are common sense, for example, a set of behaviour and thought, perceptions of the world, social arrangements and values. These are encompassed by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and do not require further explanation. The obviousness makes them appear as ‘common sense’. Therefore, although recognising the unpredictability and inherent mutable character of social life, some culturally learned set of habitual behaviour is, if only to some degree, predictable by those who share it. Habitual behaviour provides practical and ethical certainties and enable humans to assess and understand others (Simpson, unpublished).

However, what appears to me as common sense might appear anything but obvious to others, and vice versa, especially in a multicultural context. Refugees’ actions were not obvious, nor predicted and expected, there existed no shared sensation or consensus. They did not correspond to what can be understood as common sense behaviour among locals of Durham. The habitus no longer offered the means to assess the meaning and intentions behind actions, nor did it guide an obvious course of action. One volunteer’s quote clearly illuminates the absence of common sense and the lack of guidance through the habitus:

> “It’s not like I need guidelines and paperwork, so that I know what I'm doing. There is stuff that you don't think about if you can speak to them, and if you're *on the same page* straight away. If you can communicate the same language and come from the same background, you kind of *know all this stuff naturally and you can just tell*. But obviously when there is communication barriers and different cultures, then it's really hard to *know where you stand* in this situation, and how everyone feels.” [my italics]

The comment ‘you kind of know all this stuff naturally and you can just tell’ and being ‘on the same page’ expresses the experience of common sense in action. She indicates the difficulties in connection with the newcomer, who “thinks, feels and acts” (Wacquant, 2005, p. 316) in ways not immediately intelligible to the volunteer,

whose common sense will be culturally at odds with Syrians. An inchoate situation has unfolded that yielded many possibilities from which one has to creatively compose an interpretation and reaction. The uncertainties that rule the multi-cultural encounter are a suitable site to study the moral aesthetic at work and in essence the rhetorical edge of culture (Carrithers, 2009a) as volunteers interpret, persuade and justify their choices.

Engagement

Interpretations

An important aspect of many volunteers' negotiations was the interpretation of newcomers' invitations. Interpretation of a situation allowed to "move away from the inchoate" (Carrithers, 2005, p. 442) towards sense and understanding that leads to performance (Fernandez, 1986). The importance of understanding the reasons for and meanings underlying refugees' behaviour was typified by the comment "it would be nice to understand why and make it a bit more clear…it would make me know how to behave.". Similarly, when I shared my own experiences with fellow volunteers, they all seemed to place great importance on understanding the meaning of the gift and the expectations that went with it, in order to meet those expectations, and avoid disappointments and misunderstandings. Thus, accounting for why refugees invited volunteers to their homes facilitated the production of justifications retrospectively (Carrithers, 2005, p. 441). I now present several extracts from volunteers' stories that were told in retrospect, far removed from the moments in which volunteers had to improvise their reactions either to engage or disengage with refugees. Their evaluations and interpretations revealed some recurring themes that served many as compelling explanations (Carrithers, 2009a, p. 14) for refugees' unexpected gestures of hospitality and generosity, and consequently informed their decisions.

Cultural Need

Most notable were volunteers' culturalizing ideas (Scheibelhofer, 2019, p. 207) about refugees' generosity, activated in a statement by a university student who

regularly taught in conversation classes in Greenwich, and was invited for coffee at a Syrian lady's house after the conversation class. She reasoned,

> "Their culture is very welcoming and open. They just want to talk to people, and have dinner and cook…do things with people…invite them into their home. I think they're a very welcoming community. I think [the invitation] is just something from their culture that they enjoy and want to do."

Likewise Cat, who had lived in the Middle East for a year, was certain that Syrian culture of itself, explained the invitations. She said, "It's a culture where you are fed. Everyone wants to give you food.". She identified the acts of giving and sharing food as "a source of pride…" and explained, "[s]haring and experiencing meals together is a special moment.". Josh, who often engaged in organisational and one-on-one support, said, "It is culturally very important to them that they give you something every time you go to their house.". Some volunteers drew comparisons between Syrian culture and British culture. They speculated that the socio-cultural environment in Britain departed so radically from the refugees' habitual life styles that they were even more inclined to practice their familiar way of life.

This style of thinking about culture and cultural differences reveals "unchecked generalizations about the traits" (Drake, 1980, p. 7) of Syrians and constitutes a so-called folk-anthropology (Drake, 1980, p. 7), or folk-sociology (Mahalingam, 2007). The above narratives reflect the naturalised systematic thinking about cultural differences in British society, rooted in colonial ideas of essential cultural differences (Hall, 1997) which continue to permeate popular culture and 'multiculturalism' (Grillo, 2003; Sen, 2006). Particularly, with the development of genetic technologies and their availability to the lay public for genetic testing, non-specialist ideas about genetic identities with a tendency to essentialise ethnicity have emerged (Simpson, 2000). Ideas about cultural differences tend to imply the understanding of 'a culture' as a bounded homogenous group, categorised according to a "marker" (Hall, 1997), such as ethnicity, religion, faith or national origin. While anthropologists have written sparsely about folk-anthropology in regards to cultural customs, such as hospitality, multiple lay authors have explored this theme (South, 2001). Lacking

academic rigour or empirical evidence for their arguments this approach differs notably from any academic research, in this case, concerning Syrian hospitality (Vandevoordt, 2017, Rozakou, 2012).

Volunteers' justification of their involvement in terms of 'cultural need' was very often founded in such tenets of 'folk-anthropology'. Sensitive to their perceptions of refugees' cultural needs, volunteers reasoned that refugees would appreciate opportunities that allowed them to practice their own cultural habits, like hosting meals. "It must be nice to do something that you did back home, when everything else is different and strange", explained a university student volunteer. This process of reasoning revealed the framing of hospitality as an expression of need. Under such circumstance, acceptance was deemed an appropriate response. Therefore 'folk anthropology', served as a useful resource to interpret refugees' actions and inform reactions.

