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„As long as we are visible“

Refugees, Rights and Political Community

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¹ „as long as we are visible“ Larry (see annex 12)

Abstract

In the year of 2015, due mainly to unrest in the Middle East, more refugees arrived in Europe than ever before. They have been met with national and EU policies that emphasise border control and deterrence rather than human rights and dignity. I argue here that the human rights regime has proven to be insufficient to ensure refugees' rights are protected, owing to the inherent contradictions of sovereignty, citizenship, and universal rights by referring in particular to Arendt's description of the complete rightlessness of refugees. However, drawing on field research and interviews in Athens and Hamburg, this thesis counters the description of refugees as passive and essentially non-political, showing that refugees in fact constitute themselves as political subjects. They do this in small ways through place-making and inserting themselves into the social fabric of everyday life, as well as more through more overtly political acts. By insisting on being seen and heard, they disrupt the mainstream discourse and framing of social reality. This is done with the help of "communities of justice" such as the solidarity movement in Greece. Finally the thesis suggests a new form of disaggregated citizenship that can make a new guarantee of rights by involving refugees in political participation.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
A note on terminology and definitions	8
Structure.....	9
1. Europe’s ‘migrant crisis’	10
2. Literature.....	14
2.1 ‘The Scum of the Earth’, Human Rights and Refugees.....	14
2.1.2 Sovereignty, Borders and Human Rights.....	17
2.1.3 Man or citizens?	20
2.1.4 The right to have rights	23
2.2 ‘A Place in the World’: Rights claiming, place making and everyday life	27
3. Discussion.....	32
3.1 Solidarity: “you feel powerful when you can help someone else”	32
3.1.2 International Volunteers: the other arrivals	41
3.2 Squats “your home on the planet earth”	43
3.3 Acts of citizenship.....	50
3.4 Refugee Radio: Bridging the gap	53
Conclusion of Discussion	64
4. A New Law on Earth	66
Conclusion	72
Bibliography	74
Annexes	89
Annex 1.....	89
Annex 2.....	91
Annex 3.....	94
Annex 4.....	99
Annex 5.....	102
Annex 6.....	108
Annex 7.....	113
Annex 8.....	114
Annex 9.....	120

Annex 10.....	122
Annex 11.....	127
Annex 12.....	131
Annex 13.....	137

Introduction

The past year has shown clearly, and in stark terms, how cheap human life and human dignity become in the face of securing borders. Refugees have long paid the price for Europe's securitized border regime. Death at sea, detention, deportation and prolonged periods of destitution associated with asylum procedures have been an integral part of a policy of deterrence that is "punitive in intent and effect"² for decades. The objective of such policy appears quite brazenly to be making migrating to Europe difficult and dangerous enough to forestall more arrivals. It is safe to say that this policy has failed its objective. The untenable and desperate situations throughout the globe have produced more refugees than ever before; civil war in Syria, Yemen, as well as instability and violence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Nigeria have forced millions to flee. By the end of 2015, according to the UN, worldwide displacement was at the highest level ever recorded³ and Europe was in the midst of a "refugee crisis". The surprise expressed by those who expected a more "humanitarian" response must mean that they were unaware of the increased securitization of the previous years driven by the construction of migration as a constant threat to sovereign statehood and national identity. What we see now is a continuation of a policy in which territorially defined (national) states compete to reassert their sovereignty via the bodies and the freedom of those they deem outsiders.⁴ It is a continuation of the protection of privilege and prerogatives of the world's relatively affluent zones from the less fortunate⁵ and the proliferation of a logic that is based on historical racism as well as new fears relating to neoliberal globalization.⁶ The images we see on the news seem to belong to another era, when a Europe ravaged by war was awash with its own refugees. Now seventy years later, the countries of Europe are signatories of human rights charters, declarations, and bills, and have acceded to a

² (Pickering & Weber, 2014, p. 1006)

³ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015)

⁴ (DeGenova, 2010, p. 2)

⁵ (ibid, p.3)

⁶ (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 429)

universal Refugee Convention. Still, there are camps, there is barbed wire and teargas, there are freezing winters and scorching summers spent in tents on the concrete and there are desperate journeys at sea. Despite the many changes of the past seventy years, what has remained is the inherent vulnerability of existing outside of the aegis of a ‘good’ European (or equally, in those countries, of an Australian, American, Japanese or Canadian) citizenship– be it as an irregular migrant, an asylum seeker or a refugee.

The following thesis demonstrates that when it comes to refugees, weaknesses of concepts and instruments of human rights become apparent—they are weaknesses that stem from the limits imposed it by citizenship and sovereignty. At the same time, both refugees and “communities of justice” who support them resist the conflation of refugee with “outlaw by definition”.⁷ This thesis argues that refugees are in fact political, in many different ways– drawing on qualitative field research in Athens and Hamburg, the thesis describes the way refugees make a place for themselves, act, and speak to change their own situation. I would argue that this approach is the best hope for creating a better guarantee of refugee’s rights than the current situation.

Methodology

Qualitative research, as a more in-depth method works to “explore the feelings, understandings and knowledges of others through interviews, discussions or participant observation.”⁸ Dwyer and Limb argue that this makes it better suited to capturing everyday life⁹, lived experiences and shared meanings¹⁰ than quantitative research. Underlying it is the perception that social worlds are dynamic, and intersect with many larger or smaller social processes, rather than the idea that there is a fixed social ‘reality’ that can be discovered and measured precisely.¹¹

The main source of qualitative data in this thesis are a series of semi-structured interviews that were carried out mainly in Athens, though some were done over skype, and one interview took place in Hamburg. In total of seventeen interviews were conducted.

⁷ (Arendt, 1968, p. 283)

⁸ (Dwyer & Limb, 2001, p. 1)

⁹ (2001, p. 1)

¹⁰ (2001, p. 6)

¹¹(Ibid, p. 6)

¹²Interview partners were solidarity individuals in Greece, international volunteers, and refugees. The interviews were structured via an interview guide of general themes and questions, and in all cases except one (where the interviewee preferred not to be recorded) a recording device was used. In two instances a translator conveyed questions and interview subjects' answers. The interview partners were found through a method of "snowballing" as one initial contact led to another which would then lead to another.¹³ This was an extremely helpful development, especially as some solidarity members in Athens are not inclined to accommodate researchers or journalists and would rather keep to themselves. Although not all of the interviews are explicitly quoted or mentioned in the body of this thesis, many statements, connections and analyses stem from these conversations.

Semi structured interviews are informal in tone, this allowed for an open response in the participants' own words rather than yes or no answers'.¹⁴ It was possible to go into unexpected directions and explore new issues that come up during the interview, while still holding to a central theme. This form of interviews also helps to diffuse the researcher/researched dynamic¹⁵ somewhat by loosening the formality of the situation. The research in Greece also included an ethnographic dimension, which flows into the conclusions that are drawn and helped to deepen my understanding of the issues at hand. Casual conversations with many different people, spending time in squats, and participating in solidarity and voluntary activities helped to put the interviews into context even though they are not drawn on in an overt way in the body of the thesis.

During observations and interviews, I tried to keep an awareness of positionality as a researcher, and practice a degree of reflexivity. Reflexivity as "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher"¹⁶ is a crucial part of the ethics of the research process, especially when it comes to the "power

¹² The interviews quoted in the discussion are attached in the appendixes. Further interviews are on file with the author.

¹³ (Valentine, 1997, p. 117)

¹⁴ (Longhurst, 2003, p. 119)

¹⁵ (Mohammed, 2001, pp. 101-104)

¹⁶ (England, 1994, p. 244)

laden nature of interviewing encounters.”¹⁷ As a European citizen, securely in possession of a passport, a social security number and a home to go back to, I was often in a very different situation from my interview subjects. On this level, certain issues could only be approached from an “outsider” perspective¹⁸ without a real understanding of what being a refugee truly means, and how interviewees’ backgrounds and experiences shaped their answers. Thus awareness of positionality means acknowledging that my own experiences and identity shape the way I experience the social reality that I am trying to interpret and document.

Ethical research is based on respect for the people involved, taking care not to cause any harm or discomfort during the research process, and acting on a principle of justice and fairness.¹⁹ “The purpose of ethical conduct in research is to protect the rights of individuals, communities and environments that are either a part of or are affected by our research”²⁰ For the research in this thesis this involved informing each and every one of my interviewees of the purpose of the research, asking if they were comfortable with being recorded and using aliases where asked.

In addition to semi-structured interview and ethnographic input, the research in this thesis also draw on websites, facebook posts and blogs as well as youtube videos and radio broadcasts. As media is a central theme of the thesis, these are an important component.

As the research proceeded, the questions that initially motivated the research became more refined and focused and new themes emerged, which gradually became the themes that the thesis is centred around.

[A note on terminology and definitions](#)

I will use the term refugees rather than migrants here to cover all those who arrived in Europe and hope or hoped to seek asylum, although many of them have not yet received refugee status officially or some have been denied and have become ‘irregular migrants’. I do not use the definition set out in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of

¹⁷ (Valentine, 1997, p. 113)

¹⁸ (Mohammed, 2001, p. 101)

¹⁹ (Hay, 2003, p. 38)

²⁰ (Ibid, p. 39)

Refugees. Instead I follow the definition used by Larking “all those who left home because their national state is unable or unwilling to secure the conditions necessary for living what Dummett describes as ‘a decent human life’ ‘without the threat of an unnatural death’ ‘free from terror and allowing...a basic dignity’.”²¹

The terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ carry with them connotations of deserving or undeserving, those who migrate out of economic opportunism or because they fear for their lives.²² I would argue that making such a distinction is harmful, and has been used repeatedly to vilify certain groups, therefore my definition of refugee is purposefully broad.

Structure

The first chapter will describe what is termed the “refugee crisis” and the EU’s policy responses that have left tens of thousands of refugees stranded in Greece, and in destitute conditions.

The literature review sets out the central contradiction of human rights embodied by the refugee and the way this is tied to citizenship and sovereignty, focusing especially on Arendt’s theory of the right to have rights. Then it describes the theories that will underpin my assertion that refugees constitute themselves as political through rights claiming or in a certain sense, through the claiming of citizenship. In particular ideas of human geography related to place making, will be examined, to complement the questioning in the body of this thesis of Arendt’s assertion that refugees lack a place in the world and therefore a political community.

The main body of the thesis is split into several sections: The first introduces and examines the solidarity movement in Athens, a following small section contrasts this movement to the international volunteers who have arrived on the islands to offer their help, the next describes and analyses solidarity squats in Athens, and aspects of homing and place. The last two sections are dedicated to refugees engaging in acts of citizenship, and a discussion of Refugee Radio Network, a initiative based in Hamburg which gives refugees a voice in the German media landscape. This last section loosely follows

²¹ ((Dummett 2001, p 32) in (Larking, 2014, p. 3))

²² (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016, p. 16)

Arendt's concept of the political, and the necessary accompaniment of action by speech. Speech here is represented by any initiative such as Refugee Radio Network which allows refugees to be a part of the public discourse, and action is represented by initiatives like squats, or protests that are set up by refugees or that they are an integral part of. Finally, the last chapter summarizes different suggestions of how to better ensure refugees' rights are respected and valued as such. I argue that perhaps the best guarantee of protection would be for refugees to become a part of the political landscape, and have a hand in shaping the laws and policies that have jurisdiction over them. This may entail the emergence of a different kind of citizenship-one that is more inclusive and can be deconstructed into different elements that ensure certain rights for all.

1. Europe's 'migrant crisis'

In the past two years, Europe has seen the largest movement of displaced persons since World War Two. In 2015, over one million migrants and asylum seekers reached the EU via the Mediterranean, one of the world's deadliest migration routes. In that year more than 3,700 people died or went missing, an unprecedented number.²³ As of the 21st of May 2016, 189,000 people have risked their lives to reach Europe by sea that year, and 1,361 were feared drowned that year.²⁴ Most refugees come from Syria (41%), Afghanistan (21%) and Iraq (13%). Other countries of origin include Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria, Gambia, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea. 45% of arrivals are men, 20% are women and 35 % are children.²⁵

Even though the influx of people seeking refuge is certainly not insurmountable, especially when compared to the amount of refugees hosted by many countries with considerably fewer resources at their disposal²⁶, these developments have been termed a refugee "crisis" by commentators and politicians alike, and are largely perceived as such by European populations. At the same time, EU policy, together with the policy of its

²³ (Human Rights Watch, 2016(a))

²⁴ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016(c))

²⁵ (Ibid)

²⁶ as of 2015 Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon hosted the highest number of refugees worldwide. (UNHCR, no date)

partners has focused on deterring arrivals, securing borders and controlling and monitoring the flow of people. In May 2015, the Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration, outlining priorities in migration, asylum and borders policies for the years to come. It's short term goals for the influx of refugees included implementing temporary relocation for refugees, increasing the budget and capacities of Frontex²⁷ and border control and surveillance operations in the Mediterranean, implementing a 'hotspot' approach in frontline EU states (where EU agencies Frontex, Europol and the European Asylum Support Office support the member states in register and control refugee flows by "screening" refugees, fingerprinting registering and identifying them.²⁸) as well as fighting smuggling and human trafficking. For the long term, the European agenda is based on four 'pillars': 1) reducing the incentives for irregular migration; 2) saving lives and securing external borders; 3) a strong common asylum policy; and 4) a new policy on legal migration.²⁹

Thus the focus is placed heavily on border control and the managing of refugee and migration flows. Humanitarian concerns, or respecting and safeguarding the human rights of those at Europe`s borders are not mentioned as one of the four pillars. Instead, smugglers are cast as the sole reason for the deaths at sea: EU Commissioner for Migration Avramopoulos has declared that "Europe is at war with smugglers".³⁰ No matter how much energy and money is invested in fighting smuggling, denying Syrians and other refugees more flexible, cheaper and especially safer travel routes will result in a steady demand for smugglers, and push refugees to make deadly journeys.³¹

As a part of its policy the commission unveiled a plan in September to relocate Syrian, Iraqi and Eritrean asylum seeker from Greece and Italy to other European countries however so far the program has had modest success in achieving "shared responsibility" among states.³² Henley argues that the relocation program is too small compared to the numbers of people who have arrived, even if it were fully signed up to and completely operational. In its current modest form, relocation cannot be described as a success

²⁷ Frontières extérieures

²⁸ (Carrera, et al., 2015, p. 7)

²⁹ (European Commission, 2015(a)) (Carrera, et al., 2015, p. 4)

³⁰ (Carrera, 2015)

³¹ (Carrera, 2015)

³² (Henley, 2016)

either.³³ As of the 1st of June 2016 only 1994 out of 66,400 asylum seekers have been relocated from Greece, in Italy it has been 789 out of 39,600.³⁴ According to the European Commission “The lack of political will among Member States has been the most important factor in slowing down the process.”³⁵

