

A Chronic of Idomeni

The influence of the refugee camp in northern Greece on refugees, migrants and humanitarian aid organizations

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Abstract

The final eviction of the unofficial refugee camp Idomeni, located at the Greek border to the Republic of Macedonia, started in the morning of 24th of May 2016 (bordermonitoring.eu 2016). Idomeni is situated on the Balkan corridor, which has a long tradition for migration towards northern Europe, lasting at least since the 1970's. For a long time the route was loosely monitored by border security and remained relatively accessible. Idomeni gained importance to refugees, especially after the Republic of Macedonia introduced a permit for migrants to reside in the country for 72 hours, in order to pass it. Shortly after the border got more and more restricted until its final shut down in early 2016 (bordermonitorin.eu 2917: 7 ff.). Up to 15.000 people stayed at the camp waiting for the border to open up again. Now, three years later, the chronic of Idomeni was reconstructed by several organizations working in the field of humanity. The Republic of Macedonia as well as Greece were accused of the violation of human rights. The camp of Idomeni influences today's politics on migration in multiple ways. The changes of the camp imply the need for dynamic structures of humanitarian aid organizations.

The article will reconstruct Idomeni's chronic starting before it gained media attention through secondary analysis. It will recount historical and political developments as well as the happenings of human rights violations which are now on trial. Furthermore, it will recourse on today's situations of refugees on the Balkan corridor and with it on the necessity of dynamic humanitarian aid organizations from a sociological perspective.

Abbreviations

ECHR – European Conventions On Human Rights

EU – European Union

MSF – Medecines Sans Frontiers

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

SI – Syria, Iraq

SIA – Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees

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1 Introduction

The reconstructed chronicles of the Idomeni camp by humanitarian aid organisations like bodermonitoring.eu and multiple news articles make it possible to generate a more accurate picture of the happenings concerning the camp from its history till now. A secondary analysis is used to clarify that even after the official eviction, Idomeni remains influential related to immigrational developments. To this day, questions remain unanswered, such as accuses of human rights violations and illegal push-backs. The paper will focus on the impact of the camp's outcomes on humanitarian aid organizations recounting on the theory of Stefan Kühl out of his sociological perspective laid down in his book *Organisationen – Eine sehr kurze Einführung*. This theoretical framework will serve to get an insight into the importance of such organizations and their need to react according to changing requirements in context. Kühl analyses the dynamical processes of organizational sociology through its purposes, membership and hierarchy. These three components form the main part of organisational structures and can explain changes and processes of adaptation within its frameworks. Therefore, the paper seeks to complete Idomeni's history from a social organizational point of view. What did really happen in Idomeni? How does this affect the work of humanitarian aid organizations? Which political and juridical questions remain today? Hence, the paper will assume that changing political developments, as represented by the chronic of the Idomeni refugee camp, imply the need for dynamic structures of humanitarian aid organizations in order to react accordingly without failing. This question is first and foremost important for providing sustainable aid as well as for documentation purposes. It will help to understand the need for an ongoing and holistic examination of the chronic of the Balkan corridor for potential political intervention and awareness building. Moreover, it will consolidate practical implementations and critical examination within the frame of humanitarian organizational work.

The paper will start off outlining today's discourse surrounding Idomeni, including the alleged violations of human rights and illegal push-backs. It will present the situation of refugees in Greece right now and illustrate the changes of the Balkan corridor as route for migration. The second part will approach the history of the camp using existing data provided by humanitarian aid organizations and media discourse. The theoretical grounding will be introduced as a third part. Here, the theory on structures of organizations will be presented on basis of Stefan Kühls book mentioned before. Finally, the paper will conclude by connecting the findings of the each part and suggesting practical implementations in the field of humanitarian work.