Social Need

Another predominant tool of interpretation was the use of empathetic projections onto refugees lives in Durham. Volunteers projected attitudes that were contrived without reference to a concept of culture. Instead, imagining themselves in the circumstances of refugees, they reasoned with empathy. For example, some believed that 'inactivity' characterised refugees' every-day lives. On the bus with a couple of volunteers, one young woman framed the question: "What do they get to do in their daily life?" She argued that inviting volunteers to their homes might be a way to keep themselves busy. A second volunteer agreed, "Exactly, like what do they do with their lives?". Imagining the boredom of life in a strange place, both volunteers believed that hosting guests would be a desirable 'special occasion' for Syrians. Another volunteer seemed to have a more nuanced view: "Maybe they *need* friendship, they *need* someone to come around to have a chat, or to play with their children, or something." [my emphasis]. Both of these interpretations framed the hospitable gestures of refugees as expressions of 'social need'.

Employing the concept of the 'social need' deemed social interaction and personal involvement with the newcomers as an appropriate, even desirable response. Several

volunteers suggested that enabling friendship, and creating feelings of social belonging, was as important as satisfying the needs for material resources and language (Maslow, 1943). One volunteer asserted "actually building friendships with people, and incorporating them into the community, is as important as helping in English classes.". Another volunteer recognised that, "by just having a conversation, and hanging out with them, you are acknowledging they just need a friend to talk to.". Volunteers understood refugees' need to create meaningful relationships with a member of the local community to enhance their psychological wellbeing. Thus, framing hospitality as a needy gesture, volunteers perceived their personal engagement with newcomers as providing emotional and social support (Thompson and Pitts, 1992).

Agency as giver

Moreover, numerous volunteers noted that newcomers' social interactions were limited, and mostly framed by giver-receiver relations whereby, "…all they do is receive support". A retired lady empathised with refugees, "they want to give something back, and not always receive. They receive so much from people all the time.". This reasoning was applied in discussions about the necklace I had received. It was suggested that it must have been a pleasure for the Syrian woman to have had the opportunity to give to someone she liked, as well as an expression of her gratitude for the warm welcome I had given her. Volunteers reasoned that the gift was part of the practice that allowed realising herself as a person (Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, 1985) and regaining agency as giver (Vandevoordt, 2017) at a time she was mostly on the receiving end. Hence, they concluded that the 'right' response was to provide refugees with opportunities to exercise agency.

Although they were concerned about being a burden to someone who had less, by eating their food and drinking their tea, volunteers adopted a rationale which viewed the acceptance of the invitation as making a positive contribution to the hosts' lives. Also, engagement in mutual exchanges, whereby refugees were not exempt from horizontal relations was considered a crucial component of becoming an equal member of the community. A university student volunteer who also received an invitation from a family in Greenwich after the conversation class said, "I like to *give*

them the chance to have agency. They can give something to me, if it makes them feel good to share with me.". The phrase "give them the chance" underlines the reasoning that acceptance of an offer of hospitality was justified by the positive opportunities acceptance entailed. Another volunteer similarly identified a benefit to the hosts because "maybe she gets that, you know, that good feeling that you get when you give a gift.". A DCoS trustee stated that it was not fair to "…take away the joy from them [of] being a host.". It was the trustees' opinion that we should "…allow them to express themselves in the way they want to" because "…who are you to deny it from them.". A middle-aged man who offered transport, and had accepted many invitations noted, "…it doesn't do for any of us to only be recipients. We all want to be providers." With the interpretations of refugees' acts of giving as attempts to regain agency, the acceptance of offers became widely perceived as a way of facilitating refugees in becoming providers, however briefly, thereby enabling them to build a sense of equal status as agents in society. The positive feeling linked to the act of giving (Andreoni, 1990; Wilson and Musick, 2000) established the acceptance of invitations as a response in the interest of the receiver.

Giving or receiving?

To summarise this section, the concepts of need and agency were marshalled in negotiations towards the 'right' response. Interpreting refugees' hospitable and generous actions as expressions of their cultural need, social need, and the need for agency, yields some implications worth considering.

Firstly, accepting newcomers' hospitality suggests that they took on the role of the giver, thereby swapping the roles enacted in conventional understandings of charitable giving. However, volunteers' narratives revealed that they framed the situation in ways that allowed volunteers to maintain the role of the altruistic giver. With the perceived cultural importance of hospitality, through the sense of 'folk-anthropology', volunteers reasoned that accepting invitations enabled refugees to maintain and continue one aspect of their habitual way of life. Thereby, volunteers added altruistic meaning to the acceptance of refugees' invitations. In a similar vein, interpreting invitations as expressions of social need, transformed the receiving volunteer into a respondent sensible to the needs of the refugee, who provided social

and emotional support by being a guest. Volunteers' reasoning revealed the desire to serve refugees, whereby merely receiving from refugees without identifying them as beneficiaries was not sufficiently convincing to accept the invitation. Volunteers reframed receiving as 'doing good', therefore, by accepting the gift volunteers did not view the recipient, but rather the giver, as primary beneficiary. Arguably, by perceiving refugees' needs and acting upon them, volunteers did not fully release refugees from the role of receiver but maintained their status as giver and supporter, despite being the recipients of hospitality.