Additionally EU policies have relied heavily on notions of safe third countries, working together with countries along the western Balkans as well as negotiating a deal with Turkey.³⁶ The deal allows Greece to return to Turkey all new “irregular migrants” arriving after March 20th. In exchange, EU Member States will increase resettlement of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, accelerate the process of visa liberalization for Turkish nationals, and increase their financial support for refugees in Turkey.³⁷ The deal has been criticised, not least because designating Turkey a safe third country is contentious for various reasons. For example, Turkey retains geographical limitations on its ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention which restricts obligations to those fleeing consequences of events taking place in Europe.³⁸ Additionally there have been troubling reports of human rights abuses, with refugees being returned to Syria illegally³⁹ or killed and injured at the borders⁴⁰. The UN refugee Agency has expressed concern over the deal and the United Nations Refugee Chief has warned on the legality of blanket returns without proper safeguards for the refugees involved.⁴¹ The implications of trading refugees between countries without their consent does not sit well with concepts of human dignity and freedom. After the EU-Turkey deal entered into force those who had arrived in Greece before the 20th of March were sent to the mainland by authorities. Those who have arrived afterwards (as of May 2016 that has been 1,419 people) have been forcibly held in detention facilities and “the majority of them will likely be returned to Turkey”⁴²

³³ (2016)

³⁴ (European Commission, 2016(b))

³⁵ (European Commission, 2016(a))

³⁶ (European Commission, 2015(b))

³⁷ (Collett, 2016)

³⁸ UN General Assembly *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, adopted 28th July 1951, UNTS, vol. 189, p. 137 Article 1 B(1)

³⁹ (BBC, 2016(b))

⁴⁰ (Human Rights Watch, 2016(c))

⁴¹ (Spindler, 2016)

⁴² (ACAPS, Mapaction, 2016)

Greece has been the main country of first arrival in Europe for decades, and especially in the past years. Throughout the turbulent summer of 2015 refugee arrivals in Greece grew exponentially. The official numbers of arrivals in Greece from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are as follows: 31, 318 in June ; 54, 899 in July; 107, 843 in August; 147,123 in September; 211,663 in October; 151,249 in November; 108, 742 in December; 67,415 in January 2016; 57,066 in February; 26,972 in March. ⁴³ Athens was the transit point for those arriving from the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos and Rhodes, and hosted a large population of refugees that fluctuated continuously as many moved northwards often within a matter of days. Following the EU-Turkey deal and the closure of the western Balkan route the situation “has left more than 46,000 refugees and migrants in appalling conditions and in a state of constant fear and uncertainty” ⁴⁴

Meanwhile “the system for assessing asylum claims in the Greek islands and mainland is understaffed and inadequate, and there is limited safe and acceptable accommodation to host asylum-seekers pending their decision.”⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch has described the situation in hotspots: Police are failing to protect people against violence, there is insufficient protection for women and children.⁴⁶ Unsanitary conditions in the camp, lack of water and insufficient or rotten food and inadequate health care were also described, as well as overcrowding.⁴⁷

Their onwards journey throughout Europe has been viciously dangerous as well, especially for the most vulnerable. According to Europol at least 10 000 unaccompanied child refugees are missing- and the fear that they may be in the hands of human traffickers is probably well-founded. “An entire [criminal] infrastructure has developed over the past 18 months around exploiting the migrant flow” and according to Brian Donald, Europol Chief of Staff many human traffickers are now exploiting the situation of refugees, and unaccompanied minors are the most vulnerable.⁴⁸

⁴³ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016(d))

⁴⁴ (Amnesty International, 2016)

⁴⁵ (ACAPS, Mapaction, 2016)

⁴⁶ According to Human Rights watch the centres on Chios and Samos have no segregated sections for single women, family groups, or women with children. (Human Rights Watch, 2016(b))

⁴⁷ (Human Rights Watch, 2016(b))

⁴⁸ (Townsend, 2016)

Throughout the ‘crisis’, refugees have been consistently and repeatedly forced to live in overcrowded conditions⁴⁹, stranded in various train stations⁵⁰, attacked physically and verbally⁵¹ they have even been made to hand over valuables to pay for their own asylum procedures.⁵² This is fundamentally opposed to the idea of an EU or a Europe committed to human rights and equality. As such Europe’s ‘migrant crisis’ can be understood more as a crisis of the European Project, and the liberal values it claims to stand for.⁵³ Refugee policy carries “a high degree of cultural and moral symbolism” and is closely tied to ideals of human rights and equality.⁵⁴ However, I will argue in the following chapters, current mechanisms, institutions and conceptions of human rights have proven to be ineffective in securing respect for the safety, dignity and well-being of the refugees within Europe and at its borders.

2. Literature

2.1 ‘The Scum of the Earth’, Human Rights and Refugees

The current situation of refugees is compared by Larking to the situation of refugees in the inter war period. Primarily Russians who had fled the October revolution and Armenians who had fled the Ottoman Empire were stranded in Europe, without clear legal standing in countries that were anything but welcoming. For political reasons -such as relations with the now soviet republic, or the belief that refugees would eventually return- as well as economic reasons, and the increase in xenophobic nationalist sentiment, governments were reluctant to naturalize these populations.⁵⁵ Holborn describes how instead refugees were wilfully excluded from the countries they arrived to -police even going so far as to escort refugees over countries’ borders to be rid of them- locked up and subjected to legislation which banned them from working, or excluded them from

⁴⁹ (Ernst, 2015)

⁵⁰ (Korkut, 2015)

⁵¹ (Diehl, 2016) (Williams, 2015)

⁵² (Crouch & Kingsley, 2016)

⁵³ (Gilbert, 2015, p. 537)

⁵⁴ (Ibid, p. 538)

⁵⁵ (Holborn, 1938, pp. 681-682)

measures of relief for the unemployed. This meant many had to make an illicit living or obtain false papers for themselves, which in turn pushed them into a state of illegality. Holborn writes that “vagrancy or suicide” were the only alternatives left to many.^{56 57} As they were neither immigrants and under the protection of their state of origin, nor citizens of the nation state they were in, refugees were treated as a legal anomaly and, Larking argues, were denied legal personality as a result.⁵⁸ While schemes such as the Nansen passport and certificate system, which were introduced as a form of temporary travel documents, were able to help a limited number of people, their position in the host countries was clear: unwelcome, unplaceable, the surplus of humanity, the “scum of the earth”.⁵⁹ This position was reaffirmed in the 30s as most western countries (most notably the US and Great Britain) refused to loosen immigration restrictions to take in Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi regime. Those who made it were subjected to the “same vicious circle of unemployment, notice of expulsion, and evasion or entry into another country without permission”⁶⁰ that Koestler describes so well.⁶¹

Today, British MPs vote to abstain from taking in even 600 additional child refugees.⁶² Voluntary border patrols are officially rewarded in Bulgaria for intimidating and physically “apprehending” refugees who have entered the country irregularly.⁶³ Macedonian police fires teargas at refugees⁶⁴, and several countries have restricted welfare assistance to refugees as well as family reunification, or have begun to offer temporary, rather than permanent forms of asylum.⁶⁵ At the same time refugees live in bare, military-organised camps in Greece, in an arrangement that bears a striking resemblance to the displaced person camps of the first and second world war. This is an expression of the tenuous survival of camp life as a form of institutionalisation and

⁵⁶ Striking resemblance to the plight of refugees now, especially considering suicide and suicide attempts in detention centres.

⁵⁷ (Holborn, 1938, p. 689)

⁵⁸ (Larking, 2014, pp. 13-14)

⁵⁹ (Koestler, 1941, p. 1)

⁶⁰ (Holborn, 1938, p. 693)

⁶¹ (Kingsley, 2016) (Koestler, 1941)

⁶² (Kingsley, 2016)

⁶³ (Cheresheva, 2016)

⁶⁴ (Aljazeera, 2016(a))

⁶⁵ (Crouch, 2015) (Der Kurier, 2016)

containment which has left its bloody traces throughout the 20th century.⁶⁶ Today, however, we have an extensive body of institutions, declarations and watchdogs dedicated entirely to the idea of universal human rights. A development that was born in fact out of the horrors of the past century, to safeguard individuals and their equal worth.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.⁶⁷

This principle of equality is all-pervasive throughout human rights instruments indicating that human rights 'are universal, indivisible, interdependent, mutual reinforcing, and as relevant to refugees and stateless persons as to nationals in their own country'⁶⁸. There is also a general prohibition in human rights law of discriminatory enforcement of rights on any grounds, including national or social origin.⁶⁹

Thus refugees should have recourse to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)⁷⁰, International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁷¹, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)⁷², Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁷³ and any other human rights instrument provided they are under the jurisdiction of a country that has signed and ratified these conventions. Additionally, within Europe the European Convention on Human Rights, and within the European Union the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union all serve to safeguard the rights of individuals in the face of sovereign power. Finally, there are international mechanisms specifically for refugee protection: the 1951 Convention for the Protection of Refugees, its 1967

⁶⁶ (Minca, 2015, pp. 75-78)

⁶⁷ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted 10th December 1948, 217 A (III), available at <https://treaties.un.org> (accessed 11th June 2016)

⁶⁸ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2008)

⁶⁹ The universal declaration of human rights forbids discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* adopted 10th December 1984, UNTS vol. 1465, p. 85.

⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* adopted 16th December 1966, No. 14531, UNTS vol. 993, p. 3.

⁷² UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* adopted 16th December 1966, No. 14668, UNTS vol. 999, p. 171 and vol. 1057, p. 407

⁷³ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* adopted 20th November 1989, No. 27531, UNTS vol. 1577, p. 3

Protocol and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Convention sets out the definition of a refugee as someone who is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of his or her own country owing to well-founded grounds for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.⁷⁴ Both the convention and protocol also set out the core principle of non-refoulement.⁷⁵ In its preamble, there is mention in 1951 Convention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the “principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination”.⁷⁶ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the primary international actor regarding refugees, defines its mandate: “to safeguard the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee.”⁷⁷ Thus human rights and refugee protection are closely linked.

The language of rights is used repeatedly by refugees and the organisations advocating for them, human rights are often invoked as a last recourse when refugees find themselves locked up, living in inhumane conditions, deported or destitute. However, Larking points out that this precisely, undermines their claim, in fact “an appeal to human rights is evidence in itself that the person making the appeal is neither free nor equal”⁷⁸ When it comes to refugees, the weakness inherent in the idea of universal human rights become apparent. Following Larking, I will argue that this weakness is the result of the central contradiction in the relationship between universal human rights and conceptions of sovereignty and citizenship.⁷⁹

2.1.2 Sovereignty, Borders and Human Rights

Sovereignty is at the very heart of international law. Our global political system has its roots in the treaty of Westphalia and the resulting principle of the sovereign equality of states. Thus international law originally was a matter exclusively between states.⁸⁰ Some

⁷⁴ UN General Assembly *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, adopted 28th July 1951, UNTS ,vol. 189, p. 137 Article 1A (2)

⁷⁵ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016(a))

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, adopted 28th July 1951, UNTS ,vol. 189, p. 137

⁷⁷ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016(b))

⁷⁸ (Larking, 2014, p. 1)

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 28-63; (Weissbrodt & Divine, 2016 p. 870)

⁸⁰ (Rosas & Beetham, 1995, p. 63)

authors argue that international law is gradually becoming “humanised”, by the development of human rights law.⁸¹ However, others such as Larking, caution that this development should not be overstated. Human rights instruments themselves underline sovereignty, and the possibility of limiting certain rights to citizens.⁸² The Charter of the United Nations itself, while promoting the ideal of human rights, contains the notion of sovereign equality of states and of non-intervention. In the preamble it states as its purpose “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”⁸³ essentially equating states to individuals. In the Bill of Rights, some rights are limited to citizens or those lawfully present in the state,⁸⁴ and derogations and limitations to this effect are also very possible and widely applied.

On a more fundamental level Harvey points out that the comprehensive and international perspective of the global rights framework “remains formally tied to states -acting individually or collectively- in terms of creation and implementation.”⁸⁵ State officials write and ratify the instruments that make up the human rights framework, and subsequently use their constituent legal systems, ideally, to implement them.⁸⁶ However, states often fail to codify human rights protections into their legislation, and often improperly guarantee certain rights only to citizens. Even where laws are for the most part in line with human rights obligations, the state may fail to implement and enforce them, especially when it comes to certain groups such as refugees.⁸⁷ Refugees’ human rights are “in the states discretion”.⁸⁸

⁸¹ (Sicilianos, 2012, p. 1)

⁸² (Larking, 2014, pp. 29-48)

⁸³ UN General Assembly *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice* 26th June 1945 available at <https://treaties.un.org> (accessed 11th June 2016)

⁸⁴ For example the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights limits the right in Article 25 to take part in public affairs, to vote and have equal access to public service to citizens, Article 12 regarding the right to liberty of movement and the freedom to choose ones residence applies only to persons lawfully in the state. This severely limits not only refugees ability to take part in the society

⁸⁵ (Harvey, 2015, p. 43)

⁸⁶ (Weissbrodt & Divine, 2016, p. 871)

⁸⁷ Ibid p. 871

⁸⁸ (Larking, 2014, p. 141)

Hathaway sees international refugee law more as a means for reconciling a commitment of states to control immigration to the reality of forced international migration than as a vehicle of human rights. With its narrow definition of a refugee, and its lack of enforceability, it can be seen as a further instrument of border policing.⁸⁹ Hathaway argues that if the convention were indeed based on humanitarianism, the protection offered would be needs based and regardless of how and why the refugees fled.⁹⁰ Nor does it impose real, enforceable duties on states to meet the needs of refugees in a comprehensive way by basing itself on human rights. Thus she describes how the creation of international refugee law also meant a narrowing of the commitment to protection in a way that was in the perceived self-interest of states, both in relation to economic and nativist nation state ideology. Moreover she points out that it was fundamentally a project of western political culture, both in its liberal individualism, and because its definition is most likely to apply to European refugees of the postwar period.⁹¹ While the protocol removed geographic and temporal restrictions of the convention, the historical influence is still very much present.

Additionally the determination of refugee status is also mainly within a state's discretion, and there is no international mechanism for enforcing human rights standards. When it comes to status determination and reception conditions however, there are mechanisms in place in Europe, both through the European Court of Human Rights and the Common European Asylum System in the EU. However, in the face of the current refugee situation, it becomes clear that this is no guarantee.

Finally, even international law recognizes that guarding its territorial boundaries remains the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign state.⁹² And this sovereign prerogative is often the justification for human rights abuses at the borders.