2 An Outline of Today's Situation of Refugees in Greece

Since the beginning of August 2018 cases against the Republic of Macedonia run because of alleged human rights violations. The reason for these cases are illegal push-backs which were performed by the national forces of the Republic at the border to Greece. According to *No Name Kitchen*, an autonomous initiative which documents such push-backs on the Balkan corridor, the term illegal pushback is a key component of the situation on the Balkan corridor, since the closure of it, and has become an important part of the migration regime of the EU (No Name Kitchen et. al. 2019: 2). They define it as the description of “informal expulsion (without due process) of an individual or group to another country” (No Name Kitchen et. al. 2019: 2). The term differs to deportation as it occurs in legal frameworks. *Deutschlandfunk* reports by reference to a mother and her daughter fleeing from the Syrian war and stranding in the camp of Idomeni in 2016, that their family and four other refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan bring an action against the Republic regarding multiple human rights violations during the deportation of 1.500 refugees. Article four of the fourth additional protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) declares acts of group deportations illegal per se, without any lawsuits. The family was stopped together with 600 other refugees by North Macedonian soldiers as they tried to cross the border. The soldiers were armed and accompanied by dogs. They threatened them, the mother and her daughter report. The soldiers made them sleep in the rain. They forced them to go back and did not hesitate to apply teargas. The occurrence remained undocumented (Beer 2019). The case is based on Article 13 ECHR which guarantees the right for effective remedy (ECHR et. al.: 13). The depicted case is not an isolated one. Aggressive procedures are still reality, so are the violations of human rights. Other countries like Spain and Croatia deal with similar proceeding cases as well (Beer 2019). Just this year Greece was convicted as guilty on June 13th by the ECHR due to the violation of Article 3 ECHR which prohibits inhuman and humiliating treatment. The case was opened because of five unaccompanied minors and their stay in Greece. The five young men from Afghanistan were told by the Greek police to leave the country within a month. They were stopped on their way to Northern Europe by another police unit which made them stay in Greece, living under poor conditions on the street or in refugee accommodations like Idomeni. The case includes unjustified deprivation of liberty and aims at the direct actions of Greek authorities (Schmalz 2019). The years after 2015 Greek authorities needed to be ready to take actions meeting urgent needs like accommodation, nutrition, asylum procedures and health as well as social integration processes like education, training or access to labour. The situation culminates since the closure of the Balkan corridor and the joint EU-Turkey statement of March 2016. Migrants entrapped on islands in the eastern

Aegean are about to be sent back to Turkey, which is considered a so called safe third country (Tsitselikis 2018: 1). In July 2019 Turkey started deporting to Syria (Ashawi et. al. 2019). The UNHCR states for June 2019 that there were 3.200 new arrivals in Greece. In total 80.600 refugees and migrants reside in the south European country. 17.150 of whom live on the islands. The other 63.450 people are on the mainland. Refugees and migrants on the mainland suffer more difficult access to the asylum procedure. Many of them wait for two years or even more to be called for their asylum interviews (UNHCR 2019: 1 pp.). The shutdown of the European border in 2016 forced smugglers to build new networks. Their route of choice from then on was mainly along Albania, Croatia and Bosnia. Bosnia became the new hub for the journey into Europe. Weak institutions and poorly equipped border patrol in addition to a long and green border make the route easier than elsewhere. Still, the way through Albanian mountains is hard as it is rough and steep territory. Once in Bosnia, a lot of people try to cross the border to Croatia. It is also a green border which makes the passages attractive. From here only some 80 kilometres are left to enter Slovenia, a Schengen country (Addendum 2018).



Illustration 1: The Balkan Peninsula (Wikipedia.org)

3 Idomeni – A Game Changer

Idomeni became Europe's biggest and most famous refugee camp. The history of it is untold in detail and enhances various perspectives which need to be put in context. This task can only be fulfilled retrospective, even though the camp closure does not end its influence. The following passage is mainly recurring on a study evicted by *bordermonitoring.eu* and serves as a detailed report on main occurrences but is still incomplete¹. The study is based on 12 qualitative interviews in the second half of 2016. Among them are NGO workers, activists, migrants and local politicians. The report of the study relies on personal experience. All authors were active parts of the work in the camp.