An awareness of inequalities in resources between volunteers and refugees might account for the apparent desire to reframe the act of *taking from the needy* as a charitable one. Despite doing so, volunteers continued to express feelings of guilt and discomfort when receiving invitations. "I feel guilty because they don't have much and they are giving it away to me," one volunteer worried. Similarly, a colleague explained, "You feel so guilty taking it, you don't want to take their possessions.". I experienced the same concerns at the birthday party where I was given so much cake, and received a necklace. The worry that I had taken away a person's valuable resources permeated in my thoughts. I wondered about the cost of what I had been given, and felt guilty for taking so much from someone who had so little. The awareness of an unequal distribution of resources was a prevailing one, and spoke against the acceptance of offers from refugees. As such, accepting the offers demanded justifications that confirmed the benefit to refugees. This reflects a preoccupation with economic capital, conceptualising the value of an object or the meaning of a practice, that included the transfer of material capital in terms of its monetary value, rather than its symbolic and emotional value, or social function. Reasoning that employed the concept of need served to overcome the perception that by accepting hospitality, one was taking something away from refugees. Indeed, volunteers' rationales paid primary attention to the benefit Syrians gained from their visits, but did not discuss the delight, interest and benefit they gained from being served as guests. Therefore, the use of concepts that implied the role of volunteers as givers when they were receiving, became a crucial asset to produce persuasive justifications for the appropriateness of accepting hospitality from refugees.

Although volunteers construct refugees as subjects in need, they are not reduced to mere biological existence (Agamben, 1998). In the contrary, their emphasis on culture, social relationships and agency shows that volunteer recognised refugees as immersed in social relations. It is noteworthy, however, that these narratives framed newcomers as an undifferentiated group. Interpretations of behaviour, which employed ideas of culture and social need, paid scant attention to the individualised characteristics of the people involved, such as personality, interests or other qualities, either of those who offered the hospitality, or of those who received it. The nature of these need-based explanations was that they permitted volunteers to account for invitations from *any* Syrian newcomer, as they incorporated characteristics that all Syrian newcomers were deemed to have shared: Cultural background, social needs as newcomers, and their roles as recipients. Consequently, in line with their rationales, some volunteers enacted "total engagement" (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 178), developed emotional attachments and friendship (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2018). Some even drew upon kinship terminology to describe their relations to particular newcomers (Scheibelhofer, 2019, p. 207).

Detachment

Nevertheless, many volunteers remained critical of close engagement, and found reasons to decline invitations from refugees. As the following rationalities show, and as reminded by Yarrow and colleagues (2015), engagement has limitations and works in tension with detachment. Volunteers negotiated the limits of engagement along different lines of reasoning. In social work 'self-care' (Cox and Steiner, 2013; Lusk and Terrazas, 2015) and 'safeguarding' are concepts used to unsure the health and wellbeing of social workers, professional or volunteers. Here, self-care is not understood as technology to control population to look after themselves in a Foucauldian sense (Trundle, 2014, p. 17) but as precaution taken against the consequences of being "too involved" in a physically and emotionally charging situation (Capner and Caltabiano, 1993; Kulik, 2007; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). Therefore, self-care is often linked to detachment, often viewed as "morally suspect" (Trundle, 2012, p. 221) rather than recognised as valuable skill of great necessity in voluntary social care.

Equal support

As spending more time with one family implied that they had to reduce their investment of time and resources in other families (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019), numerous volunteers reasoned that accepting invitations was incompatible with the "ethic of disinterested equality" (Trundle, 2012, p. 211; Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 187). The concern for equal service provision led some to adopt a 'professional' distance, which enabled them to provide equal amounts of support to all (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019, p. 113). Josh, a retired civil servant, who had previously visited refugees' homes, decided to stop because of his desire to

> "[…]be here for all of them equally. Therefore I can't get too close with just one family. I have a friend who is retired who started teaching language classes, and they are strictly not allowed to develop personal friendships or relationships. I can see the rationale, because you just get pulled in and then you're not giving everyone the same kind of support."

Following his principle of fairness, if he accepted one invitation, he had to accept all. This would have been impracticable in his view, not only because of the limits on time, but due to personal commitments. He decided therefore, to decline invitations in favour of offering equal treatment.

Several volunteers considered similar positions, however they did not refrain from accepting refugees' hospitality. A young student-volunteer explained that, "You want to help people that you have an emotional investment in, but it doesn't mean they need any more than somebody else does.". Emily considered the positive and negative sides of personal engagement and befriending Syrians (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019). While acknowledging the inequalities resulting from favourable relations, she nevertheless engaged with some families in private. She viewed favouritism as a natural phenomenon and did not feel she had to treat all refugees equally. In fact, she embraced opportunities to involve herself personally, striving to develop even closer friendships, and hoped to invite some newcomers into her home.

Josh's and Emily's initial approaches to volunteering might account for the different conclusions they have drawn. Emily became a member of the DCoS with the aim of engaging in befriending and mentoring. Josh, on the other hand, had wanted to help everyone as much as he could. These diverging attitudes might account for the different decisions they consequently made. Despite the range of conclusions that could be drawn, the notion of equal services occupied an important place in volunteers' determinations about whether to detach or engage with refugees closely.

Being pulled in

Several volunteers, who had received training and had experience in the community sector, identified another issue in accepting invitations: The risk of being 'pulled in'. These volunteers assessed that accepting invitations and developing emotional attachments bore obligations that pulled them into relations with potentially harmful consequences for both parties. The development of obligations and emotional connections was viewed as problematic because they yielded: (1) The risk of counteracting the council's goal of fostering independence; (2) the possibility of tampering, or manipulation; (3) the sacrifice of time that might ordinarily be dedicated to personal matters. These risks were brought to the fore through training and resources offered by the public sector, as well as the DCoS, and were counteracted by "setting boundaries" and "drawing a line", as the phrasing went. Narratives that activated ideas of risk were predominantly produced by those volunteers who had either been trained in volunteering for the community sector, or who had accessed guidelines published by the DCoS and the council. This is not to say that all volunteers who had received training or were closely involved with the governance of the DCoS always declined invitations. However, those who expressed concerns about becoming more intimately acquainted with refugees drew upon resources that were provided by the public and third sector.