While nowadays forces of globalisation threaten sovereign autonomy, and power and politics are becoming increasingly divorced from the nation state, states continue to aggressively assert their sovereignty when it comes to immigration and border control.⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid p. 128

⁹⁰ (Hathaway, 1991, p. 130)

⁹¹ Ibid p. 134

⁹² (Larking, 2014, p. 129)

⁹³ Ibid p. 121; (Baumann, 2002, pp. 10-14)

Papastergiadis argues that modern anxieties about global economic and physical insecurity, historical racism and a fear of the unknown and placeless “other” that is the refugee or migrant have produced an “invasion complex” that has taken hold in the “global political imaginary”.⁹⁴ This feeds into anti-immigrant sentiments and policies and drives the excessively harsh border regime that Europe has been developing for decades. Though migration flows can hardly be stopped completely, De Genova argues that this is not the point, the border regime tries instead to institutionalise mobility.⁹⁵ I have argued elsewhere that this focus on immigration and border control, and the very public enactments of such, serve to symbolically re-assert the sovereignty of the state.⁹⁶

2.1.3 Man or citizens? ⁹⁷

Historically citizenship has been profoundly significant for rights-bearing, and it still is today. Depending on what is in your passport you may be automatically entitled to access to healthcare, social services, you can stand for office, you can vote for your government, and you can rely on the protection of your state when you go abroad. Human rights themselves are informed by liberalism and the democratic values which developed in parallel to the modern nation-state.

Cornelisse traces the origins of liberal rights to French revolution’s right of man, which rapidly shrank from its original revolutionary meaning to denote the right of the French male citizen.⁹⁸ As the idea of liberal rights expanded across Europe it was applied in practice to the male citizens of the state. “The man, supposedly independent of all government turns out to be the citizen of a nation”.⁹⁹ Thus citizenship has long been the mechanism through which rights were acquired, articulated, guaranteed. The development of liberal rights went hand in hand with theories of social contract, which were developed by philosophers of the enlightenment such as Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke. It encompasses both moral and political obligations as well as rights which grow out of an agreement, among citizens or between citizens and the state.¹⁰⁰ This was the

⁹⁴ (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 429)

⁹⁵ (DeGenova, 2010, pp. 33-36)

⁹⁶ (Loew, 2016, p. 10)

⁹⁷ (Kristeva, 1991, p. 97)

⁹⁸ (Cornelisse, 2010, p. 109)

⁹⁹ (Kristeva, 1991, p. 150).

¹⁰⁰ (Friend, no date)

foundation not only for many forms of modern political theory later on but also inspired and was invoked by democratic developments such as the declaration of independence in the United States. Democracy and the concept of liberal rights were intrinsically linked. At the same time the nation state as an imagined community provided an idea of national identity and common purpose that was later amplified by romantic nationalism.¹⁰¹ Balibar also points out that we cannot see this development as separate from European history of colonialism and even today it “incorporates an irreducible anthropological racism into the very notion of political citizenship.”¹⁰² Today the biopolitical and nativist aspects of nationalism, that imply a racial entitlement to certain citizenships with more “heft” than others, carry over into the way Europe treats outsiders.¹⁰³

Broadly defined, “A citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership.”¹⁰⁴ The concept of citizenship has three related aspects. The first is citizenship as legal status, as a gateway to a range of civil political and social rights. The second sees citizenship as political agency, and participation in the state of which the individual is a citizen. The third is citizenship as identity that comes from being a part of a political community or citizenry.¹⁰⁵ The idea of citizenship as a political principle of self-rule was first set forth by Aristotle, in which all those involved are equals and involved in decision making and deliberation in the public sphere. This idea carries through to more modern conceptions of what citizenship is and the way this is related to rights.

Marshall speaks of a defined limited community where citizenship develops in evolutionary sequence to include of civil (equality before the law), political (equality in making the law or choosing lawmakers), and social citizenship (equal access to welfare, social and economic rights). He argues that all these aspects of citizenship are inextricably linked, as for example, one cannot adequately exercise political and civil citizenship without a decent education or living conditions.¹⁰⁶ Thus civil and political rights as well as social and economic rights are a product of citizenship and are interdependent.

¹⁰¹ (Cornelisse, 2010, pp. 109-110) (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 36)

¹⁰² (Balibar, 2003, p. 38)

¹⁰³ (Macklin, 2007, p. 354)

¹⁰⁴ (Leydet, 2014)

¹⁰⁵ (Ibid); (Tonkiss & Bloom, 2016, p. 838)

¹⁰⁶ (Marshall, 2006, pp. 30-40)

Members of a community are bonded together first by working to attain these rights and then by enjoying these rights together, and they are loyal to their community because they created and shaped it.¹⁰⁷ This view of citizenship would stand in contrast to nativist or nationalist ideas, as anyone could potentially be a part of the political community, creating a “civic” or constitutional patriotism rather than an “ethnic” nationalism.¹⁰⁸

This democratic civic republicanism sees democracy and participation as playing the most important role in specifying justifying and protecting the rights of citizens.¹⁰⁹ A different understanding of citizenship is simply that of a legal person free to act within the law and within the laws protection. This is more elastic and potentially inclusive definition, however it does not allow for the kind of political participation, solidarity and focus on equality of a republican model. In reality, neither understanding of citizenship is directly applicable. Even modern democracies are far from the full participation of all members of society in the way Marshall imagined. Not only are the systems of governance flawed, and states are not comprised of a society of equals, economically or socially, but globalization has challenged the nation states ability to control developments directly affecting citizens, undermining the republican ideas of citizenship. Moreover, citizens often have multiple, “cosmopolitan” identities and loyalties, which undermine cultural or ethnic ideas about citizenship.¹¹⁰

On a more fundamental level, citizenship, as bound up as it is with liberal rights, is at odds with the ideal of universal human rights. As Papadopolous and Tsianos put it “if you include everyone, and if you assign rights to everyone, citizenship becomes obsolete.”¹¹¹ The rights inherent to citizenship can only apply to the limited group of people who have that status, establishing a privilege relative to outsiders. Thus the nation state functions as a membership organisation with citizenship as an instrument of social closure.¹¹² This dimension of exclusivity is inextricably linked to the concept of territoriality, the idea that underlies the “founding of political power on a demarcated territory.”¹¹³ Cornelisse

¹⁰⁷ (Cohen, 2010, pp. 82-83)

¹⁰⁸ (Cohen, 1999 p. 252)

¹⁰⁹ (Ibid p. 246)

¹¹⁰ (Ibid p. 247)

¹¹¹ (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 182)

¹¹² (Brubaker, 1992 p. 21) (Cohen, 1999 p. 250)

¹¹³ (Cornelisse, 2010, p. 106)

describes how territorial sovereignty too, was an idea that came to dominate political consciousness only at the end of the 15th century, even though we now see it as an inevitable and natural way of organising the global political system.¹¹⁴

Papadopolous and Tsianos points out that in modern democracies citizenship acts as a specific form of governance that regulates the relation between rights and representation and secures rights through representation. It designates certain populations as legitimately being entitled to rights, while other populations are left out.¹¹⁵ Where does that leave refugees? If ‘[t]he normal individual is a national of some state enjoying the protection of the government of that state’¹¹⁶ then a person without a nation state guaranteeing in protection is a legal anomaly. As such the refugee is denied not only certain human rights, but what Arendt terms their “right to have rights”.¹¹⁷

2.1.4 The right to have rights¹¹⁸

Hannah Arendt coined the term a right to have rights in “The Origins of Totalitarianism”, her seminal work in which she examined Nazism and Stalinism to analyse the roots of the political developments of the 20th century that gave rise to so much suffering. In her discussion of the stateless and the rights of man, she too draws on the predicament of the interwar refugees. As a Jewish-German citizen Arendt herself was a refugee, and experienced the status of statelessness for many years.¹¹⁹ Having fled Nazi Germany for Paris in 1933, Arendt later managed to escape Vichy France after a period of time in an internment camp and arrived in the United States in 1941. She first published ‘The Origins of Totalitarianism’ less than a decade after the end of the Second World War. It is profoundly linked to the era Arendt conceived her ideas in, her formative experiences, and “the most dramatic events of her time”¹²⁰ however, I argue that her thoughts on politics and human rights still resonate today.

¹¹⁴ (Ibid p. 102)

¹¹⁵ (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 182)

¹¹⁶ ((Jennings 1939, p. 99) in (Larking, 2014, p. 17)

¹¹⁷ (Arendt, 1968, pp. 296-7)

¹¹⁸ (Arendt, 1968, p. 296)

¹¹⁹ (Kesby, 2012)

¹²⁰ (Canovan, 1992, p. 7)

Arendt delivers a scathing criticism of the liberal idea of the rights of man, pointing out the “poignant irony” of the ideals of inalienable human rights, and the actual situation of the stateless.¹²¹ While refugees are not formally stateless, following Larking’s definition, refugees’ “national state is unable or unwilling to secure the conditions necessary” for a life without threat to their life or well-being and allowing a basic dignity.¹²² They do not have a place to return to that would provide basic rights. Not only that but their state is unable to protect them as aliens in another country. Arendt includes refugees in the category of the stateless and refers to their predicament to illustrate her points on statelessness.

Arendt argues that refugees in the interwar period were reduced to a “condition of complete rightlessness”¹²³ because they lacked the most basic right to have rights. To be clear, the denial of a right to have rights does not mean one is denied food or shelter or freedom from oppression only that these are no longer rights.

“There is no question that those outside the pale of the law may have more freedom of movement than a lawfully imprisoned criminal or that they enjoy more freedom of opinion in the internment camps of democratic countries than they would in any ordinary despotism, not to mention in a totalitarian country. But neither physical safety-being fed by some state or private welfare agency-nor freedom of opinion changes in the least their fundamental situation of rightlessness. The prolongation of their lives is due to charity and not to right, for no law exists which could force the nations to feed them; their freedom of movement, if they have it at all, gives them no right to residence which even the jailed criminal enjoys as a matter of course; and their freedom of opinion is a fool's freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow.”¹²⁴

For Arendt a central part of refugees’ loss of the right to have rights is their position “beyond the pale of the law”, as a legal anomaly. Having fled a state which is unable or unwilling to protect them, they are not able to rely on that nationality to bring them within

¹²¹(Arendt, 1968, p. 279)

¹²² (Larking, 2014, p. 2)

¹²³ (Ibid, p.296)

¹²⁴ (Ibid p. 296)

the orbit of the law”¹²⁵ Arendt thus argues that a loss of statehood entails a loss of legal personality. This characterisation may be a bit extreme. When it comes to the interwar period Larking argues that Arendt’s analysis ignores the complex international legal regime regarding refugees as well as punitive laws in the states themselves.¹²⁶ Currently international refugee laws, and asylum procedures as well as the punitive measures of border control imposed by states all put refugees very much within a system of law that is created for them. Refugees are subject to certain very specific laws, though they have no say in those laws. In a “completely organised humanity”¹²⁷, a world consisting of the “human artifice” of nation states,¹²⁸ I would argue that not being able to rely on a citizenship status, especially for refugees who have not yet been granted asylum, and are not yet granted a definite legal status in their host states, produces a special kind of vulnerability. The most powerful proof of that fragility is the callous treatment of refugees, not just in Europe but in almost every host country.

Arendt places a special emphasis on responsibility and action. The stateless’ predicament is such that, she argues, he or she could improve the situation, and gain a recognized position in the world by committing a crime.¹²⁹

“For then a criminal offense becomes the best opportunity to regain some kind of human equality, even if it be as a recognized exception to the norm.... He is no longer the scum of the earth but important enough to be informed of all the details of the law under which he will be tried. He has become a respectable person.”¹³⁰

Crucially, as a criminal the stateless person is suffering the consequences of his or her actions, he or she is not innocent. It is the innocence of the stateless, precisely, that, Arendt argues, showcase their “total domination” by the state.¹³¹ The fact that the stateless are innocent from any crime, other than that of their presence in the host country, makes clear how unjust much of their treatment is. But it also underlines the denial of agency that

¹²⁵ (UN Committee on Refugees (1949) quoted in (Larking, 2014, p. 18))

¹²⁶ (Larking, 2014, p. 7)

¹²⁷ (Arendt, 1968, p. 297)

¹²⁸ (Ibid, p.301)

¹²⁹ (Krause, 2008, p. 336)

¹³⁰ (Arendt, 1968, pp. 286-287)

¹³¹ (Krause, 2008, p. 336)

comes with the denial of the right to have rights. “Innocence in the sense of a complete lack of responsibility was the mark of their rightlessness...”¹³²

More than that, the refugee or the stateless, has lost a “place in the world”.¹³³ Kesby describes that this can be a place of lawful residence. However, a loss of a place in the world also means something less tangible.¹³⁴ As Arendt puts it, the refugee suffers the “loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world.”¹³⁵

Having lost this, means you are no longer part of a community where speech and action have any significance. The point to make here, is that a place in the world is something that individuals have made for themselves, as much as it has been given by their status of citizen. Kesby suggests that this can incorporate a performative conception of place where “a person is not merely the passive recipient of a “place in the world” in the sense of possessing and exercising the right to reside in a territory but comes to “have” a place and to constitute places through their action.”¹³⁶ Like Marshall Arendt emphasises civic democratic participation and above all the importance of action and speech in the sphere of the political. Like Marshall she sees rights as not naturally inherent to each individual but as artefacts of a political community. “We are not born equal, we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights”.¹³⁷ This explains the failure of the concept of “inalienable” inherent rights to guarantee any substantial practical protection to the stateless, in the interwar period and now.¹³⁸ Larking refers to the Myth of Human Rights, arguing that not only are human rights ineffective, but that the myth of inherent rights actively obscures the political nature of rights.¹³⁹

¹³² (Arendt, 1968, p. 295)

¹³³ (Ibid, p. 296)

¹³⁴ (Kesby, 2012)

¹³⁵ (Arendt, 1968, p. 293)

¹³⁶ (Kesby, 2012)

¹³⁷ (Arendt, 1968, p. 301).