3.1 The Start: A Popular Route

The route along Greece and the Republic of Macedonia has tradition. At least since the 1970's it was a popular way to enter European countries because of its relatively accessible terrain and a loose border control. In the 1990's the border crossing became a daily occurrence. At that time the direction of the movement was different. People came to Greece instead of leaving it in order to seek clandestine, seasonal work. Legal visa were difficult to obtain. Mostly people from former Yugoslavia, China, Albania and Bulgaria were passing the border to the south. In 2008 the route became more difficult due to growing racist attitudes of the local population. Authorities and the police started turning increasingly brutal against the migrants. They were routinely stopped, searched, arrested and their temporary settlements were destroyed. With the launch of the *Operation Xenios Zeus* in 2012 by Greek authorities the situation became more tense. Large scale identity checks, mostly around Athens, rounded up and detained 85.000 people. Almost 6.000 were arrested in accusation of being illegal in the country. The operations dismissed the fact that most people did not have the chance to access their asylum procedure. The only option left to them was to go to Athens in order to obtain asylum which involved extensive waiting hours, expenses for travelling and accommodation as well as the risk to get

¹ The history line follows the most important occurrences in accordance with its meaning to humanitarian aid organizations. Still, it misses out mutual happenings as the blocking of the train tracks by sorely disappointed refugees and their ended journey, which caused a remarkable economic default for railway companies and was interrupted highly violently by the authorities. It even cost human life (Koukoumakas et. al. 2015). Moreover, the states perspective is not represented in full scope, due to a distinct approach to the topic.

caught along the way. Before autumn 2015 migrants entering the country held an official document which denied their access to some areas like Achaia (Patras), Thesprotia (Igoumenitsa), Kilkis (Idomeni) and Attica (Athens), as they are important mobility points for ships and trains. Still, the operation indirectly promoted Idomeni as a transit point. With the affords of Turkey and Greece in cooperation with FRONTEX to shut down the Greek-Turkish border along the Evros river in 2012, the transit routes changed more south to the sea border between the Turkish mainland and the Greek Aegaeon islands. The land border was sealed and a huge amount of police forces were sent to the Evros border region. Idomeni was almost unpoliced at that time. Local businesses and NGOs flourished in the region across the border to the Republic of Macedonia. In June 2015 the number of people arriving in this area increased quickly and slowly attracted media attention. People started camping more openly around the border and the train station. The transit migration remained mostly unnoticed. Furthermore, residents started providing humanitarian aid in a spontaneous manner. So called *jungles* came about as refugees hid for days or weeks in the fields and in the woods. Their path to the Republic of Macedonia was along the train tracks, either on their own or with the help of smugglers. Being caught meant a push-back to Greece. Even though the push-backs followed a diplomatic protocol and were covered by a bilateral agreement from November 2008, their implementation was often informal and accompanied by extreme violence: “they were not just met with massive violence on the part of the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia, but also by regular attacks and robberies by mafia groups, and the two often seemed to operate alongside each other or even collaborate” (Antastasiadou et. al. 2017: 6).

3.2 The Structure: Humanitarian Aid, Business and the Role of the Greek State

Until 2015, humanitarian support was local and spontaneous as people living around the area felt the need to help. It became more and more organized first by two activist groups from Polykastro and Kilkis. The arresting of Evelina Politidou, a local supporter, made clear that even helping could have serious consequences. As the media attention rose, professional aid organizations were attracted. A competitive relationship between the volunteer work and the professional organizations unfolded. Locals blamed the organizations to make use of the situation in a way of humanitarian business. With the increasing number of people coming to the border in the summer of 2015, more and more businesses were conducted. Greek authorities chose not to intervene, even though the shops for necessities for the refugees sold their products often to inflated prices. Private entrepreneurs launched bus links from Athens to bring refugees directly to the camp. Therefore, the Greek state’s relation to the camp can be regarded as

present-absent: the state remained absent in providing the basic needs but became present in pursuing laws and policies. The state undertook a forced detour of one million refugees through the country, which was pointless. Moreover, the state created business opportunities for local entrepreneurs (Antastasiadou et. al. 2017: 7 pp.).