Independence

In discussions about whether or not it was appropriate to accept invitations and offers of gifts, Claire often mentioned the risk of counteracting the council's goal of equipping refugees with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to live independently as soon as possible. Regulated giving should ensure sustainable

independence and avoid dependencies (Scheibelhofer, 2019, p. 213). One volunteer feared that because of the abundance of voluntary support offered by friend-volunteers,[1] refugees would develop certain dependencies. She offered a particular example, where a close relationship between a volunteer and newcomers had resulted in what the council's key worker had dismissed as a hindrance to the goal of independence. She recalled that one group of Syrians

> "…wanted to go to a mosque in Newcastle every week…One of the volunteers takes them every Friday, and it's his petrol money. He waits for them and takes them to the halal shop, and then he takes them home, and I know that the key worker wants them to do it themselves, because they could take the bus.".

She explained that this weekly excursion "…suits the refugees because they don't have to pay, and it suits the volunteer who wants to support. That's the dynamic.". Although disengaging through setting boundaries might encourage independence, there is the consideration that it could also deprive refugees of access to valuable resources and social connections. This reveals the conundrum between helping and undermining autonomy (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019). While the council's goal of fostering independence quickly was never the primary reason for detachment from refugees, it was often mentioned in narratives to justify disengagement, alongside other reasons.

Balance and abuse of trust

Several volunteers considered negative consequences for their personal health and wellbeing as a result of close involvement. The aspiration for a "healthy balance" between helping others and looking after one's own wellbeing framed many volunteers' decisions on engaging or disengaging with refugees. Josh noted, "I have to go for my own good, mental health and physical health… to keep a balance.". Emily addressed the difficulties in maintaining such balance because one gets easily

[1] volunteers who accepted invitations, closely engaged with refugees in their private homes and developed friendships

drawn “into something, like ‘do you know this?’, ‘would you come with me?’, ‘would you do this?’, ‘would you do this phone call?’, and so on. I think you have to be aware that you have this boundary and work for each other’s best interests.”. However, given the newcomers desire to build connections, and given their need for support, volunteers expressed difficulty in maintaining such boundaries.

Claire shared her experience of “getting too involved” and bearing the costs of over-commitment. She had passed her phone number to many refugees, and visited their homes regularly. Consequently, she frequently received phone calls and messages from newcomers, asking for support and advice. She admitted during a car drive between dropping off bags of clothing, “I do more than I want to do, really. You find yourself in situations where you can't ignore it, where you have to do something about it.”. At one point, Claire got so invested that she prioritised refugees’ wellbeing over her own. She “[…]stopped doing things that I wanted to do because I was helping out.”. She recounted an incident where she told her son that she could not pick up her grandson from school, as she normally did every week, because she had to accompany a Syrian family to an urgent hospital visit. She realised that “it intrudes on my life to a point where it gets a bit worrying.”. Through the safeguarding guidelines, Claire had learned to say “no”, reduce her work load (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019, p. 260) for the sake of her own health and wellbeing. In that sense, distance and detachment could prevent volunteers from unpredictable emotions and negative health consequences (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019, p. 113).

A secondary issue arising from closer involvement with refugees was the possibility of trust abuse. The possibility of refugees pressuring volunteers into providing services by entering into friendships was acknowledged. The emergence of obligations as part of developing friendships was considered by one volunteer, who explained that “when you're in a friendship it’s your responsibility or obligation to help, and you naturally protect those you are closest to. A stranger’s problems don’t affect you, because you are not obliged to help.”. As a result volunteers considered that the obligations inherent to friendships (Bell and Coleman, 1999) could easily be exploited for their benefits and enhanced access to support. Claire, the leader of the Wilburn conversation class, recalled that in order to avoid such precarious and

pressurised situations, “We had been recommended to protect ourselves and not go to their homes.”. This recommendation was issued by the DCoS’ safeguarding policy and code of conduct, stating that volunteers “must not accept personal gifts” and “must not give information to refugees, volunteers or members which [volunteers] do not wish to be in the public domain, e.g. mobile numbers, home address…”. Only volunteers who held previous training in the community sector, attended meetings by the DCoS, or received emails from the DCoS with information about safeguarding, deployed these resources. In light of the safeguarding resources available, refugees’ hospitable and generous gestures could be approached with suspicion and caution, suggesting a rejection rather than an acceptance of their propositions.

In summary, the multiplicity of concepts and available techniques showed that there was no set answer to the question of how to engage with refugees, nor was there one dominant source that guided best practice. Instead, the diverse of ideas, concepts and reasons volunteers marshalled, revealed a range of resources, which allowed volunteers to access different techniques at different times. Hence, the decisions volunteers made and the justifications they provided, varied across time and space. For instance, a student volunteer declined an invitation after a conversation class, however, on our bus ride to Durham she explained to me that next time she would accept the invite. She had concerns and time pressure that day, which accounted for her rejection, but then drew upon concepts of social and cultural need, as well as her desire to allow refugees to become hosts, to convince the me and herself, of her willingness to accept the next offer. Thus, the recourses activated and the decisions arrived at were situation specific.