¹³⁸ (Ibid, p. 291)

¹³⁹ (Larking, 2014, p. 44)

Thus the current as well as past treatment of refugees give rise to serious doubts about the effectiveness of human rights when it comes to the stateless. The inherent contradictions both in the idea of national sovereignty in international law and the way citizenship is tied up with rights produce a situation of acute vulnerability for refugees. Arendt characterises this situation through the concept of the “right to have rights” which sees rights as being based on having a political community and a place in the world. So far, and in much of the political discussion regarding refugees laid out here, including Hannah Arendt’s, the refugee is a passive, non-political being whose lack of agency is his or her most defining feature. Rather than members of a community they are simply members of the human race, emissaries of “bare life”.¹⁴⁰ However, Arendt also emphasizes the revolutionary potential of the stateless. They force us to question the nation state’s territorial claim to sovereignty through their presence, to question the myth of human rights, even to question the fragility and artifice in our own place in the world.¹⁴¹

In the following chapter, I will present theories that will underlie my challenge to the idea of the refugee as inherently innocent, as bare life, and as “outlaw by definition”.^{142 143}

2.2 ‘A Place in the World’: Rights claiming, place making and everyday life

In the democratic civic republican theories, citizens as members of a community shape that community’s rights and obligations. In contrast Rancière provides a different interpretation of rights, and even of politics itself. Rancière assigns the term Police to the organization of powers, the way roles and structures are put in place and are justified. It is a logic that envelops not just the social but also the private sphere and determines who is a recognized political actor.¹⁴⁴ However, politics is not made within or by the police. For Rancière, politics, is the rupture of the status quo by those who are left out and do not belong as political actors, in the course of their struggle to be seen and heard. Politics “overturns the distribution of terms and places by playing man off against citizen and citizen off against man.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, those who are not accorded citizenship or full

¹⁴⁰ (Agamben, 1998, p. 1)

¹⁴¹ (Canovan, 1992, pp. 31-36)

¹⁴² (Arendt, 1968, p. 283)

¹⁴³ (Agamben, 1998)

¹⁴⁴ (Kesby, 2012)

¹⁴⁵ (Rancière, 2006, p. 301)

citizenship but instead simply “belong to the human race”¹⁴⁶ are in fact the ones to make politics. Using the example of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, he argues that when Rosa Parks refused to leave her seat she decided by means of her action, that it was her right to have the same access to seats as the white users of public transport, that it was in fact her right to live in a society without racial segregation and persecution. Moreover, those who took part of the boycott that followed decided the same by means of their acts.¹⁴⁷ Rancière points out that in such situations the people involved “exercise through their action the rights of citizen that the law denies them. They thus demonstrate that they indeed have the rights they are denied.”¹⁴⁸

This causes the dissensus¹⁴⁹ and the disruption of the police that brings about a change in society. Crucially, the subject of politics and of rights that he himself claims, is above all someone who acts, and who communicates to his fellow men.¹⁵⁰

In a similar vein, Isin introduces the concept of the activist citizen, which is based on a definition of citizenship which expands beyond the legal and institutional to include social practices and movements.¹⁵¹ He looks at how certain acts constitute certain groups as claimants of rights, responsibilities and justice that they did not have before. This concept has been used to examine protest movements of irregular immigrants such the Sans Papiers in France and the Sinpapeles in Spain who, though they have no official status or rights can be defined as activist citizens.¹⁵² Isin emphasizes that acts are not to be confused with actions. As a verb to act” implies simultaneously being directed and oriented towards something”¹⁵³ and “is a rupture in the given.”¹⁵⁴ Thus acts of citizenship are no routine social actions such as voting or taxpaying, but instead are acts that “make a difference”¹⁵⁵ and challenge the habitus.¹⁵⁶ This takes Rancière’s concept even further

¹⁴⁶ (Arendt, 1968, p. 302)

¹⁴⁷ (Rancière, 2006, p. 302)

¹⁴⁸ (Ibid, p.302)

¹⁴⁹ (Rancière, 2004, p. 304)

¹⁵⁰ (Rancière, 2006, pp. 301-303)

¹⁵¹ (Mezzadra, 2006 p. 92 quoted in (Barbero, 2012, p. 533)) ; (Isin, 2009, p. 367)

¹⁵² (Barbero, 2012, p. 529) ; (Isin, 2009, p. 380)

¹⁵³ (Isin, 2008, p. 21);

agam¹⁵⁴ (Ibid p. 25)

¹⁵⁵ (Isin, 2009, p. 379)

¹⁵⁶ (Johnson, 2015, p. 955)

in that those who cause “disruption” or make a difference, not only prove that they are owed certain rights, but also that they are in fact citizens of a sort. Such a broad conception of citizenship has been criticised¹⁵⁷ and merits a cautious approach. However it can offer a useful further dimension to Rancière’s concept of politics, especially for those without formal citizenship status.

Though Rancière is at odds with Arendt when it comes to the fundamental situation of the rightless, this, incidentally, is also a central part of her conception of political life. She emphasizes the importance of speech and action, through which individuals can give an account of themselves and their vision of the world in public, insert themselves into the human world¹⁵⁸ so doing take responsibility for the world they share.¹⁵⁹ To act for her means to begin, to set something into motion¹⁶⁰ but without speech “action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, by the same token, it would lose its subject... Not acting men but performing robots” would be the actors.”¹⁶¹ Speech is what makes action relevant, and identifies its subject.¹⁶² At the basis of all of this is the fact of human plurality, and its potential. Arendt argues that “power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse”, at the same time the existence of other people is what sets limits to power.¹⁶³ Thus men produce the public realm through speech and action, generating the space within the world which men need in order to appear at all.¹⁶⁴

We can take Arendt’s and Rancière’s ideas together, and suggest that when refugees act, and speak, they create dissensus. I would argue that because they are supposed to be “marked as inexistent”¹⁶⁵ even having a voice, and a presence beyond that is already an act of disruption. Moreover one of the most disruptive things a refugee could do would be to precisely defy their position as “outlaw”¹⁶⁶ and claim for themselves a “place in the

¹⁵⁷ (Johnson, 2015, p. 956)

¹⁵⁸ (Arendt, 1958, p. 184)

¹⁵⁹ (Larking, 2014, p. 56)

¹⁶⁰ (Arendt, 1958, p. 177)

¹⁶¹ (Ibid, p. 178)

¹⁶² (Ibid p. 179)

¹⁶³ (Ibid, p. 200-201)

¹⁶⁴ (Ibid p. 208)

¹⁶⁵ (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 182)

¹⁶⁶ (Arendt, 1968, p. 283)

world”¹⁶⁷. I will show with the help of my empirical research that this is precisely what refugees do, both together with an international and local network of support and individually, in small ways as well as big. I will base this on a performative conception of place, where a person comes to have and constitute a place through their action.¹⁶⁸ This, social fabric and community may very well be the seed from which a political community, as Arendt sees it, could spring.

The idea that the meaning we give to spaces is shaped profoundly by societal and political relations is eloquently put forward by Lefebvre in the production of space.¹⁶⁹ Lefebvre states that “(social) space is a (social) product.”¹⁷⁰ which affects perceptions of space and social practices that happen through and within space. He makes a distinction between abstract space and social space. Abstract space is about the intersection of knowledge and power and is used by those who wish to control social organization and impose their cultural hegemony. Social space, in contrast, arises from practice. It is produced through everyday lived experience of all members of society, and their perceptions, representations of space, and the imaginary that that created.¹⁷¹ Since then the idea that space is socially produced or constructed has become one of the foundations of contemporary social and cultural geography.¹⁷² However, while theories of the production of space are highly relevant to this research, it is important to note that space and place are two different concepts within human geography.

Cresswell puts it succinctly “places are spaces that have been made meaningful by people.”¹⁷³

Henderson offers a more detailed definition, whereby place is “usually distinguished by cultural or subjective meanings through which it is constructed and differentiated and is understood by most human geographers to be in an incessant state of ‘becoming’.”¹⁷⁴ This is a definition that has a lot in common with Lefebvre’s concept of continually produced

¹⁶⁷ (Ibid, p. 293)

¹⁶⁸ (Kesby, 2012)

¹⁶⁹ (Kesby, 2012)

¹⁷⁰ (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 26)

¹⁷¹ (Gottdiener, 1993, p. 131)

¹⁷² (Unwin, 2000, p. 11)

¹⁷³ (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7)

¹⁷⁴ (Henderson, 2009, p. 540)

space as something that is a process. In fact Henderson suggests one can see place as a particular moment within produced space.¹⁷⁵ However, though both space and place are continuously changing, place has an element of stability and security that is missing in space. Moreover, place has a meaning and an emotional value, and Tuan argues, is very much attached to our human lives, and our subjective and sensory experiences. For Tuan “places are centers of felt value”¹⁷⁶ that humans create in order to feel at home in the world.¹⁷⁷ Cresswell suggests looking at the world as places makes us see it in a different light “We see attachments and connections between people and place, We see worlds of meaning and experience..”¹⁷⁸

Creating such centres of value is an almost inevitable part of being human. Both in the geographical sense, in which place is still bound to the material sense of a geographical location, but also in the broader sense of what arendt calls the social fabric.

This social fabric is what weaves through the lifeworlds of individuals, in what geographers and sociologists call everyday life “a realm associated with ordinary, routine and repetitive aspects of social life that are pervasive and yet frequently overlooked and taken-for-granted.”¹⁷⁹ These are often banal aspects of life such as walking, cooking, playing, working or commuting. Human geographers see “the concrete situations of everyday life as of fundamental importance, because “it is at the scale of actual human practices that a society is reproduced and that its individuals are socialized.”¹⁸⁰ The concept has been taken up by feminist geographers as they examine the everyday practice of care-work or home-making as a part of the intricate connections between specifically women’s lives and the construction of place that shape society in a larger sense.¹⁸¹ Thus the everyday lifeworld of habitual actions and attitudes are what sediment a way of life, and they also harbour potential for social change, and action in the Arendtian sense.¹⁸² In this vein DeCerteau looks at the tactics of subversion employed by ordinary people in

¹⁷⁵ (Ibid, p. 540)

¹⁷⁶ (Tuan, 1977, p. 4)

¹⁷⁷ (Cresswell, 2004, p. 74)

¹⁷⁸ (Ibid, p. 74)

¹⁷⁹ (Pinder, 2009, p. 223)

¹⁸⁰ (thrift 1981 in (Pred, 1981, p. 6)

¹⁸¹ (Dyck, 2005, p. 236)

¹⁸² (Ley, 2009, p. 418)

their everyday life.¹⁸³ For example by transforming the dominant cultural economy (Lefebvre's abstract space) by adapting it to their own uses.¹⁸⁴ He calls this a tactic, a way of turning to your end forces and situations that you find yourself in the power of, thus "the place of the tactic belongs to the other"¹⁸⁵. Who if not the stateless, the refugee, is the other, and by that token is overcoming their designation of "other". Someone who is able in their daily life to make a place for themselves in the social fabric of a nation state who is not supposed to belong there, who changes the life-worlds of others, and makes themselves visible is in fact showing that they do belong.

For Lefebvre, everyday life is a site of struggle between being colonized by the state and the commodity and more authentic living and potential for radical change, the production of different spaces.¹⁸⁶ I will argue that this is especially true when it comes to refugees and the networks of support surrounding them, who assert themselves through everyday acts of subversiveness. I will argue that these are just as important as the acts of disruption and of citizenship-such as protests, or hungerstrikes- that result in rights claiming by refugees.

Thus refugees make a "place in the world" for themselves on various levels, from the emotional and social connections they form, to the everyday acts of placemaking, to acts of citizenship and disruption of the habitus.

3. Discussion

3.1 Solidarity: "you feel powerful when you can help someone else"¹⁸⁷

It is impossible to examine the Greek movement of solidarity with refugees of the past year without also taking into account the years of austerity and financial crisis preceding it, and the unrest, the radical politicization of many segments of the population and especially the initiatives of self-organisation that appeared. By the time the refugee

¹⁸³ (Pinder, 2009 p. 225)

¹⁸⁴ (De Certeau, 1984, pp. 13-14)

¹⁸⁵ (Ibid, p. 19)

¹⁸⁶ (Lefebvre, 1974, pp. 1-67)

¹⁸⁷ (*Yiannis, Solidarian*)

arrivals hit a peak in 2015, locals had already gathered experience in responding to the acute needs of the most vulnerable in a way the state no longer did. There had also developed a considerable distrust of the state, and the EU and large NGOs on the scene.¹⁸⁸

The effects of crisis, and the implementation of the so called Troika's (the ECB, IMF, and EU commission) austerity demands have been devastating, deep rooted and almost universal. As state services collapsed, and people's incomes dropped a large part of the population was abruptly impoverished.¹⁸⁹ Thus "as the crisis evolved, most Greeks could not rely on either their personal income or the receding welfare state."¹⁹⁰

As of March 2016, the unemployment rate in Greece has been 24.1 %.¹⁹¹ By contrast, it was 7.30 percent in May of 2008 before the crisis hit. Pensions and unemployment benefits were painfully reduced, and many could not rely on a regular wage from their jobs. At the same time public spending was slashed, impoverishing the public health, housing and education sectors among others.¹⁹² This led to drastic "increase of homelessness, soup kitchens and literal starvation in Athens."¹⁹³ The health of the population plummeted and the suicide rate doubled in the years between 2008 and 2011 both of which can be linked to the financial crisis.^{194 195 196} As Dalakoglou declares, the crisis has been, quite literally, lethal for the Greek population.¹⁹⁷

In the light the inadequacy of the state to support those who were crushed by the economic situation, people began to organize informally and adapt to the social needs of the most vulnerable, creating in effect a sort of alternative, subversive everyday.¹⁹⁸ Inhabitants of Athens and people throughout Greece set up informal food distribution networks directly from farmers to consumers (the most famous of which was the "potato movement" which

¹⁸⁸ (Rakopoulos, 2014, pp. 313-318)

¹⁸⁹ (Matsaganis, M. and Leventi, C. (2011) in (Dalakoglou, 2012) p 543)

¹⁹⁰ (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 37)

¹⁹¹ (Trading Economics, 2016)

¹⁹² (Rakopoulos, 2014, p. 315)

¹⁹³ (Dalakoglou, 2012, p. 543)

¹⁹⁴ (Economou, et al., 2011, p. 1459)

¹⁹⁵ (Kentikelenis, et al., 2011, p. 1457)

¹⁹⁶ (Dalakoglou, 2012, p. 543)

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p.543

¹⁹⁸ (Kallianos, 2013, p. 549)

was a cooperation with potato farmers, or various social groceries)¹⁹⁹, non-monetary local exchanges, workers' collectives, time shares, self-organised farms, social clinics, and new squats.²⁰⁰ Such forms of collective action, Kallianos argues, do not aim to seize control of the state but instead challenge its very authority and hegemony in everyday life in a very deliberate way.²⁰¹ Those involved often see themselves as part of a movement of "solidarity" or have overlaps with different left wing political movements with more far reaching or longterm political goals.²⁰²

Political ideas outside the mainstream gained traction to an unprecedented degree both on the left and right. In the years after the crisis, the street and various public spaces became contested space as political movements claimed for themselves certain areas and parts of the city and clashed (with one other or with the police) on the street.²⁰³ An important episode in the solidarity movement was the occupation of Syntagma Square in 2011 which has been described as one of the most powerful spontaneous actions of collective resistance in the anti-austerity movement.²⁰⁴ Starting out as a camp it grew and led to an open public assembly and then daily rallies and assemblies, one of the aims of which was to create a forum of "genuine" or "direct" democracy.²⁰⁵ The movement gradually dispersed, although many of the ideas and connections formed there have informed other initiatives, including those enacting solidarity with refugees .