3.3 The Turning Point: The 72-Hour Paper

On June 18 2015 the Republic of Macedonia introduced a 72-hour paper which allowed the refugees to cross the country within that time. A similar paper was introduced in Serbia some years before. Smugglers temporarily disappeared since there was no need for them. The visibility of the camp increased which attracted even more new businesses. In August 2015 a camp was opened in Gevgelija, not far from Idomeni, on the other side of the border as a space for refugees to register and obtain the 72-hour paper. The situation in the camp became chaotic and non-stop trains were established to transport refugees directly to the border between the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. Though the erection of the new camp was in favour of the refugees, the situation did remain contradictory. Just before opening the camp, the Republic of Macedonia tried to block the previously tolerated border: “[t]he fields around Idomeni turned into something resembling a battlefield as migrants tried to enter the Republic of Macedonia anyway and Macedonian police and army wielded tear gas, shock grenades and batons in response” (Anastasiadou 2017: 33). Because of the sudden border closure on August the 20th thousands of people were stuck at Idomeni waiting for the border to eventually open again after three days. On grounds of the establishment of the buses from Athens in June, the border opened again on the 23rd of August. Still, Idomeni was not a remote point for passing the border. People hid in the jungles as they arrived secretly, and the police pretended to not see them. The living conditions in the camp worsened and agony unfolded due to the unsecure situation. Local community, traders and NGOs were present around this time. “According to the UNHCR data, 687.047 migrants passed through Gevgelija (and by extension Idomeni) between July 1st, 2015 and the end of that year” (Anastasiadou 2017: 36). The flow cut of a second time in November 2015 as Serbia refused to let migrants enter who are not originally coming from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan (SIA-countries). These politics led to a segregation of refugees by their origin. The Republic of Macedonia immediately copied this practice and built a fence along the Greek border. Not long after around 1.000 refugees were stuck in Idomeni again. The number rapidly increased as buses kept on arriving. Among them refugees from not SIA-countries. Some of them decided to take busses back which meant another payment, but most of them stayed. Refugee protests evolved: “[t]hey rallied in massive protests, demonstrating in many different

ways to demand free passage [...], and they pitched small tents to stay in while waiting for a new opportunity” (Anastasiadou 2017: 37). The formerly erected small number of tents by the UNHCR and some NGOs which were mostly used for supplies and medical services or as waiting space were added up by larger tents provided by aid organizations in order to provide temporary accommodation for hundreds. With the decision of the closure of the border for non-SIA-citizens, the situation of Idomeni changed severely. Idomeni turned into a village and community. Practices became normalized in this rather situation of emergency, and unrest started to unfold. Violence and distress came about and affected the people working there as well. In December 2015, the Greek state started to implement a more organized approach in order to control the situation in Idomeni. Together with the Macedonian police they created a maintained fenced corridor with a gate for controlling the crossings more effectively. As a response, the UNHCR began to inform the people in the camp about the possibility of its eviction. At the same time, the police started stopping the busses from Athens as well as taxis, several kilometres away from Idomeni. Only SIA-citizens were allowed to pass through.

3.4 The End? Idomeni’s Eviction

The 9th of December 2015 marks the day of the first eviction of Idomeni by the Greek police. People were forced to leave the camp and were moved to camps elsewhere on the Greek mainland. The intentional peaceful eviction was not as peaceful after all as several beating and arrests were reported. The media were kept away from the camp as well as NGO workers. The camp stood empty. In late January 2016 Greek authorities allowed the use of the camp’s infrastructure again as Macedonian authorities began to deny the entry to all migrants for some time. From late February 2016 on, the possibilities to cross the Greek-Macedonian border were further limited. From 23rd of February on, only migrants from SI-countries were allowed to pass. Particularly migrants from Afghanistan started protesting, which often ended in violence. On the same day authorities made them leave the camp and forced them to enter busses. The camp still grew and remained accessible to all nationalities during the following months. The Republic of Macedonia kept on introducing more restrictions for entry. In late February and the beginning of March 2016 the entrance was denied to people who held a Turkish visa since Turkey was considered a safe third country. On 8th March the gate closed permanently. At that time the number of people staying in Idomeni reached up to 14.000. Protests followed. The total eviction started on 24th of May 2016 and took several weeks. People moved back and forth between official and unofficial camps not knowing where they would be better off. The UNHCR advertised the possibility to move into an official side as the conditions would be much

better and the moving would open up the possibility to apply for relocation and family reunification in other EU member states. However, people following the suggestion would soon discover that neither the conditions nor the chances for applications were better or even given (Anastasiadou et. al. 2017). “Doctors Without Borders denounces the compulsory transfer from Idomeni to organized camps, remarking that there was a general lack of information. On top of that, their workers were restricted from providing any humanitarian assistance to refugees” (Koukoumakas et. al. 2016). At the same time, many refugees disappeared (Anastasiadou et. al. 2017).