Professionalism

There were, however, two volunteers whose experiences, narratives and reasoning were not situation specific and differed significantly from those discussed so far. Carmen and Sara, both from Middle Eastern countries, had migrated to the UK several decades before, and had been involved in voluntarism all their lives. They were not surprised by the newcomers’ hospitable and generous offers, nor did they engage in negotiations on how to react. They offered justifications comprising only one path of reasoning, demonstrating a unique pattern, which distinguished them

from the complex and messy negotiations the majority of volunteers entered into. I call them "professional" because their work is organised around predefined areas of intervention with the aim of realising certain objectives under specified and regulated modes of interaction with refugees (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019, p. 187). They referred to principles of professionalism, particularly, the primary importance of boundaries, impartiality and their specialised knowledge and skills. Adopting these principles, visiting someone's home would contest their professional attitudes.

They held the non-negotiable view that the 'right' way to react was to reject invitations and gifts. They *always* rejected *all* attempts to develop relationships, and declined all gestures of hospitality, *without* considering alternatives or the potential benefits of accepting invitations. Carmen's comments provide a snippet of the lengthy narratives she used to justify why it was necessary to maintain a distance, "It's a good and very professional practice to have limitations…before you get involved and things get complicated.". And she elaborates further,

> "You have to have a boundary when it comes to voluntary work, you have to have a boundary…You have to have a limit when you do a professional job. Volunteers and paid workers are the same. There is no difference. As a volunteer you have to have even more restrictions."

Likewise, Sara recalled that, "They do it all the time 'Please come for lunch now'. I say 'thank you some other time', but I never go.". She declined all invitations with the following argumentation:

> "I don't want to get involved with the personal things. There is a line and I never cross it. This is one of the things I learnt from social workers, and the police in Southampton. They gave us outlines on how to deal with refugees and asylum seekers, and what the limits are. Don't let them cross your limit, and these limits I remember, and it was very useful."

They aligned their experiences of volunteering with those of career professionals practicing in the public domain and adhering to strict boundaries. Their background, their extensive experiences of the voluntary sector, and the training they had received, might account for this approach. The resources available to them were significantly different. Lengthy exposure to professional guidelines seemed to have been incorporated into their common sense thinking, providing them with a ready-made policy on how to engage with refugees, when most volunteers relied on negotiations and other resources. This explains why neither of them struggled in finding the 'right' reaction, as did the majority of volunteers I met. Instead, they held their views with the greatest certainty that the 'right' action was to maintain boundaries and to restrict interactions with refugees to the provision of information and instrumental support (Thompson and Pitts, 1992). Notably, professional volunteers fail to see practices of giving and hospitality not only as biological processes or economic transactions, but actions that are endowed with psychological, political and social meanings, and therefore imued with symbolic significance (Vandevoordt, 2017, p. 606). Limiting interations to one-way acts of giving, risks depriving refugees of autonomy, the ability of self-expression, and individual dignity (Vandevoordt, 2017, p. 614-615) whereby social hierarchies are reproduced (Muehlebach, 2011).

Conclusion

To conclude, I demonstrated the adaptability of the category of the volunteer under the absence of specified roles and guidelines of how to interact with refugees. I examined the breadth of argumentation, and the diversity of resources available to volunteers, when considering whether or not to engage with refugees in the private sphere. I argued that the multicultural context, in which a gap of common sense occurred, provided insight into the multiple forms of reasoning, involving the creative composition of interpretations of refugees' actions and justifications for volunteers' reactions. Common sense and the habitus did not provide guidance for action. Unlike the organised presentation of rationales, volunteers' reasoning was messy and unorganised, diverse and complex. Resources were, with the exceptions the 'professional-volunteers', never employed in isolation. Rather, volunteers

demonstrated their consideration of multiple reasons, which were marshalled in complex negotiations.

I suggest that the range of resources activated, and the diversity of approaches towards engaging with refugees, were linked to the unique circumstances in Durham in a twofold way. Firstly, the variety of resources and the complexity of negotiations were developed in response to refugees initiatives; they asked for phone numbers, sent Facebook friend requests, issued invitations, and offered gifts. I speculate that these actions were linked to the informal dynamics, non-hierarchical structures, and messy organisation, which created conditions under which refugees were given opportunities to act in these particular ways. Hierarchical, structured and institutionalised support establishments, I suspect, would not have created an environment in which refugees could take initiatives to engender friendships as easily and regularly as they did in Durham. To this end, the production of narratives presented in this chapter are linked specifically to the circumstances of refugee support in Durham.

Secondly, because of the unique formation of Durham's civil society support, only a few volunteers in Durham accessed institutional resources, guidelines or training. The working environment for volunteers missed any kind of organisational rhetoric, which served to create a shared understanding of what it means to be a volunteer, what roles it implies, and how the mission of the charity would be translated into practice. The only guidelines volunteers had were the code of conduct, the volunteer agreement, and the safeguarding policy the DCoS published, which only few accessed. While some referred to these guidelines, and used them to inform the decision to disengage with refugees, most volunteers appeared unaware of them, suggesting that the guidelines, had not reached the volunteers working on the ground, and had not been translated into their work. Therefore, most of the volunteers lacked the resources and experiences Sara and Carmen gained in their involvement with more institutionalised humanitarian projects, and had to improvise. As such, the improvised ways in which volunteers engaged with refugees, did not occur by chance, but arose out of necessity in the context of civil engagement in Durham.

The diversity of ways of doing volunteering, with regards to engagement with and detachment from the recipients of voluntary work, suggests that the category of the volunteer is open to adaptation and interpretation (Barthes and Heath, 1977, p. 39; Lechte, 1994, p. 64). “The volunteer” labels a social category which has no agreed on content in the forms of obligations, expectations, rules, or norms that “a volunteer” might practice and embody. Some viewed volunteering as amounting to professional work, and applied the ethics of professionalism to their engagement with refugees; others were comfortable with the view that volunteering and friendship overlapped one another. Therefore, the activation of resources in complex negotiations, and their arrangement in the processes of reasoning, were an inevitable and central aspect of the volunteering experience in Durham.