Occupying public space is integral throughout these movements of revolt and protest.²⁰⁶ This has carried over into the refugee solidarity movement, as much of it is centred on offering a safe alternative to institutionalized space, or emergency shelter. Moreover the experience of self-organising, developments of novel socialities²⁰⁷ and

¹⁹⁹ (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 41)

²⁰⁰ (Dalakoglou, 2012, p. 536)

²⁰¹ (p. 549)

²⁰² (Rakopoulos, 2014, p. 318)

²⁰³ (Kallianos, 2013, pp. 548-554)

²⁰⁴ (Dalakoglou, 2012, p. 537)

²⁰⁵ (Ibid p.537) (Schwarz, 2011)

²⁰⁶ (Kallianos, 2013, p. 548)

²⁰⁷ (Rakopoulos, 2015, p. 87)

alternative democratic and economic spaces have informed the effective and expansive refugee support networks developed by Greek, and also international solidarians.²⁰⁸

Those involved in Refugee Solidarity in Athens identify as July 2015 as the pivotal moment, when they became aware of a large group of stranded refugees living in the Pedion tou Areos Park near Exarchia. The refugees were mainly from Afghanistan but also from Pakistan, and would only stay in the park for a few days before moving on. Nevertheless, there were about 350-400 people there at any one time. Moreover, in the summer heat the people were living in tents, had no access to water, food or sanitary facilities and were quite vulnerable and unprotected. During this time Greece was under capital control, and it was only possible to withdraw small amounts of cash from automatic tellers which meant those in the park could not immediately pay a smuggler and move on, meaning they were effectively “stranded” for a few days, with almost no financial resources. An assembly was called, and though it was initiated by anarchists, it united almost 100 people of many different political colours “people from anarchism and many radical leftists, apolitical people, rightwingers with sensitivities..”(Theo). One member told me it was the biggest project the movement of solidarity (with refugees) had done until then.” (Phevos) The assembly resulted in a highly organised support effort: Those who attended created different teams to take care of the most immediate needs of the refugees in Pedion tou Areos: healthcare, three meals a day, guarding the area from attacks by fascists and providing chemical toilets, working showers, clothing and water to help them on their way.

As the influx of people increased- for although the state was setting up camps around Athens, thousands were stranded in Piraeus port especially as European countries closed their borders- more similar solidarity initiatives developed to meet the growing humanitarian catastrophe. Additionally already existing structures began to take on new roles-sometimes finding themselves facing tasks they were not prepared for.

²⁰⁸ Solidarians here, are people who understand themselves to be in solidarity with refugees, which I expand on further down.

The Afghan Migrants and Refugee community in Greece was initially set up, in 2007, to bring together afghans living in Greece to help one another and advocate for their rights together. Its main focus was integration and improving the relations between afghans and the native Greek population. It is a relatively small organisation funded only through its member's contributions, and it has no regular staff. However as many Afghan refugees started to arrive in Athens with nowhere to go they turned to the community for immediate, emergency help. The organisers of the community found themselves trying desperately to provide shelter and clothing, and to connect the new arrivals to legal advice and help them arrange asylum interviews. This despite not having any funding or resources for such activities "We say we are not the government, not an NGO. We don't have things to give you, how can we help?" (*Amir*)

Other structures were better able to adapt.

The Metropolitan Community Clinic in Helliniko is one of 14 social clinics in Athens. It was initially set up as a solidarity initiative for those who were unable to access mainstream healthcare, and with the help of the doctors who offer their services free of charge, large donations of pharmaceuticals and equipment and a contingent of volunteers, it has done this very effectively. October 2015 the clinic held an assembly and decided to expand their services to refugees living in the refugee camp in Elliniko. They established a small clinic and while they cannot establish a permanent presence there, they go about three times a week and also organise transport for refugees to the clinic if this is necessary. They are also taking a consciously political position both on closed camps, austerity and EU policies by holding press briefings.

The Centre for Migrants is located on a side street in Exarchia district, the hub of alternative political culture and activity in Athens, and home to many squats and solidarity initiatives. The centre has been in operation since 1990 and is run entirely by volunteers. It has long provided support to refugees, especially giving legal advice and aid to asylum seekers as well as advocacy. Now it has expanded its services, and provides language lessons in Greek, German and English. On weekends, refugees and solidarians cook and eat together. People are constantly in and out of the centre's offices. It is an integral part of Exarchia as are the refugees who use the centre's services. Thus the lifeworlds of both refugees and the inhabitants of Exarchia mingle and are mutually altered, children ride

by on bicycles, young men sit in cafes and sounds of many different languages fill the air. Exarchia is already, I would argue, a site of resistance to government hegemony and control, a site of struggle, as Lefebvre would put it. It has been a hotbed of ideological resistance for decades and has been at the heart of anti-austerity protests and solidarity, the scene of riots and police violence.^{209 210} It has been shaped profoundly by its inhabitants and by the leftist anti austerity forces of Athens, both in material and immaterial ways.²¹¹ As such it is perhaps one of Athens most welcoming areas to refugees, and offers an everyday life that is grounded deeply in an ethos of solidarity.

Greek members of the refugee solidarity movement, distance themselves very clearly from charity or aid. This clear distinction was, and still is also a central feature of the anti-austerity solidarity movement. Refugee solidarity does not posit the refugee as a victim in need of humanitarian help and compassion²¹² instead bases itself on an ideal of horizontalism:

“In solidarity you are equal with the other and you help him to have an action for himself. Charity is something you are upper and you give them and I don’t want to have a relationship. We try to involve people in solidarity.” (*Petros, Doctor at Hellinko social clinic*)

Millner shows that solidarity denaturalises compassionate hospitality associated with humanitarianism as the only ethical response to refugees.²¹³ Instead the act of giving is not understood as a gesture of compassion, but as an exchange and a form of mutual recognition and part of a mutual struggle.²¹⁴ This understanding extends to the solidarity

²⁰⁹ (Palet, 2015)

²¹⁰ The death of fifteen-year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos at the hands of a policeman in 2008 and the weeks long riots and protests in the area afterwards was emblematic of the police brutality and the whole community’s collective resistance to it. Police brutality scars the neighbourhood on a regular basis (Baboulias, 2014)

²¹¹ this is perhaps most evident in a tiny park in the centre of the area which was meant to be a parking lot which activists took over and eventually managed to bring under communal control and turn into a park. (Baboulias, 2014)

²¹² (Millner, 2011, p. 321)

²¹³ (2011, p. 320)

²¹⁴ (Millner, 2011, p. 325)

movements in Calais, and the NoBorders movement in general²¹⁵ as part of a transnational solidarity network.

Speaking of solidarity in the anti-austerity context- which can to a considerable degree, I would argue, apply to the refugee context- Cabot lays down three important qualities: First, as described before it is horizontal and anti-hierarchical.²¹⁶ Second it involves reciprocity and the involvement of those in need of help. Solidarians conceded that this was important but often difficult to achieve, an opinion corroborated to a certain extent by refugees themselves and my own observations - I will return to this later in this chapter. Living together, eating together, or spending time on projects together as a part of the solidarity movement is meant to achieve this “horizontal entwinement of people in society”²¹⁷ at least in theory, and is meant to create a sense of community. This sense of community can also be difficult to achieve, not least because until quite recently Athens has been a point of transit to other countries for most refugees, and their time in the city was limited. Third in solidarity the assistance provided is not just material but also affective and emotional. ²¹⁸This is certainly the case in the refugee solidarity movement as well, and is an aspect heavily emphasised by volunteers and refugees. For example, Petros from the social clinic in Helliniko contrasts the behaviour of government officials in the Helliniko camp, with the way that they themselves interact with the refugees. Rather than being efficient and mechanical, doctors and volunteers from the clinic make an effort to connect to those in the camp on a human level, they develop relationships with the patients and are trusted with their personal problems.

At the same time, refugees also offer emotional support to solidarity individuals or volunteers.

“you know, its not just the refugees who need help, the people who are working with the refugees need help...It was a girl from Germany and she was depressed completely broken from the thing she was doing and I spoke with her for about

²¹⁵ (Ibid p.320)

²¹⁶ (2016, p. 159)

²¹⁷ (Cabot, 2016, p. 160)

²¹⁸ (Ibid, p.160)

three days and maybe I don't know I managed to give her a good point of view about what you are doing here" (*Ali, Iran*)

Thus "solidarity at its core means establishing a relational ontology"²¹⁹ This sense of connectivity comes from both sides. On the Greek side it has a lot to do with their own national history of war and displacement and current predicament in the face of economic crisis.

"People remembered their grandparents' generation being refugees...my own grandmother was a refugee...they have nothing different from being my mother, my sister, my friends, my aunt." (*Margarita, Centre for Migrants*)

Greeks I spoke to felt that enduring hardship makes you more empathetic for the suffering of others. As Greeks have suffered the brutal economic downturn, they can to a certain extent see themselves in the refugees' predicament.

"Its this phenomenon where a poor person will give you to eat if you are hungry because he knows what hunger is. A rich person will never give you will be afraid to lend a hand and give you something." (*Margarita, Centre for Migrants*)

Moreover respondents pointed out that given the current situation being able to help someone else, who is in an even worse situation gave them a sense of purpose and pride. This many-layered emotional connection is central to solidararians' experiences and motivations.

I would add to Cabot's definition that successful refugee solidarity involves a concrete larger political goal, it involves "mirroring an aspirant and politically conscious worldview"²²⁰Specifically it is worldview transcends the border regime, forms neoliberal governance and liberal rights based on the nation state. Most solidarity individuals I spoke to not only want to offer day to day support to refugees, they want to help them to move on, to open borders, to pressure a change in states' punitive migration policies, or to effect a change in society at large in a way that extends beyond the immediate.

²¹⁹ (Rygiel, 2011, p. 15)

²²⁰ (Rakopoulos, 2014, p. 315)

“what people want is to move on. What we have to do as a movement in general is to put political pressure so people can move on... To the governments in general. The European governments. Also the Macedonians, the solidarity from Macedonia should do the same.” (*Theo, Solidarian*)

There was also a need to take into account the possibility that migrants would not be able to move on and would have to be integrated in Greece.

“Plan B, say those 50 000 people get stuck in Athens or anywhere, they have to be integrated on equal terms, facing equal laws, having equal jobs and all that. Which extends a lot more than the refugee crisis itself.” (*Phevos, solidarian*)

So thinking in this way, solidarians integrate their own future with the refugees’ future and aim to achieve a certain idea of equality and justice in the long term. The support the solidarity movement can offer thus goes beyond immediate, material help but can also be an effective alliance for general political goals or rights claiming. Papadopoulous and Tsianos use term mobile commons of migration, to describe the way people on the move create for themselves common worlds of existence, below the radar of established political structures²²¹ which can be seen as a political precisely because they enable migrants by their very presence to challenge the hegemony of the nation state and the limits of liberal citizenship.²²² The mobile commons itself, is made up of many different facets. One of them, Papadopoulous and Tsianos call “transnational communities of justice”. “alliances and coalitions between different groups, local governments, political organisation, NGOs etc.”²²³

Following their description the refugee solidarity movement functions as a community of justice, but also contribute to the mobile commons in other ways. Tsianos and Papadopoulous exemplify four other areas of the mobile commons: knowledge mobility (knowledge of existing possibilities of support, ways of travel), infrastructure of connectivity (a way of gathering information via media and communication streams), informal economies (this can include gift economies, but also illegal or informal

²²¹ (2013, p. 178)

²²² (Ibid, p. 188)

²²³ (2013, p. 191)

economies that may be exploitative), and a politics of care (made up of forms of mutual cooperation and friendships).²²⁴ In all of these areas, the greek network of solidarity is active and involved, especially I will argue, the last. Not only do solidarians advocate and network on behalf of refugees, they also set up or post in facebook pages, or websites and connect refugees to legal help or housing. They also share meals, organise the distribution of water, food, clothing in urgent cases (as in Pedion tou Areos), and form friendships and personal connections with refugees, often keeping in contact after they have moved to their next destination.

3.1.2 International Volunteers: the other arrivals

As refugee arrivals to Greek islands and the Greek mainland increased dramatically throughout 2015, it generated another influx of people coming for the most part from the opposite direction. International volunteers arrived in Greece in unprecedented numbers, from Germany, from Norway, from England, or even the USA and Canada to offer their time and support. The island of Lesvos in particular, but also the port of Piraeus in Athens, or the camp of Idomeni at the Greek-Macedonian border became destinations for people of various ages, backgrounds and also motivations. They came (and still come) independently or in organised groups and have become an integral part of the systems of support set up in these places.

everyone! I'm looking to volunteer in Greece from September until November, would love to make some connections to do this. I'm particularly skilled with public health and gender issues however I've attached my CV and have a diverse background of skills. Would love to help out in any way I can! (*post on facebook page Information Point for Greece Volunteers*)

Potential volunteers often turn to facebook platforms to find out where they can volunteer, or what might be needed in terms of donations. At the same time organisations post updates about situations and calls for help.

On Lesvos for example small charities and NGOs from different countries provide services and support, from a drop in the ocean (Norwegian) to Lighthouse Relief

²²⁴ (2013, p. 191-192)

(Swedish) to a group of Spanish Firefighters doing sea rescues, countless small organisations worked together with large charities like Médecins sans Frontières. A British volunteer on Lesbos who was volunteering for a British organisation that transported new arrivals from the beaches to Médecins Sans Frontières facilities, felt that the many voluntary organisations had been highly effective, but at the same time he was also aware of the ambivalence of the situation:

“voluntourism is definitely a thing. People come, take photos and write a long post on facebook”(George, *Volunteer in Lesbos*)

This perception, that some people were using the humanitarian crisis as a photo-op or an opportunity to promote themselves was certainly shared by some solidarians I talked to in Athens. However they also appreciated that most international volunteers were doing valuable work, and genuinely wanted to help. A further difficulty may be that many international volunteers do not come for more than one or two weeks, and the reliance on a steady stream of “enthusiastic newcomers” is not the most stable foundation.²²⁵

This situation now seems to be changing. The flow of volunteers is becoming more regulated, as both the island of Lesbos and mainland official camps require or prefer volunteers to register with the police.²²⁶ Police has also become more tough towards volunteers and solidarians, and has begun to detain them and enhance controls on the islands and on the Greek mainland.²²⁷ Moreover, many small NGOs are ceasing their activities as arrivals have slowed after the EU-Turkey agreement. Nonetheless, the services provided by international volunteers have been vital, both on the islands and the mainland.

