

Šid

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Šid is a city and the center of the municipality of the same name in the Srem District, located in the northern part of the Republic of Serbia within the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Šid is located in the immediate vicinity of the **border** between Serbia and Croatia, which also places it on the external border of the European Union in the **Western Balkans**.

Šid and its surroundings were significantly affected by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war during the 1990s, when populations were “exchanged” across both sides of the border, established at that time between Serbia and Croatia. Population “exchanges” were done with the goal of ethnic homogenization. Today, people from the countries of the **Global South** pass through and stay in Šid. Narratives about refugees from the 1990s intertwine with narratives regarding the movement witnessed by the population of Šid and its surroundings today (Jovanović, Mitrović and Erdei 2022).

After the state-organized humanitarian corridor was redirected from the border with Hungary onto the border with Croatia in September 2015, Šid became the central hub of the **Balkan route** and **corridor**. Three transit and reception centers (cf. **camp**) were opened in the municipality of Šid at that time: Šid – Stanica (in the center of the city of Šid), Adaševci (near the Batrovci border crossing) and Principovac (which is located right at the border crossing of the same name; a section of its yard is located on the territory of Croatia), managed by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (Komesarijat za izbeglice i migracije Republike Srbije – KIRS). With the official closure of the corridor in March of 2016, crossing the border between Serbia and Croatia became completely irregularized for people on the move. Three reception centers remained open as places of encampment (Agier 2016), **humanitarian exceptionalism** (Petrović 2018), detention and transit of people on the move.

Despite the closure of the corridor, people continued to cross the border between Serbia and Croatia. Such developments show that (thanks to the efforts of people on the move) the external borders of the EU are not “hermetically sealed”, but partially permeable. While, on the other hand, we have numerous efforts to “protect” the EU’s external border from people on the move, as demonstrated by the reports of activists present in Šid. Those reports contain testimonies about violence perpetrated against people on the move, with a special focus on **pushbacks** (Are You Syrious? and Welcome Initiative 2017; Border Violence Monitoring Network 2019, 2020).

Field diary note, surroundings of Šid, September 2020.

TAXI DRIVER

He talked about migrants without fear or hatred. He says that he sometimes drives families, that some of them are really nice and that he doesn’t charge them much more than others. He says that the transport of migrants does not count as smuggling, because he is not allowed to ask anyone for their ID, what they plan to do or where they are going next. The police once even told him to drive people straight to the center of a border town in the vicinity of Šid, not to leave them at the entrance. Migrants are willing to pay a lot, but no one can guarantee them they will get where they want. They can easily enter Croatia, but then they catch them and send them back, break their phones, beat them, sometimes steal their money. He says that they can only get across with help from someone from Croatia. They try to pass through the **forest**. He talked about how at first it seems as though they know nothing, that they are grungy, but that they know how to take care of themselves and use technology very well. They say that they know the forest better than the locals.

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