Conclusion

This study explored the complex phenomenon of volunteering in response to the arrival of refugees via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in County Durham. Charitable giving in the form of emotional, information, and instrumental support (Thompson and Pitts, 1992) challenged the wide spread xenophobia and hostile attitudes towards migrants in County Durham, and the UK as a whole. Exploring the motivational narratives, the institutional organisation and volunteers' experience of it as well as the ways in which volunteers engaged with refugees, offered an multi-angled approach to volunteering. Such holistic approach that the practices and experiences of civil society initiatives in Durham can be understood as a "situated practice" (Cornwall, 2000, p. 3), deeply embedded in local political and social circumstances. Following news of the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2016 the Durham City of Sanctuary was founded, accompanied by numerous gestures of welcome from the local community, and spontaneously improvised support where no existing infrastructure and facilities to support migrants existed. Support initiatives included the collection of donations, one-on-one support, transportation, trips, conversation classes, drop-ins and other gatherings. Meanwhile, xenophobic hate crime and strong anti-immigrant sentiments, manifested in right wing groupings and nationalist voting behaviour, had caused the Durham County Council and the DCoS to embrace a no-publicity approach. This restricted public engagement efforts and meant the curtailment of rhetorical attempts to move the minds (Carrithers, 2009a, p.7) of the local community towards welcoming refugees, and participating in support provision. As the DCoS was the only non-governmental body in Durham primarily concerned with refugees' welfare, their strategy of dealing with racism in the community by maintaining a low public presence impacted on the ways in which volunteering was conducted, experienced, and perceived, as discussed throughout chapters one to four.

In order to conceptualise social life in the domain of volunteering in Durham I conducted a multi-sited ethnography in four locations in and near central Durham and adopted Carrithers' approach to human sociality to study civic engagement. Such an approach differs to existing scholarship on charitable volunteering and refugee

resettlement. Studies on civil society engagement are predominantly situated within the neoliberal critique, drawing upon concepts of ‘discourse’ and ‘active’ or ‘humanitarian’ citizenship. Work on charitable giving emphasises the power-infused relations between giver and recipient. Structuralist approaches explain volunteering with reference to cultural predispositions. These approaches did not satisfyingly explain the changing, mutable and unpredictable character of volunteering in Durham. Any understanding of volunteering in Durham required a focus on local’s experiences of *improvising*, which was inherent in the delivery of voluntary refugee support under the non-institutionalised and disorganised conditions in Durham. As refugees’ needs were identified unexpectedly, and refugees approached volunteers with unanticipated overtures of friendship, what was called for was improvisation, often leaving no time for reflection. Exploring volunteers’ narratives revealed the possibilities, scepticism, uncertainty, and choice that emerged from the natural flow of social life (Carrithers, 2005). The detailed study of post-hoc narratives was of particular value, as it provided insights into volunteers’ rationales and the interpretative work and persuasive skill implied. This approach understands people as both acting and reacting, influenced by the external, while holding a degree of moral agency. This avoided an overly abstract perspective that has a tendency to dismiss people’s lived experiences and agency, and informed a picture of voluntary refugee support provision “as a web of persons both acting upon each other, and acted upon” (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440). Thus, situating my work within the framework of Rhetoric Culture Theory allowed my ethnographic account to correspond more closely with volunteers’ experiences (Carrithers, 2005, p. 440).

To summarise and draw a conclusion, the informal and non-institutionalised context of volunteering for refugees in Durham gave rise to a diversified and diffused volunteer body. I started by introducing the practices and spaces of refugee support by identifying three key characteristics that indicated the non-institutionalised and ad-hoc character of support provision. I showed that a web of agents, including members of the local community, churches, the DCoS, a community centre, and student societies communicated, cooperated to enhance refugees’ capital and capabilities. I identified the lack of physical or symbolic markers to delineate organisational spaces, practices and people. A final characteristic of voluntary refuge support was the reliance on improvisation and the demand for volunteers’ flexibility

and spontaneity, which showed that local people improvised in perceived emergencies and moments of need in a compassionate way.

Chapter two illustrated the diverse paths of volunteer involvement, which shared a common feature: The reliance on word-of-mouth (Paolicchi, 1995) under the absence of public information about volunteering possibilities and the lack of institutional recruitment efforts. It is apparent that DCoS played no relevant part in volunteers' lived experiences of their entry into support provision. Motivational narratives showed no indication of any preconceived ideology, nor did they provide evidence for the reproduction, or awareness, of the DCoS's mission statement. Notably, narratives showed no indication of having been influenced by mobilisation efforts and discursive practices to foster a culture of volunteering. Scholars identified discursive technologies to foster a 'neoliberal morality' (Muehelbach, 2012), however, investigation of motivational narratives does not support such theory, as there was no indication of volunteers' involvement having been impacted by a discourse of responsibilisation (Lacey and Ilcan, 2006; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs and Hustinx, 2010; Newman and Tonkens, 2011; van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel, 2011) or sentimentalisation (Rajaram, 2002; Konstantinidou, 2008; Muehlebach, 2012; Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2018). Instead, narratives demonstrated a range of explanations that largely focussed on the self, and one's personal interests and life situation, suggesting an individualistic (Wuthnow, 1998; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003) rather than collectivistic (Eckstein, 2001) mode of volunteering. Volunteers' post-hoc explanations were messy and appeared to be improvised mid-conversation. This suggests that they had not justified their involvement previously and therefore engaged in support ad-hoc rather than planned.

