Kick-off seminar Helping Hands Research Network
Welcome to the launch of the interdisciplinary research network: Helping Hands. Research Network on the Everyday Border Work of European Citizens, funded by the Danish Research Council 2017-2019. The network gathers researchers (ethnologists, anthropologists, human geographers, borders and migration scholars), from 6 different countries; Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Scotland, in order to investigate the different ways in which people of everyday life Europe choose to 'give a helping hand', pursuing their own kind of aiding work in support of refugees coming to Europe.

The program will be a mixture of keynote lectures and round-table discussions.

Draft Programme

Venue: UCPH, KUA 1, room 22.0.11  
Time: 9.30-15.30  
Wednesday May 31
9.30: Welcome note by Marie Sandberg & Dorte Jagetic Andersen, organizers and leaders of the Helping Hands Research Network

10.00 - 11.00: Keynote Shahram Khosravi, Stockholm University: The time of borders  
Discussant Olivier Kramsch, Radboud University, Nijmegen Centre for Border Research

The time of borders
Migration and borders are generally perceived and studied as a spatial process and the temporal aspect of migration has received much less attention. In this presentation I will develop an anthropological account of the lived experiences of waiting among migrants. Despite its common presence in many migrants’ lives, the act of waiting has been less studied in migration studies. The role of solidarity networks is crucial during waiting. I will focus on migrants’ ‘social navigation’ of “waithood”, in encounters with the state, NGOs, and volunteers or other organizations; to explain the impact of prolonged waiting on individuals. What does it mean to wait for a long period of time?; How do migrants organize their time waiting?

Shahram Khosravi is Associate Professor at Stockholm University and the author of two books: Young and Defiant in Tehran, University of Pennsylvania Press (2008) and The Illegal Traveler: an auto-ethnography of borders, Palgrave (2010). He has been an active writer in the Swedish press and also written fictions; ‘Round Trip to Ithaca’ in Exiled Ink! Magazine (2011) and ‘The Persian Escort’ in Collective Exile (2013).

11.00 – 12.00: Keynote Heath Cabott, University of Pittsburgh: Solidarity in Zones of Humanitarian Citizenship: Everyday Border Work on Europe’s Margins  
Discussant Synnøve Bendixsen, University of Bergen
Solidarity in Zones of Humanitarian Citizenship: Everyday Border Work on Europe’s Margins

This talk will examine Greece’s constitution as a humanitarian space and object of humanitarian sentiment within European Union territory, and how “solidarity” initiatives in Greece have attempted to establish dignity, equity, and subjecthood in ways that resist or circumvent these forms of humanitarianization. Since the early 2000s, Greece has been an external border of concern in European migration and asylum regimes, but in 2015-16, Greece entered the global limelight as the key entry-point for hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and migrants arriving on European territory. This country on the margins of Europe thus found itself at the epicenter of two overlapping “humanitarian” crises: the economic crisis and the crisis of refugees. Since 2010, austerity policies have hamstrung the Greek state’s capacity to meet the basic needs of citizens, long-term residents, and new arrivals alike without external forms of assistance. Images of homelessness, ill-health, and the suffering Greek people have served as rationales for both domestic social programs and European and international financial support. Meanwhile, as Greek sovereignty is directly challenged through austerity, the “refugee crisis” has opened up a booming humanitarian marketplace in Greece. International organizations, foreign NGOs, and volunteers from all over the world have flooded in to provide (much needed) reception services and ongoing assistance to refugees. Drawing on ethnographic data from 2004 to the present, I will argue that the Greek case signals the emergence of what I call humanitarian citizenship on Europe’s margins: the replacement of both social rights (afforded to citizens) and human rights (afforded to refugees) with humanitarian logics and sentiment, positioning both citizens and refugees in partially shared zones of precarity. Yet I will also explore how solidarity initiatives in Greece have sought to undermine humanitarianization, and the precarity that it signals, through organizational and ideological innovations. Such forms of both violence and struggle characterize the everyday border work currently emerging on Europe’s margins.

Heath Cabot (PhD University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010) is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. She is a political and legal anthropologist whose research examines citizenship, ethics, and rights in Europe, with a focus on Greece. She has studied asylum and refugee related issues in Greece since 2005, and is the author of On the Doorstep of Europe: Asylum and Citizenship in Greece (2014). Her current project is on austerity, community-based healthcare, and solidarity movements in Greece and Italy. She is co-editor-in-chief of the Political and Legal Anthropology Review.

Lunch

13.30-15.30: Roundtable: The promises of solidarity work – what are the potentials and challenges?
This roundtable is composed of an international panel of experts, who have all engaged themselves in solidarity work.

Venligboerne/Tina Kraft, Copenhagen
VenligBoligerne/Johan Galster 2+1, Copenhagen
University Asylum, Kolar Aparna, Radboud University, Nijmegen Centre for Border Research.
Moderator: Marie Sandberg