People also arrive from different countries to participate as solidarians- for example by cooking cleaning and looking after children at different squats for refugees. Medicine and equipment are donated to the Helliniko social clinic from countries across Europe. Solidarity becomes a transnational agenda, and groups and individuals connect and stay in touch with one another and with the refugees they have met in Greece. However,

²²⁵ (Papataxiarchis, 2016, p. 7)

²²⁶ (Confused Volunteers, 2016)

²²⁷ (KeepTalkingGreece, 2016) (Makris, 2016) (Safdar, 2016)

volunteering is understood by solidarians as a very different activity because it lacks the element of a common struggle, the attempts of involving refugees and the sense of horizontalism. However, I would argue that solidarity and volunteering are not necessarily clearly demarcated spheres of activity. Individual Greeks or Internationals who call themselves volunteers may be involved in the same activities as solidarians, and may perceive their own role in similar ways. Moreover, a person's perception of what they are doing, their political motivations and belief systems can change over time. Theo recalls a young man who came to Pedion tou Areos to volunteer,

“He came and said I am a volunteer. I told him we are not volunteers we are people in solidarity. He asked what's the difference? I said you will find out yourself. And at the end of the initiative in Pedion tou Areos he said to the assembly I came as a volunteer and now I am in solidarity and I believe in autonomy and self-organising.” (*Theo, Solidarian*)

Perhaps not everyone necessarily experiences such a clear “conversion”, however people involved in support initiatives are in touch with one another and with the refugees they work with and certainly discuss ideas and goals which can spread as the internationals return home.²²⁸ This movement of international volunteers certainly has some problematic aspects. However, it also embodies a chance and an understanding of larger European or global responsibility for the situation

3.2 Squats “your home on the planet earth”²²⁹

The first squat for refugees in Athens, Notara 26²³⁰, was opened by anarchist and leftist activists early December 2015 in Exarchia. It was meant for vulnerable people, the elderly, women and families. Shortly afterwards Themistokleus 58 was occupied by another group and opened to refugees. The idea was to complement the Notara arrangement by hosting single men. It is described by Greek solidarity members as much more political and uncompromising than Notara. In February, squatters occupied a new space in the Gini building of the Polytechnical university, which was also described to

²²⁸ (Papataxiarchis, 2016, p. 7)

²²⁹ (*Ali, Iran*)

²³⁰ Most of the squats are named after the streets they are on, some are named for the distinctive building they are located in (e.g. the Gini squat, or Scolio)

me as highly political and uncompromisingly anarchist. Finally Carnagos 22 was added and Scolio, also referred to as “the fifth” which was opened one month and a half before the end of April.²³¹

As I was in Athens between 20th of April and 10th of May 2016 solidarians had just opened a new squat, which was highly praised online, in the media and by solidarians themselves for being very clean, well-organised and offering a high standard of living to refugees.²³² Hotel City Plaza had stood empty for years before it was claimed and refurbished by solidarians to house refugees. It retains the layout and exterior of a hotel, with refugees living in former hotel rooms, complete with key cards, running water and electricity. The large hotel kitchen is used to cook communal meals and there are solidarians behind the reception to answer questions, and on 24-hour guard duty in the lobby to watch for members of the far right and police.

Urban squatting is described by Welch as “the occupation of empty buildings without the owners’ permission.”²³³ The buildings can be private or public, and often (as is the case in the Athens squats examined here) have a strong political, mostly anarchist or leftist background. Abellan et al²³⁴ and Chatterton & Pickerill²³⁵ describe how such housing arrangements spring up throughout the economic crisis in Spain both to support those suffering from evictions and lack of affordable housing but also as a form of protest against capitalist appropriation of space.

The squats in Athens examined here are by no means clandestine arrangements and they are tolerated by law enforcement, partly one could argue because they help to solve the problem of accommodation for refugees. In fact, the more publicity and public support a squat can garner, the safer it is from eviction. Welch argues that “the squatters’ greatest defence against forced eviction and criminal charges and prosecution is the general community.”²³⁶ Therefore, she describes, squatters often go to great lengths to get the local community on their side by hosting arts festivals, extending their support to locals

²³¹ More squats likely exist in Athens that I was unaware of and have not included in my research. Moreover, even less official squatting is probably happening which is far less organised

²³² (Connelly, 2016) (Hilton, 2016) (Solidarity2Refugees, 2016)

²³³ (1992 p. 323)

²³⁴ (2012 p. 320)

²³⁵ (2010 p.475)

²³⁶ (1992, p. 332)

or involving them in decision making²³⁷ For squats in Exarchia many locals are already highly invested in solidarity initiatives, and assist in squat activities such as language lessons. Moreover, sympathetic news coverage is essential²³⁸ as this can swing the public opinion. In the case of the City Plaza, enthusiasm for the new squat was palpable, in the media, online and in the solidarity community, and it was a hub of activity.

For refugees, squats offer a more inclusive, warm and human alternative to the official State NGO and Military run camps.

“The most important thing is you don’t want to go to the camps...you can’t do anything in the camps. The most important thing in the squats it’s city centre, there is a life. Yeah, you are just waiting in the camps. Stay in line for food, the bathroom, stand in line..” (*Mohammed, Syria*)

Thus some of the most salient features of the camp- its isolation, its institutionalization and stripping away of agency, of social or political belonging- are consciously challenged by the squat.²³⁹ Most of the squats are in the centre of the city, many of them are in the vibrant community of Exarchia, or in the case of City Plaza, near Victoria square which has also been a central gathering point for refugees for months.²⁴⁰ Living in squats places refugees in the centre of a politically active and locally grounded community. Moreover squatting is by its very nature, something that demands the involvement of people, and emphasises individual commitment, in a way that is almost antithetical to the institutionalised, paternalistic nature of the camp.

“The targeted houses usually are in derelict condition... Thus one of the first activities of the squatters is to clean up and repair the house or building; often it requires repairs that include mending or replacing roofs and windows and replacing walls, floors, sinks, plumbing, and electrical wiring.”²⁴¹ Welch describes that these activities have an empowering and uplifting effect on squatters, as they succeed in making a place for

²³⁷ In Athens, “Scolia” or the fifth invited members of the local community to one of their two weekly assemblies, and took care to inform them of activities.

²³⁸ (Welch, 1992, p. 332)

²³⁹ (Minca, 2015, pp. 74-76)

²⁴⁰ (Gaglias & Seferoglou, 2015)

²⁴¹ (Welch, 1992, p. 325)

themselves and asserting their presence in a material affective ways.²⁴² Thus these are ways not only of materially changing a place, but imbuing it with meaning and emotional value.²⁴³

How far refugees themselves were involved in the physical renovations of buildings was not completely clear in the course of the research. However, in City Plaza at least it was clear that refugees were involved in the daily housekeeping tasks of the squat. Before moving in, refugees would receive information in Arabic, Farsi or English informing them of their responsibilities (cleaning their own room and common areas for example) and the house rules. This was a prerequisite for living in the squat, and a central part of the daily experience of living there. Two refugees I talked to and were hoping to find places there came every day to offer their help.²⁴⁴

“I go to the squat every day to help and then maybe we live there. I will help after that I will maybe take one room and I will cook. I am good. Maybe I will clean the dishes too. I am very good at cleaning.” (*Rabee, Syria*)

They appreciated the ethos of solidarity as well.

“It’s about being as an equal. The whole refugees are volunteering at the squats it’s pretty cool. It’s more level. ..everyone is sharing. Yeah. Self organisation. That makes it more beautiful than the camps..” (*Mohammed, Syria*)

Greek solidarians also emphasised the importance of giving the refugees in squats an element of control over their own situation, and involve them in its day to day tasks. At the same time they felt reluctant to impose ideas about self-organisation.

“You always have to have the concern too to remind people who are institutionalized and in a void. So we should help them by reminding them that they should be organised. Not organise them by our own standards.” (*Yiannis, Solidarian*)

²⁴² (Ibid p. 325)

²⁴³ (Tuan, 1977, p. 4)

²⁴⁴ there is always more demand than space in the squats, and in this case, hotel city plaza was hosting mainly families. The two young men were hoping to improve their chances by translating and helping out at the squat

Many Greek solidarians would like refugees to become involved in the running of the squat, and take on more responsibilities. However, this can prove difficult. While the borders were still open, Athens was a short stopover for most and it can take time to get used to new responsibilities and rules of communal living. Not least, language and cultural barriers make it difficult to get people involved in day to day activities and solidarians do not always go out of their way to include refugees in cooking or cleaning.

Thus there is an essential difference between solidarity squats and “ordinary” squats that are set up because of an acute lack of housing or for political reasons. Those to set up the squats are, overwhelmingly, not those who are meant to live in them. Greek solidarians and international helpers and activists squat an abandoned building specifically for the purpose of housing refugees. In most cases they also run it. Conversations with solidarians suggested that though refugees are invited to attend weekly assemblies in Notara for example, most organisational decisions are made by solidarians themselves. This may be for a variety of reasons: cultural, language barriers (though in Hotel City Plaza at least, there were translations into English, and other squats offer translations into Arabic or Farsi/Dehi), shyness on the part of the refugees, or lack of integrational effort on the part of Greek and international solidarians. One respondent referred to solidarians as “very strong opinioned people”, which may certainly make it difficult to argue. Thus Welch’s characterisation of squatting as an uplifting experience that imbues a place with meaning does not necessarily apply in quite the same way- though it may do so in different ways I will examine later on.

One squat that offered a different perspective was the “fifth” which had been set up in a school building in Exarchia. During my time in Athens it was housing 362 people, roughly twice as many as initially were foreseen.²⁴⁵ It is run and organised completely by the refugees who live there. The man who was instrumental in setting it up, and is the main figure in the squat arrived in Greece from Syria decades before, and has been active in efforts of solidarity with refugees in Lesbos and Athens throughout the past year. He emphasised that the idea from the beginning was not to open something for refugees, but

²⁴⁵ Castro stated that this was due to the overwhelming demand, and a general reluctance to turn people away.

to “open something with refugees, to create an open place where refugees could stay and commute and self-organise.”

The fifth follows the general organisational structure of other squats, with assemblies for decision making and different teams for various squat activities, except that all of this is done by the refugees themselves. The squat has two assemblies, one which includes solidarity individuals from the local community, the other consisting only of the refugees living in the building, which addresses the main practical concerns. There are various services provided by the inhabitants themselves, right down to a health team made up of refugees with medical experience, a theatre group, and even a barbershop. The squat houses a primary school for the children living there, with Syrian teachers who can teach in their own language and pick up in the curriculum where the children left off.²⁴⁶ Children are inscribed in local schools as well, which contributes to the refugee community’s integration into the local community. Additionally, the squat can offer support to refugees who live somewhere else: Families use the washing rooms, bathrooms, and food is shared with visitors. Some visitors simply come because they like to be there, and spend time with the residents. I would suggest that this aspect shows the squat provides a place in the sense of a community that others seek out, and find comfort in. It may also be a source of pride in Welch’s sense for the inhabitants.²⁴⁷ Finally it also shows that a squat can work well, perhaps even better, when it is not run by Greek solidarians but by refugees themselves. However, I would suggest that it may be important to have a “bridge”, someone who is able to relate to the refugees and is also involved in the Greek solidarity community such as Castro.

I argue that refugees who live in squats are able to produce a place in the world for themselves, in material as well as in social terms, in a way that is not possible in official camps. Everyday activities such as cooking and cleaning are a stark contrast to the passivity of waiting for handouts in camps, as Mohammed describes. These ordinary activities, to a certain degree like the fixing up dilapidated buildings in Welch’s Study, can give people the feeling that they are taking some control. Moreover, a kind of routine

²⁴⁶ Castro emphasises that the squat accepts refugees of any nationality of but initially it started with Syrian refugees and there are many Syrians living there

²⁴⁷ it certainly seemed a source of pride for Castro, unfortunately I was not able to speak to the squat’s inhabitants

involving “concrete materialities of rooms, objects, rituals”²⁴⁸ constitutes a process of “homing”²⁴⁹, the emotional and material work of making a home identified by feminist geographers.²⁵⁰ However Ahmed argues that temporality plays an important part in the idea of the home: the idea of the home in the past present and future.²⁵¹ The lack of stability and certainty for the future is certainly one of the factors that can stand in the way of refugees’ getting a feeling of place and home. Moreover more than anything “it takes time to feel at home.”²⁵² In such a situation, it may be more useful to follow Dawson and Rapport’s assertion that “‘home’ comes to be found in behavioural routines and techniques, in styles of dress and address, in memories, myths and stories, in jokes and opinions.”²⁵³ Perhaps a place in the world can be found in oneself, in other people, and a sense of oneself within that fabric as a form of continuity and identity a refugees “make sense of their lives as movement.” Perhaps a place in the world can be found in the “mobile commons”²⁵⁴ created through squats and activities involving internationals, Greek solidarians and refugees but most of all through spaces like the fifth, that refugees are most in control of.

Taking part in the daily activities of squats as residents, or organising them are not the only way refugees become active within the solidarity community. Refugees can also become involved in translating or other forms of activism or volunteering themselves like Mohammed and Raabi, or Ali, a young man from Iran.

“I try to stay in local communities. It is better than staying with refugees. It is good to stay with refugees but it is just for fun. It’s got nothing to do with the next plan, you need to plan for the future. And it is better to help others, so I helped and received something.” (*Ali, Iran*)

Ali was able to have a reciprocal relationship to Greek and international solidarians, as he helped them with their efforts. Moreover Ali felt that becoming a part of the solidarian

²⁴⁸ (Ahmed, et al., 2003, p. 9)

²⁴⁹ (Ibid p.9)

²⁵⁰ (Dyck, 2005, p. 240)

²⁵¹ (2003, p. 9)

²⁵² (Ibid p.9)

²⁵³ (2010) back cover of the book

²⁵⁴ (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 178)

community would help him in the long run -though he was also motivated by a desire to help other refugees, and a friendship with solidarians. I would argue that while the solidarity movement itself is a tactic of resistance(and perhaps survival) in the face of a neoliberal economic system, the Troika's austerity measures and a strict border regime, refugees themselves develop their own tactics within the space of solidarity in a way that sometimes aligns with the solidarian project, and sometimes does not. Raabi and Mohammed, the two young men who are volunteering their time in the Hotel Plaza Squat, do this because they feel a desire to help others and also because they would like to get a room in the squat and know that this will improve their chances. Other refugees help to translate in Piraeus or at Helliniko camp and so are able to make contact with international volunteers and solidarians who can help them on their way. The people living in the squats themselves, even in the fifth, are for the most part not engaging in self-organising or making a political statement in the way that many Greek solidarians are. Instead, it seems that most are simply looking for a safe and clean place to stay before they either move on or get asylum approved and eventually are able to work and rent their own apartments. They are making the best out of their current situation.