I argued that these narratives were linked to, and an expression of, the absence of formal recruitment strategies and institutionalised rhetoric that communicated a shared purpose. They are testimony to the proposition that no resources were provided by established organisations that helped volunteers make sense of their involvement, in terms of a shared mission and values across the volunteer body. My working theory is that if the DCoS had translated their mission into practice, and engaged in public activism with the aim of mobilising locals to welcome and support refugees, in other words, if the recruitment process was institutionalised, volunteers'

narratives would have employed resources taken from organisational rhetoric. What transpired is that the narratives accounting for why and how volunteers became involved were informed by their experiences of the disorganised role of the DCoS, requiring participants to draw upon their own resources.

In the absence of symbolic, material, and rhetoric indicators, and in light of the of the improvised ad-hoc character of many support activities, chapter three asked how volunteers interpreted accountability, and made sense of the organisation of support activities. Building upon the discussion of the missing role of the DCoS in volunteering involvement and recruitment processes, and following from the discussion on the impossibility of identifying institutional belonging of spaces and volunteers' performances, due to the absence of signs and organisational markers in chapter one, I explored how volunteers narrated their experiences of responsibility, accountability, and organisation. The chapter revealed inconsistent interpretations of accountability across narratives by those involved in refugee support, whereby the DCoS took on an ambiguous and criticised role in many narratives. The inconsistent interpretations of who is in charge, and the fluid boundaries between individually organised activities and activities organised by the charity called into question the utility of volunteering categories such as 'formal' and 'informal' volunteering, proposed by Ganesh and Mcallum (2009) and 'organised' and 'organic' civil society coined by VanDyck (2017).

Some volunteers' statements about the charity and the organisation of volunteering revealed the construction of intra-community boundaries. The absence of public engagement and poorly used communication channels, alongside irregular contact between charity trustees and volunteers working on the ground, resulted in a perception of the inactivity of the charity, and a failure to meet volunteers' expectations. As a result of their discontent, some volunteers detached themselves rhetorically from the charity, and presented their voluntary engagement as independent form the charity's project. Using activities and approaches to refugees as markers of differences, volunteers engaged in rhetorical efforts of boundary drawing and the construction of social categories painting the picture of a fragmented volunteer community. This further confirmed the argument of chapter two, that

volunteering in Durham does not constitute a collective action (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, Wuthnow, 1998).

In the final chapter I explored yet again a different aspect of volunteering. I diverted attention away from organisational concerns to the micro processes at hand, as volunteers improvised their engagement with refugees. The investigation of volunteers' negotiations led us once again to the non-institutionalised character of refugee support in Durham, and more particularly, to consider the un-established role of "the volunteer". Due to the informal setting of refugee support, where no hierarchical structures defined the interaction between refugees and volunteers, refugees frequently invited volunteers to move their relationship form the public domain in conversation classes and gatherings, to the private sphere of friendship. Surprised and unprepared, most volunteers, apart from those I classified as the 'professional volunteer', had to improvise a response. In post-hoc narratives they activated a range of resources to interpret refugees actions and justify their responses. In this process, volunteers drew upon concepts of need, which suggested personal engagement with refugees, and upon concepts of dependency, imbalance, protection and exploitation, which informed justifications for disengagement. What the variety of rationales exemplified was the undefined role of "the volunteer" in Durham, which allowed for improvised adaptions, as there was no supervision or formal guidance defining their engagement with refugees.

Such account on volunteering reveals great inconsistency in volunteers' narratives and diversity in their practices, experiences and perceptions of volunteering. I suggest that this absence of uniformity can be linked to the environment and organisation of volunteering, marked by an absence of means to create consistent and shared experiences on all levels of volunteering. Instead, volunteering in Durham is best described as diverse, inconsistent, variable and diffused, and an expression of individualistic rather than collectivistic forms of volunteering. Chapter Two presented the diversity of volunteers' rationales to account for their involvement under the absence of a shared purpose, goal, and mission for volunteering. The inconsistent narratives reflected the invisibility of rhetorical work that articulated and communicated a common goal and shared values to volunteers, which might have affected feelings of belonging to a larger community defined by its mission. Chapter

three illustrated a diversity of conceptions of how volunteering was organised and who was accountable. I suggested that such stark diversity, including contradicting views, and even unawareness of who was in charge, emerged from the environment described in chapter one, characterised by an absence of symbols, rhetorical work, and transparent organisation that delineated an organisational body responsible. The final chapter also revealed diversity in the ways volunteer engaged with refugees, and highlighted stark variations in the resources activated to inform and justify engagement or detachment. This inconsistency may be linked to the different resources, guides, rules and training volunteers accessed, which resulted in a variety of rationales and justifications of different forms of engagement with refugees.

The remarkable diversity on all levels of volunteering; the reasons given for why they volunteered (motivation), how they engaged (experience) and how they made sense of the organisation of volunteering (interpretation) yielded few points of commonality. Volunteering was not a way of being and doing together (Eckstein, 2001), instead, volunteers did things their own way, framing volunteering as an individualistic practice. Such diversity also calls into question the meaning of the concept of "volunteering". The ethnographic account reveals the complex reality of volunteering for refugees in County Durham and shows that volunteering is not stable and must not be understood as uniform category. In fact, volunteering for refugees in Durham or volunteering with the DCoS holds little meaning, as it points to no mutually agreed on practices, relations, purpose, role or responsibilities. Instead the term leaves space for adaption, improvisation and interpretation. As such it corresponds to the notion of 'floating' or 'empty' signifier (Barthes and Heath, 1977, p. 39; Lechte, 1994, p. 64) defined a "signifier with a vague, highly variable, unspecifiable or nonexistent signified" (Chandler, 2007, p. 250). Volunteering as unspecifiable and unpredictable category highlights the importance of ethnography to conceptualise the particularities of people's volunteering experiences as embedded in their social lives.