4 NGOs as dynamic Organizations

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are private institutions which advocate social interests and are independent from states. Their history reaches back to the times before national states developed as influential to society and politics in an international context. The notion was established in 1945 through the United Nations. NGOs are important actors whose professional knowledge is appreciated by national and international institutions. There are some characteristics shared by NGOs:

1. Publicity through legal organization, self-administration and internationality: NGOs do not operate secretly. Rather they are visible in public. They follow a private legal structure, are registered and are self-administrated through their own statutes. Their alignment is international, even though they might concentrate on specific regions. Still, they act internationally through exchange with other foreign organizations or through the treatment of global problems.
2. Their alignment focusses on public welfare in society: NGOs do not follow harmful or discriminating actions.
3. Independency: NGOs act independently, in terms of content and finances, from states and economics. They choose their topics and actions on their own along their defined goals. This does not imply that they do not receive national funding. Rather they do not depend on public bodies or enterprises.
4. Voluntarily: NGOS, as other organizations, can have paid positions, but a great amount of work is covered through volunteers. People contribute to the organization and its purpose without payment. They are not profit-orientated.
5. Beyond personality: The interests of the members of NGOS reaches beyond their personal purposes (The World of NGOs).

Therefore, NGOs can be considered as a subcategory of organizations. Organizations in total share a structure which allows them to act dynamically. This dynamic is important for quick reactions in accordance with changing circumstances in order to work effectively. Stefan Kühl explains in his book *Organisationen: Eine sehr kurze Einführung (Organizations: a very short introduction)* how the structure of organizations works. Their internal structure enables their dynamics. Scientifically, Kühl suggests a definition of organizations which reaches beyond the trivial understanding or the notion *organise*. He defines them as a specific form of social constructs or social systems which differ from other social constructs as families, groups, networks, protests or national states. In core they are structured through three main characteristics in distinction to society as a whole: Membership, Purpose and Hierarchy. Only a social construct which can decide independently over these characteristics is an organization in the frame of their legal possibilities. The purpose of organizations is the starting point of their work and its legitimation of existence. Purposes should be defined clearly and lead the structure of the organization. From here people will be recruited in order to fulfil the purpose in a hierarchical order. Furthermore, the purpose decides over the instruments utilized to serve the purpose. The hierarchical order only mirrors the structure of the purposes and instruments. Kühl remarks that the reality of organizations often does not match the clear understanding of it. The purposes are often unclear, the utilization of the instruments is often neither effective nor efficient, hierarchies are built not to serve the purpose, rather purposes are chosen in accordance to already existing paths of communication and decisions. Hence, he chooses an approach which is rather descriptive than normative in order to reconstruct the reality of organizations. In terms of membership, the members of the organizations need to approve the expectations of the organizations. Otherwise they will be excluded. Realistically there are deviations from the formal expectations, but they serve as orientation. Through indifferences in tasks which are often the case, and which need to be accepted by the members in order to keep the membership, the organization gains the power to change the expectations of its members rather spontaneously. The members declare their consent with their membership. Therefore, purposes can be modified without the consent of its members. The same counts for hierarchies and the composition of members. Realistically members accept these indifferences regarding changes, disappointments and strain to a high degree before they decide to leave the organization. Through these indifferences an organization secures its existence by permanent adaption to changing circumstances (Kühl 2011: 9 pp.). In NGOs the purpose is often more attractive than the payment. Through personal identification with the organizational purpose the members are more eager to adapt to the expectations. The purpose is often defined openly, contradictory or