3.3 Acts of citizenship²⁵⁵

Refugees living in the fifth squat challenge the institutionalisation of the camp, and especially the isolation it produces. They also challenge the control most solidarians have over day to day running of squats, and produce a different form of "place" for themselves both materially and socially. Refugees living and self-organising in the fifth disrupt the local inhabitants' habitus through their unapologetic, highly involved presence in the community and so claim a certain place within it. In small everyday ways, they question the dominant discourse about themselves-as passive victims, as a drain on resources, or as inherently "other"- and their position as "outcasts". Isin's concept of citizenship necessarily includes strategies of resistance against domination which is enacted through "individuals developing symbolic, social, cultural and economic practices that enable (them) as political agents under new terms (to take) different position in the social space

²⁵⁵ (Barbero, 2012, p. 533)

than those in which they were previously positioned.”²⁵⁶ In this way refugees “constitute themselves as someone to whom the right to have rights is due.”²⁵⁷

Barbero identifies three factors that make up acts of citizenship: citizenship is conceived as dialogical in that the act is a form of conduct across social groups, it expresses a rupture and a social transformation, and it is a form of seeking justice by any means.²⁵⁸ The first two factors apply to refugees living and self-organising in squats- it does not just involve the group of refugees, but solidararians and local as well, and perhaps it affects far right groups too. Moreover, it is a transformation of the community they live in, and changes their position by making them less isolated and have more access to a “community of justice”, and support. However, as I have noted before, choosing to live in a squat would rarely be a consciously political act by the refugee, or a means of seeking justice for the group (while it is certainly seeking justice in the form of dignified and safe living conditions).

Nonetheless, refugees have certainly been involved in acts that more clearly fall into the category of acts of citizenship, for example in Vienna in 2012,²⁵⁹ Berlin 2013²⁶⁰ and on the Greece Macedonian Border²⁶¹ in actions ranging from occupations, hunger strikes, to demonstrations and marches. Similar to the protests of irregular migrants, working without official documentation²⁶² such actions gain an added dimension by exposing the contradictions of liberal citizenship and the assumed citizen-agent equivalency.²⁶³ On the other hand, there are several factors that hinder refugees from taking to the streets and engaging in rights claiming as envisioned by Rancière.

Firstly, refugees are faced with pressing individual concerns, and are generally more preoccupied with their and their families well-being before thinking of collective forms of action.

²⁵⁶ (Ibid, p. 533)

²⁵⁷ (Kesby, 2012)

²⁵⁸ (Barbero, 2012, pp. 534-535)

²⁵⁹ (Refugeecamp Vienna, 2013)

²⁶⁰ (Blockupy Plattform Berlin , 2013)

²⁶¹ (BBC, 2015)

²⁶² (Barbero, 2012, p. 529) (Krause, 2008, p. 331)

²⁶³ (Johnson, 2015, p. 954)

“People at the moment they don’t give a shit about self organising and all that stuff . They just want to move, seek asylum and start working and be as they were. Then you can judge if they want to become political or not.” (*Theo, solidararian*)

Many of the solidararians I talked to would have liked to have seen refugees become involved in more direct political actions together with them. They were aware however, that this was not their priority, and especially that they were far more vulnerable, and were trying to avoid any conflict with law enforcement. At the same time they saw the problematic of advocating on behalf of refugees through protests or political actions.

“By doing things without the refugees you are always in a position of power. You are not horizontal with them. “ (*Theo, Solidararian*)

“of course, thats the thing, the problem. It’s easy for you and me to discuss have these brilliant or stupid ideas. But we have to count the refugee. We do it because of him, but if its to fulfil our political ego its a problematic situation already. ..of course they have more to lose.” (*Theo, Solidararian*)

Refugees themselves may feel apprehensive about openly protesting for various reasons. A keen awareness of their own vulnerability and deportability at the hands of law enforcement, or the difficulties this may cause for their asylum process can be a powerful factor. Moreover, the young men from Syria I talked to were hoping to go back home as soon as possible. Mohammed did not see Greece (or any country in Europe) as a country he had a political say or stake in.

“You can’t. In my situation you can’t. It’s not my country. `Cause it’s not my country, we don’t have the right to go to protest. Some kind of activity that does not belong to me. Yeah, if they want to help me, I appreciate that. If the people who own the land want to protect me or give me some kind of hand I appreciate that but I don’t have the right to make any kind of activities that are not available to me as a refugee...it’s not my country, I don’t belong here.” (*Mohammed, Syria*)

“let me tell you the first of my plans. I will go to one of these countries of relocation and continue my studies. I will work, will make friends and when the war is finished in Syria I will go back. Because I love my country. I love my city

and I love my bed and my house. I will have my dog. This is my future.” (*Rabee, Syria*)

Nevertheless, there are instances where refugees have indeed mobilised and protested on their own or alongside with the solidarians. March 30th, a group of 1000-1500 people, solidarians and refugees together marched through central Athens in protest against the EU-Turkey agreement.²⁶⁴ In the Island of Chios about 300 people broke out of the hotspot where they were being detained. They walked several Kilometres through the port of Chios in protest to advocate for their rights of movement both inside the island, and for the right to leave the island.²⁶⁵ A further example are illicit, or attempted border crossing protests and protests, and sit ins in the camp of Idomeni.²⁶⁶

Johnson argues that protests by noncitizens, precisely because of their vulnerability and deportability become unexpected, but all the more powerful.²⁶⁷ What these instances have in common is that they are all directed at one specific thing that blocks refugees’ onwards journey, demonstrating with these acts that the pieces of legislature, the border fence, the detention centre have painful human consequences. The mere existence of the sprawling, unregulated and desperate camps of Piraeus or Idomeni show clearly the human consequences of the border regime. These are images that shock and distress onlookers. I would argue that one of the most powerful ways refugees claim their rights, is simply by refusing not to be seen. Refusing to be quiet. Refugees embody Arendt’s two central tenets of the political: they act, and they speak.

3.4 Refugee Radio: Bridging the gap

In this section we shift our focus away from Athens and the area of Exarchia, to the city of Hamburg, more specifically to Kampnagel, a cultural centre in the city, it is home to many cultural projects, among them the Migrantpolitan house, a small space for exchange and action of migrants, Hamburg locals and travellers.²⁶⁸ There I met Larry, a refugee

²⁶⁴ (Karagiannopoulos & Tagaris, 2016) (USnews, 2016)

²⁶⁵ (Ekathimerini, 2016)

²⁶⁶ (BBC, 2016(a)) (BBCnews, 2016(b)) (BBCnews, 2016(a))

²⁶⁷ (Johnson, 2015, p. 855)

²⁶⁸ „Ein transnationaler Begegnungs- und Aktionsraum für Migrant*innen, Hamburger*innen und Weltenbummler*innen.“ (Kampnagel, 2015)

from Nigeria and a founding member and editor in chief of the Refugee Radio Network, which broadcasts from Kampnagel across Germany, Europe and the world.

The network is an independent, self-organised social initiative led and operated by refugees living in Hamburg. The group runs an online community radio program with the aim to connect people, and share stories from refugees and for refugees throughout Europe.²⁶⁹ But the goal, Larry explained is also to change the local perceptions of refugees and to provide a counter narrative, and a voice to refugees in the media landscape in general. Founded in 2014 it has grown exponentially, and has received attention from local, national and international media.²⁷⁰ The radio is multilingual and has programs in Deri, in Pashtu and in Arabic among others. The scheme for the online radio includes world music, a migrant news hour, an African news hour, live poetry readings from refugees, a refugee women's show, and a show for refugee kids. It is an eclectic mix of different cultures, and languages which flow together and often merge within the same program. In the refugee voices program Afghani poetry is translated into German, interviews are done first in Arabic or English and then translated into German and the host repeats short phrases in different languages to add effect. The radio network has expanded and now also produces an online refugee voices TV show, Larry tells me they are thinking of doing a reality TV show as well. For him, the main thing is to give refugees a platform where they themselves can talk about the topics that affect them:

“we are the refugees, we know what we represent, we know, it's our problem and we are the ones who know how to tackle this problem.”

This is a unique and extremely important contribution to the media landscape, especially in Germany, where the topic of refugees has dominated public discourse, and polarised political standpoints.

Germany played a pivotal role in 2015 and 16 as refugees arrived in large numbers and many European countries closed their borders. For many months it pursued a policy of open borders and the Dublin regulations were temporarily suspended for Syrian refugees,

²⁶⁹ (RefugeeRadioNetwork, 2015(a))

²⁷⁰ (RefugeeRadioNetwork, 2015(b))

and their asylum applications were processed in Germany instead. Angela Merkel's now famous statement: "wir schaffen das"²⁷¹ came to represent a policy that was unique in the European Union.²⁷² By October 2015 Germany had admitted more refugees than any other country in Europe, and it is now home to over one million refugees.²⁷³ Merkel's refugee policy was carried by a wave of enthusiasm as locals engaged in voluntary activity to support the new arrivals during the summer and autumn months especially- a phenomenon which gave rise to a new term in German language: *Willkommenskultur*-a culture of welcome.

Holmes and Castaneda argue that there is a struggle over meaning, legitimization and power in representations of the refugee crisis, specifically through the lens of Germany.²⁷⁴ Thus the hospitality is ambivalent and "uniquely nuanced and conditioned by memories (and some present day realities) of xenophobia and fascism."²⁷⁵ Moreover, some see Germany as having to take a leading role in the European union due to its relative wealth and its leadership role in supporting austerity measures in the Greek crisis.²⁷⁶

Nonetheless "it is impossible to ignore the role of the mass media in influencing public and elite political attitudes towards asylum and migration. The mass media can set agendas and frame debates. They provide the information which citizens use to make sense of the world and their place within it."²⁷⁷ Thus the role of the media has been extremely important, as narratives of solidarity and the personal stories of suffering of the refugee on the one hand²⁷⁸ compete with narratives that are less positive, and distinctions that are made between the deserving refugee, and the undeserving opportunistic migrants posing as refugees.²⁷⁹ Filipovic describes how mainstream German media produced a wave positive stories about German generosity to refugee arrivals during the late summer and early autumn, celebrating the *Willkommenskultur*²⁸⁰. This changed over time,

²⁷¹ (Bannas, 2015)

²⁷² (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016, p. 14)

²⁷³ (Aljazeera, 2016(b))

²⁷⁴ (2016, p. 12)

²⁷⁵ (Ibid, p. 14)

²⁷⁶ (Ibid, p. 15)

²⁷⁷ (Berry, et al., 2016, p. 6)

²⁷⁸ (Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016, p. 19)

²⁷⁹ (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016, pp. 16-17)

²⁸⁰ (Filipovic, 2015)

especially after the New Years attacks in Köln, when the well-worn, racialized narrative of Muslim men as a threat to German women and western freedoms gained ground.²⁸¹ However, the way certain perceptions about refugees are formed can be far subtler. Holmes and Castaneda point to how specific words or figures of speech can themselves tilt perceptions a certain way. For example metaphors of water such as ‘flood’, ‘tide’ or ‘flow’ frequently emerge in connection with refugees and reproduce a fear of an unspecified European mainstream that would drown or be overwhelmed by difference.²⁸² Using either the term ‘migrant’ or ‘refugee’ also has different connotations and effects- the term ‘migrant crisis’ subtly delegitimises a call for protection, and refugee crisis reinforces them.²⁸³ These small semantic differences matter considerably. In a content analysis of press coverage of refugees in five European countries (Spain, Italy, Germany, the UK and Sweden) in 2014 and 2015 Berry et al found that there were significant differences in the main themes, language and description surrounding the issue of refugees between countries. For example media outlets in Germany and Sweden were more likely to use the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ whereas media in Italy, the UK and Spain the term was migrant or immigrant.²⁸⁴ Moreover, Berry et al note that German media has been comparatively sympathetic, as have many official political figures -though the tide is certainly changing and negative, racist or xenophobic voices are gaining ground²⁸⁵- partly because “the expression of such sentiment (anti-immigrant or refugee sentiment) in public speech by elected representatives still remains somewhat taboo”^{286 287}

Nonetheless de La Rosa argues that public statements made by German politicians are dominated by an understanding of refugees as a problem. At the same time in mainstream

²⁸¹ (Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016, p. 28)

²⁸² (2016, p. 18)

²⁸³ (Ibid, p. 16)

²⁸⁴ (Berry, et al., 2016, p. 1)

²⁸⁵ (Strickland, 2016)

²⁸⁶ (Berry, et al., 2016, p. 235)

²⁸⁷ By comparison Hemmelmann and Wagner show that the facebook sites of politicians do contain clearly negative opinions about refugees or the reception of refugees in Germany-especially those of right wing politicians like the AfD, but also the CSU, a conservative party. Moreover, trust in classic, mainstream media -as well as mainstream parties- is decreasing. (Hemmelmann & Wegner, 2016 p. 20) Strong feelings of distrust towards mainstream media, the concept of a “Lügenpresse”-literally, liarmedia-that hushes up and hides crimes committed by refugees or negative consequences of the refugees arriving in Germany has been promoted aggressively by the far right online. (Filipovic, 2015)

media one can observe an attempt to frame refugees not as a problem but as an economic benefit to German society. However, she points out that even this is problematic as it imposes a differentiation between the economically desirable refugee (the young, well-educated and healthy) versus the economically undesirable (the old, disabled or those not fitting the job market).²⁸⁸

In addition to certain phrases or words, the medium of photography has been highly influential in the media discourse on Refugees. Images of families living in camps in Calais or Idomeni, on the move or disembarking from boats among the waves on the island of Lesbos can create a feeling of urgency and intimacy that few other mediums can. The picture of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on a Turkish beach sent emotional shockwaves throughout the world. It was an image that "symbolically transformed reality"²⁸⁹ and completely changed the discourse and public perception of the tragedy of Syrian refugees. Such images are extremely powerful. But at the same time social inequality can be linked to inequality in representation, production and consumption of images. As a less powerful group, refugees have little control over how they are represented.²⁹⁰

Refugees' stories are being reproduced by mainstream media, their images are used to spark compassion or outrage, they are discussed by politicians and journalists and quoted in one line or two to make a point. What was missing, in the media landscape were the voices of refugees themselves, published and framed in a way they could control. This is something Larry, and the other founders of refugee radio recognised.

"there was a necessity for us to start something like that in Germany because the media were portraying refugees in a negative way, calling people coming terrorist, suicide bombers and so on and so forth. Based on that narrative civil society also didn't know so much, that was a shock for us."

"(Its) for everybody, for both (German people and refugees). That is why we say we like to bridge the gap. The gap is information and conversation. Information

²⁸⁸ (De La Rosa, 2015)

²⁸⁹ (Garcia-Matilla, et al., 2016, p. 1989)

²⁹⁰ (Ibid, p. 1994)

means everything that has to do with telling stories, with engaging. So yes, it's empowering refugees and also informing society, empowering society.”

For Larry information is key. He argues that people are unaware of the realities facing refugees and so are easily misled. For example, he mentions that many Germans didn't think refugees could own laptops or smartphones, and viewed such things as luxury items (in fact, smartphones are essential tools to help refugees plan their journeys and stay in touch with family members and friends²⁹¹ far from a luxury, they are a necessity) and this fact played into the hands of the right wing. However, he says such attitudes are changing, and “people are learning.” He also wants to inform potential refugees who are still in their home countries or en-route about the hardships and realities of coming to Europe.