In the remaining section of this thesis I consider the recently verbalised attempts to formalise voluntary support with reference to my research findings, and conclude by suggesting further essential research. The cultural, legal and regulatory framework of volunteering is evolving, and confronts organic grassroots organisations with

demands for professionalising and formalising their services and thereby drifting towards a more standardised form of service provision (Schiff and Clavé-Mercier, 2019; Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019; Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019). Some shifts into that direction begun after I had terminated fieldwork with the offering of volunteer training by the Durham County Council. The first course started in October 2019. I have overheard that these courses were compulsory, however, in an email from the DCoS the training was described as an "opportunity" rather than obligation. Furthermore, the DCoS's planned to introduce an application process for all potential volunteers, in which they will be interviewed and will undergo training. Given the diffused condition of support provision and its ad-hoc character, as well as the ambiguous organisational boundaries of the charity, such formalisation attempts raise several issues, which may provide grounds for a degree of circumspection.

As many volunteers were not members of the DCoS, but nevertheless practiced within spaces that some might regards as overseen by the DCoS, the question of who to invite into a programme of interviews and training becomes fundamental. For example, currently, university students constitute a strong volunteering force in conversation classes. Would they have to be interviewed and trained by the DCoS, notwithstanding their participation in conversation classes through their own organisation, the Durham for Refugees society? And what about volunteers who have already undergone extensive training as part of a different project? Importantly, I have shown that volunteers become involved via the most informal routes, whereby serendipitous encounters and word-of-mouth constitutes the most prevalent means of finding out about, and gaining access to, volunteering opportunities. The result is that volunteers have been able to bypass the DCoS bureaucracy, which in turn has meant that trustees were uninformed about the happenings and the attendants in conversation classes and drop-ins. This demands a consideration of how and at which stage of involvement volunteers would be required to undergo formal interviewing and training. Moreover, if new volunteers participate in gatherings via informal routes, who would be responsible to direct them towards the DCoS, in order to undergo formalised processing, and what are the consequences for a person who wants to support, but is not willing to engage in time consuming training? Are they to be excluded from support provision and gatherings?

Currently, the DCoS plays an ambiguous role in the perceptions and experiences of volunteers. As shown in chapter three, the DCoS is not consistently perceived as the organiser or body accountable for support provision in Durham. In fact, many spaces of support were understood as initiatives that had erupted form the ground up, and were organised by people who had disaffiliated themselves from the charity. Can the DCoS justifiably claim control over volunteer involvement in those spaces, which are not officially connected with the DCoS, nor experienced by volunteers to be so? I speculate that unless the charity translates its mission statement into practice, by establishing a public image; unless it marks spaces of support and volunteers as part of its domain, and encourages the feeling of belonging to a DCoS community, leading volunteers to embody and identify with the charity; unless it engages on a fundamentally more pro-active level, attempts to formalise volunteering might not "trickle down" to the ground.

Most crucially, it is worth considering what the implications of formalisation would be on the experiences of volunteers, on the support refugees receive, and on interactions between volunteers and refugees. Could compulsory interviewing and training place an unnecessary burden on volunteers, or even hinder their involvement, leading to a decrease in numbers, and the loss of an invaluable workforce? Would formalisation reinforce hierarchical structures, and regulate how volunteers engage with refugees and deliver support?

The findings presented in chapter four show that many of those volunteers who decided to disengage with refugees' offers of hospitality and "maintain boundaries", had undergone volunteer training. Volunteer training might regulate the previously vivid initiatives and spontaneous willingness and transform them into structured practices along rules, enacted by the newly defined volunteer (Turinsky and Nowicka, 2019). Training might risk the systematic creation of social categories that artificially produce boundaries in peoples' minds. Constructing a framework of policies and guidelines around "how to deal with refugees" reinforces subject categories that mark refugees off as 'vulnerable people', different to 'us', surrounded by legal and bureaucratic processes, rather than acknowledging their full social existence as people who strive for social relationships. If volunteers were trained to maintain a distance, with safeguarding policies and tropes of "protection" and

"balance" in mind, volunteers might be inhibited to develop friendships or to engage with refugees in the private sphere. One unintended consequence of this would be that refugees would become exempt from mutual relationships, and would find it impossible to attain an identity beyond that of the recipient (Muehlebach, 2011). This way training might lead to the production of subjectivities as widely discussed in scholarship on humanitarianism and charity. Thus, training as part of the agenda of formalisation could ultimately be a barrier to successful integration in the community through the prevention of meaningful relationships (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2016, Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2018). An institutionalisation of recruitment processes and public outreach, might reach more people, lead to more labour force, an increase in skills and availability of volunteers. This, alongside defining channels of communication and responsibilities might make support more sustainable and provide volunteers with more effective and efficient support.

These are, however, only speculations. To understand the implications of formalisation in the particular context of Durham, and to address these crucial questions, I suggest further research into volunteer engagement in Durham. Tracing the development and potential institutionalisation of volunteering in Durham provides a unique opportunity through which a more in-depth understanding of the impact of formalisation on the organisation of civil society support and the experiences of volunteers can be achieved. It is equally important to have a better grasp on the implications of the diverse forms of organised and dis-organised, and formal and informal support on refugees (Morrice, 2007; Vertovec, *et al.*, 2017, p. 21) and the relationships between volunteers and refugees, particularly, at a time when "integration" into society is widely discussed, and multiculturalism has been called into question. Thus, I advocate for further comparative research to identify and explore the effects and implications of non-institutionalised and formalised refugee on the interaction between refugees and volunteers and on their respective experiences of giving and receiving support. Given the increasing reliance on the volunteer sector and in light of the government's support and regular evaluation of the humanitarian resettlement programme, I would expect such research to find strong interest and support on the part of the government and local authorities which cooperate with the civil society sector.

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