utopian. Purposes can change rapidly due to changing priorities, changes in law, innovations etc. If organizations dismiss their purposes, they keep on existing and rather search for new goals. Sometimes they lose track of their purposes and hold on to their instruments. In this case purposes will be post-constructed. As the hierarchies of the organization is accepted by its members, the organization can adapt to its changing environment without referring on the state of minds of its members. Kühl is of the opinion that hierarchies should not be seen as rigid and one way. Rather he acknowledges that the work of the subjects influences and even structures the work of the leader, for example due to communication processes. The subjects choose the way in which information reach the leaders (Kühl 2011: 40 pp.). Though, not every NGO or every humanitarian aid organization in the context of Idomeni is officially structured in this way, such as some anarchist organizations which follow other organizational traits, the characteristics still account roughly.

5 Humanitarian Aid through NGOs in Idomeni

In becoming a member of an organization is giving consent to its expectations. People become members of NGOs out of the attractive purpose they try to serve, as they are improving public welfare. As a consequence, the members are willing to work voluntarily which is one characteristic of NGOs. The great attraction of the purposes are even the reason why members accept to be pushed far to their personal limits. Within the organizations, indifferences exist. These enable NGOs to act dynamically and adopt to their given circumstances. The circumstances have a great impact on the actual work of NGOs as we will see in the following.

Humanitarian aid organizations as NGOs appeared very slowly in the region of Idomeni. First, locals who noticed what was going on around them decided to help spontaneously (Anastasiadou et. al. 2017: 6). In 2014 they started to distribute food, clothing and supplies to the refugees at the border. Some offered accommodation. Some were even trying to implement housing and accommodation programmes. They provided unprofessional psychological support by listening to the stories of the refugees. They reported that many of them suffered due to the weather conditions in the north of Greece. Locals drove them to health centres while running the risk to get caught themselves. Most of them had no experience in volunteering or activism (Ayramidis et. al. 2017). During that time humanitarian aid organizations started documenting the occurrences in the region. Though local individuals or small organizations made an effort to help, the authorities put up some burdens. In November 2014 a proposal of an antifascist initiative from Thessaloniki to build infrastructure and to provide shelter for the migrants, at least for one night, was rejected. NGOs and solidarity groups were not allowed to put up tents

for storage purposes for a long time. Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) was the first of the big NGOs arriving in Idomeni. In March 2015 they sent only three people – a translator, a doctor and an employee from the technical team. In June 2015 they added psychologists and started documenting the testimonies and the evidence given by the refugees. Furthermore, they struggled to install even the basic infrastructure and only managed to build two toilets and one water tap because of bureaucratic burdens (Anastasiadou 2017: 16 pp.). Obviously, there was some need for basic infrastructure and supplies as well as the documentation due to the occurrences reported by the migrants and the efforts to keep the camp invisible by the state. During spring 2015 some dramatic occurrences gained media attention. 14 young men were run over by a train in the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, smugglers forced 93 refugees to pay 500 Euros extra for boarding a train going to Serbia, which was over watched by the police. Now, the NGOs and local activists started cooperating strategically with the media, even though this could have meant unrest in the camp. The media attention and awareness raising became an important part of the work for humanitarian aid. In summer 2015 Idomeni gained even more media attention and larger NGOs started to arrive. One activist explains: “In a way, however, they displaced the local support structures, and from the point of view of local volunteers they took advantage of the situation to raise funds” (Anastasiadou et. al. 2017: 26). The media attention pushed local authorities to react and open up the possibilities to help. With the regulation of September 19th and the arrival of even more people, the organizations were able to set up larger tents for accommodating hundreds of refugees. Before there were only a few tents set up by the UNHCR for structural use, such as medical services and waiting areas. Moreover, the MSF started to erect tents. Still, the conflict between smaller organizations and the bigger NGOs remained and little by little they got expelled, peaking in the absolute expulsion with the camps eviction in 2016. NGOs started to lobby for the 72-hour paper which was implemented in June 2015. Foremost the local NGO *Legis* as well as the UNHCR pushed the politics to implement the paper on basis of a passed law in Serbia. As the busses from Athens started arriving the NGOs handed out water, food, clothing and provided medical help. The UNHCR helped the Macedonian government to erect a tent camp on the Macedonian side. In November 2015 even more tents were erected. Until then the help focused on the fact that the people will pass and was not established for long term stay. This changed with the regulation of the SIA-citizens and the starting push-backs in the end of 2015. Now, help was needed around the clock especially in terms of medical care. Still, the facilities remained meagre and insufficient. They could only provide a minimum of basic services. It was around that time that headlines made their way through international media concerning inhuman conditions of the

camp. New arrivals had to sleep outside in the cold. Volunteers reported that the conditions in the camp affected them psychologically. Still, they kept on working. In January 2016 *jungles* emerged again. The MSF managed to erect a camp outside of Idomeni which provide showers and sanitary facilities as well as childcare and heated tents with privacy. The camp was cleaned once a day. However, the Greek government decided to prohibit the refugees to sleep there or even take a shower. In April 2016 the supply containers of the NGOs in the camp of Idomeni provided the people with medicine, clothing, blankets, dry food, bottled water, evaporated milk, tea, sugar, children's toys and hygiene items. The number of items never met the demand. During that time a first aid station was established as well as an information point as it was difficult to seek reliable information about the status of the camp and the supplies. Playrooms for children were installed. NGOs tried to provide dry wood in order to prevent further burnings of plastic for cooking and heating purposes. The wood was always insufficient. As Idomeni became more and more a village with a stable structure, entertainment programmes were also provided. They reached from music over film screenings and entertainment for children. At the same time, an internet hot spot centre was built, and even a cultural centre was set up by volunteers to hold classes to adults and children. As the eviction came across and the volunteers were kept out of the camp, as well as the press, information became thin, which was also due to the strategy of the Greek government. Information seeking, at the end of the Idomeni camp, became essential. Through Google Maps, NGOs tried to stay informed about the location of the refugees as they were taken by busses. Only the UNHCR was allowed to enter the new official camps (Anastasiadou et. al. 2017: 26 pp.).

6 Conclusion

Idomeni was one of the best known refugee camps in Europe. The conditions in the camp produced shocking images which made their way all around the world. The need for help attracted many volunteers and NGOs Europe wide. Even though by today the camp is evicted for three years, its influence stays remarkable. Trials accusing European states for acting inhuman and discriminating are pending. The documentation of the camps history as well as its outcomes remain more than important.

Humanitarian help had to react to the political and structural circumstances. At all times the work required dynamical structures and covered multiple fields which changed rapidly throughout the camps existence. Only through internal structures and the organization of numerous individuals, help was provided. The internal structures enabled this dynamic work and carried the fruits of some condition improvements in the camp on different levels. As more

people started arriving in the region of Idomeni, mainly locals noticed the need for help and supplied them with basic goods, housing as well as the possibility to consult medical support. Politically, the camp was held down. Reports of violence and force reached aid organizations. The need for documentation became obvious. As the weather conditions in the north of Greece are challenging, housing and shelter became an important goal of help. Though the provision was restricted first, little by little tents were erected. With people living there a basic infrastructure of toilets and water taps became necessary as well as technical support. The rising number of people arriving made it utile to have professional medical and psychological help on site. Still, the situation in the camp was bad. Violence was a daily occurrence and awareness building through media became necessary to put pressure on the politics to react. Lobby work followed in order to open up a possibility for people to pass the border. Another important field of work was the networking among the organization themselves which remained unsuccessful throughout the time. As the camp became a village, childcare and entertainment options were established. In the last months even a cultural centre for educational purposes and an internet hot spot centre were built. At all times reliable and accessible pieces of information were required.

Although all this work was carried out, the problem of inhuman conditions for refugees and migrants did not end with the eviction of the Idomeni camp. The routes change and the conditions differ with each legal frame of each country. It is of crucial importance to keep on documenting the occurrences on the corridor in order to improve the conditions of refugees and migrants remotely. Often the occurrences do not make it into mainstream media which implies an ongoing cooperation with the press. Information for the refugees and migrants are important in order to keep them safe and to prevent unrest and frustration. States need to react according to the situation as many refugees find themselves in dangerous and unhealthy circumstances. Trials should be taken out more quickly in order to make an important statement. Last but not least the story of Idomeni should not be replicated.

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