The motto of the radio “love freedom love life” shows clearly that it wants to promote, as Larry puts it, a positive attitude to things. At the same time, the many interviews and discussions featured by Refugee Radio clearly aim for a realistic representation of life in Germany for refugees.

“I am looking step by step to be normal in the normal life. At the moment I live in the Asyl Heim²⁹² and I am looking to have work. And if you are looking to have work you need to follow the bureaucracy...we are looking to be active people do something useful to ourselves and something useful for society here.” *Interviewee on Refugee Connect* ²⁹³

Moreover, the programs discuss the difficulties they face, especially racism and discrimination.

„there are first class immigrants and second class immigrants. No one is afraid of Japanese people going to universities all over the world to learn some German, English or other languages. But when people see black people they say who paid you to be here? What are you doing here?.. We are not seen as people who can go

²⁹¹ (Worley, 2016)

²⁹² Official accommodation for asylum seekers

²⁹³ (Refugee Radio Network: Refugee Connect, 2015)

somewhere to learn.” *A.D. Junior, a guest on a show about “migration and the fear factor”*²⁹⁴

Larry believed that programs featured in Refugee Radio Network meet the urgent need from refugees to tell their stories.

“the Afghan Voices for example²⁹⁵ the Afghan refugees they were here only 6 months, 3 months, and they became political one way or the other and they approached me. They called me in fact someone from the afghan community... An awful lot of people say they want to be part of it.”

They wanted to talk about what they are facing, about their living conditions, the problems in the camps, the discrimination along ethnic lines. Larry knows that these are entrenched and familiar issues for refugees in Germany, and nonetheless it is important to address them.

“It’s not new, it’s institutional and it’s been there for decades. It may never change, but there is nothing wrong in fighting back.”

I would argue that this way of phrasing things is highly significant. Larry understands the programs on the radio as an act of defiance, as a part of a struggle. On the radio the phrase “la lutte continue” or “la lotta continua”²⁹⁶ is repeated often. If the habitual conception of refugees, and the way they are portrayed by mainstream media is a part of the “police”, the status quo, Refugee Radio is its disruption and as such constitutes the right of refugees to be a part of the public discourse, not just as the object of discussion, but as participants.²⁹⁷

“ ‘cause we are one of the few if not the only refugee run project in Deutschland at least. So that has got no white face on it. The people in society, not all of them, but many are not comfortable with that they always want to tell us our story. We

²⁹⁴ (Refugee Radio Network TV, 2016)

²⁹⁵ Afghan Voices is a regular segment on the radio

²⁹⁶ The struggle continues

²⁹⁷ (Rancière, 2006, p. 301)

have a system which has to do with colonisation and imperialism that wants always to be right. You know, they want us to follow their narrative.” *Larry*

Not letting others “tell us our story”, taking control of the narrative involves a broader act of resistance against global structures of neo-imperialism and institutional racism. At the same time, the radio can be seen to conform to the three characteristics of acts of citizenship, according to Barbero: It expresses a social transformation, in that those discussed as a ‘problem’ are now a part of the conversation; It is a form of justice seeking, as those involved in the radio see themselves as a part of a struggle against discrimination and racism; It is also dialogical, because it seeks to engage the German population as well.²⁹⁸ Refugee Radio is also dialogical in that it engages with mainstream media, by including some of the programmes in mainstream media. Likewise, some of their programs are played on other radio stations like Radio Free Europe, on various German and Italian radio stations and also on one Austrian radio station. They incorporate programmes from mainstream media into their slots as well, ensuring a wider audience for them and at the same time attracting new listeners.

Mainstream media embodies what Couldry terms “media power”- “the particular concentration of symbolic power that media represents”²⁹⁹ Mainstream media is in the privileged position of defining and framing realities.³⁰⁰ Within that position of power, there is often profound inequality and power imbalances in society itself are reproduced, as the more powerful are better able to represent their own conception of social realities.³⁰¹ Media power draws its influence precisely from its ordinariness, it’s ubiquitous and normalised nature. Couldry argues that belief in what we are told by newspapers, radios, on television and the belief in others belief and the actions we take based on these beliefs all become so routine that we barely notice it³⁰² Here, he follows Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power: Bourdieu sees power as something that is create culturally and symbolically and is legitimised over and over again through imposed

²⁹⁸ (Barbero, 2012, pp. 534-535)

²⁹⁹ (Couldry, 2000, p. 3)

³⁰⁰ (Ibid, p. 7)

³⁰¹ (Ibid, p. 8)

³⁰² (Ibid, p. 5)

structures and individuals' agency-through 'habitus' the socialised norms or direction that lead actions and thinking. It is something that is created and recreated unnoticeably and in an offhand way.³⁰³

Geographers describe a similar phenomenon where media consumption becomes part of a 'habit' or routine. The routine act of reading the same newspaper everyday becomes a 'habit field' and so a form of place.³⁰⁴ Similarly, radio broadcasting is designed to fill each day, all day, reliably accompanying the listener through perhaps their daily domestic activities or throughout their habit of commuting every day to and from work.³⁰⁵ As repetition and habits are deeply connected to place-making, I would argue, so is media consumption. This may also be the case on a larger scale of a sense of place or identity. Barnett connects media power to the construction of modern nationalism, and the understanding of the self as embedded in a national experience or whole, as they become part "practices of ritual sharing which enable the emergence of a sense of self based on imagining oneself engaged in the same activity as anonymous and absent others at the same time".³⁰⁶ For example individuals share the idea that a whole 'nation' anxiously awaits the outcome of a football match relayed to them through the television.

Thus we can understand the insertion of Refugee Radio, the many non-white faces and new narratives, as a disruption of the former 'habitus'-the former everyday rituals, and taken for granted structures of thinking, in particular about national identity. In the case of Germany, being German is something that is reproduced by the symbolic power of mainstream German media. The *Willkommenskultur* became a part of that for some time at least, while at the same time the idea that refugees are a problem to be overcome equally became a part of social reality because it was framed in this way by within the public discourse. As a medium that is completely in the hands of refugees, Refugee Radio Network can change this in several ways. On the one hand, I would argue, that it is a disruption and an act of citizenship. On the other hand, the radio inserts the refugee narrative in the public sphere and so changes it, while also giving refugees themselves a

³⁰³ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170)

³⁰⁴ (Moore, 2004, p. 19)

³⁰⁵ (Ibid, p. 24)

³⁰⁶ (Barnett, 2004, p. 62)

sphere with which they can identify, a ‘habitus’ that they can become a part of. This especially because the unique thing about Refugee Radio is that it aims to be inclusive of so many different people and identities and nationalities, melding them together into a multifaceted refugee perspective.

Perhaps we can follow Keane’s suggestion that “the public sphere is better understood as a complex mosaic of different sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres.”³⁰⁷ As a part of the mosaic, Refugee Radio is still relatively small, but it overlaps with mainstream media, and engages with it, and I would argue will perhaps in the long run change mainstream media itself.

“how many black faces do you see on your mainstream media? In my opinion that is what they are all afraid of. They are afraid of diversity, of change of multiculturalism... But the minute we cross that line the fear will be eliminated. I think that will change, it’s just a matter of time.” *Larry*

The important thing, Larry emphasises is to be creating things, and putting them into the world, this doesn’t have to be in the form of a radio, it can be in print, in photograph or music: “as long as we are visible”. He is not alone in this idea, projects and online platforms for creative ventures of refugees are proliferating.³⁰⁸ 33-year old Nadir from Afghanistan who has lived in Athens for 13 years is an amateur street photographer, and publishes his photographs in an online magazine which is a platform for both Greek and migrant contributors. “If you are a migrant people don’t look at you the same, they look down on you. That’s why I write and show pictures. To show we are the same, we can discuss problems.”³⁰⁹ Being a part of a public discussion is paramount.

The Refugee Radio Network in Hamburg has a sister studio in Italy. It also has close connections to a radio Jungala-a similar project run by refugees and helpers in Calais. Larry sees himself -and Refugee Radio Network- as part of a network of refugees, civil society, NGOs, and support groups across Europe-an informal web of connections between individuals who share a similar worldview and aim. Such connections are made

³⁰⁷ (1995, p. 8)

³⁰⁸ (Hölter, 2016) (KuB Berlin, 2016) (UNIS Vienna, 2015)

³⁰⁹ The Magazine website: <http://www.solomon.gr/#!/magazine/zpolq>

possible through new technologies of communication, which have also profoundly shaped refugees' journeys and experiences. In different ways social media has become a part of that 'framing of reality' for refugees and for the local communities' perception of refugees. Barnett puts forward the concept of the 'communicative spaces' which includes both spaces of communication through new forms of online media, as well as new spaces of sociability and interaction through technology. These "transform the ways in which ordinary people engage in a wider world of publicly significant processes and events, as well as transforming the nature and meanings of those processes and events themselves."³¹⁰ For example, the picture of Aylan Kurdi was published, circulated and reacted to online³¹¹ on Facebook as well as through more established media sites, and blogs. As an integral part of the mobile commons³¹² virtual spaces such as chatrooms, Facebook, emails, or WhatsApp help refugees by giving them information about routes, survival tactics and keeping them connected to family and friends. People are involved with different groups of people and perform different identities to them-thus experiencing multiple social realities at once in virtual space.³¹³ Gillespie et al point out that "Despite the high level of media reporting about refugees, there is inadequate provision of reliable news and information for refugees."³¹⁴ Thus refugees often use these virtual spaces and networks to find the information they need, and to navigate their journeys or their daily lives in a new country.³¹⁵

Virtual spaces can contribute to acts of citizenship. Witteborn describes how refugee protests in Berlin were linked closely to political mobilisation on social networking sites and blogs.³¹⁶ Solidarity initiatives also rely on Facebook sites, where people regularly post questions and information and calls for volunteers or donations. A volunteer on Lesbos described how NGOs activities were coordinated over WhatsApp, similarly a refugee who translated at Piraeus port also told me that he and his friends organised as a team of translators over WhatsApp. Thus these new means of communication are important for

³¹⁰ (Barnett, 2004, p. 73)

³¹¹ (Garcia-Matilla, et al., 2016)

³¹² (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 190)

³¹³ (Moore, 2004, p. 23)

³¹⁴ (2016, p. 5)

³¹⁵ (Ibid, p. 7)

³¹⁶ (Witteborn, 2015, p. 351)

soldiarions, volunteers and refugees, and for connecting a “network” in the sense that Larry sees it.

A virtual network can perhaps lay the groundwork for a more physical and tangible movement. From the 26th to the 18th of February 2016 Kampnagel hosted an international conference for refugees. More than 2000 people and filled up the conference halls. Refugees, supporters and activists met up with the aim to “discuss, network and share their knowledge”³¹⁷ Larry organised a workshop on media, both giving guidance on technical know-how, as well as discussing alternative forms of media in general. This level of organisation points to a potential for perhaps a more formalized network, and the effect this could have on rights-claiming for refugees. Refugees may be in the process of “creating a new scene, writing a new script”³¹⁸ not just for themselves, but for the populations around them, and the very concept of human rights.

Conclusion of Discussion

For Arendt, speech discloses who someone is-“his qualities, gifts, talents and shortcomings”³¹⁹- as opposed to what they are, the mere description assigned to them when they are in complete silence and perfect passivity. Through “speech”-or through photography, theatre productions, poetry, or radio programs, creations that are shared with others- refugees are no longer a ‘what’ (a refugee) but a ‘who’ (a person). By self-organising in squats, by participating in protests, by networking and creating their own forms of media and making public their creative endeavours refugees counter the passivity Arendt associates with the loss of the right to have rights, the loss of social or political significance. They resist the denial of a place in the world, imposed on them by their lack of citizenship and the vulnerability that comes along with it. They create a place in the world, in material ways in squats and in less tangible ways through communities and networks and routines. This contradicts Arendt’s characterisation of the stateless as “outcasts by definition”³²⁰ and as inherently innocent.

³¹⁷ (Refugee Conference , 2016)

³¹⁸ (Barbero, 2012, p. 544)

³¹⁹ (Arendt, 1958, p. 179)

³²⁰ (Arendt, 1968, p. 283)

But more than that by doing these things refugees disrupt the habitus and the status quo, and engage in acts that can be defined, following Isin, as acts of citizenship. This is not necessarily the case in all of the scenarios discussed here: in many of the squats for example, refugees are simply trying to make the best out of their situation. Additionally, being in a state of transit, as a vulnerable deportable person, as well as a feeling of nonbelonging may all discourage refugees from engaging in these clear acts. This is something members of the solidararian community in Greece are aware of, even as they are wary of advocating on behalf of refugees rather than together with them. They also acknowledge that the running of squats is mainly done by solidarians. However refugees have succeeded in establishing a self-organised squat in a more conscious act of place-making.

In Hamburg refugees engage in many ways and the Refugee Radio Network has been highly successful. I would suggest that perhaps this has something to do with the situation of those living there. For most refugees in Germany they are in their destination country, whereas in Greece -at least until the EU-Turkey deal and the sealing off of borders to the north- this has not been the case. Perhaps having arrived at their destination would make refugees more invested in rights formation in their new situation, as they would feel like they are building something more lasting. Moreover, refugees as a vulnerable group may be more likely to choose actions that are safer-putting on a radio show puts you less at risk than staging a protest, or even squatting in the way it is done in the fifth. Finally, as refugees like Larry or Castro act as bridges between local communities of support and refugees, and establish and grow their projects. They could make it easier for others to start similar initiatives and build on their success and experience. At the same time transnational and virtual networks of support themselves can strengthen refugees` rights claiming and point to a potential new ways of securing Human Rights for refugees.

4. A New Law on Earth³²¹

Arendt's assertion that "human dignity needs a new guarantee, a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth"³²² is as true today as it was in the aftermaths of the First and Second World Wars. Human rights as a concept, and the international instruments and mechanisms that developed to defend that concept have proven insufficient to ensure that refugees are subject to the same justice and rights as citizens of the state.³²³ In fact, Larking argues, the myth of human rights obscures the reality of political inequality and "induces a form of moral amnesia, allowing political inequality to act as a marker of moral inequality. The perverse result... is that those forced to rely on their natural or human rights are actually treated as unnatural and inhuman."³²⁴

Citizenship remains the most reliable mechanism to guarantee rights. In the understanding of democratic civic republicanism these rights would ideally develop, and be guarded in a community through the civic participation of citizens as equals. This universal level of political engagement is wishful thinking in current liberal democracies, nevertheless political involvement is intimately tied to rights formation and preservation, especially for groups who are traditionally excluded from the demos. One of the problems relating to human rights, Larking argues, is that it ignores the political achievement involved in constituting individuals as equals.³²⁵ Thus according refugees human rights may come to be seen as a moral act that a state can commit at will, rather than a political or legal necessity. The special vulnerability of refugees, according to Arendt occurs because without a political community or a place in the world they do not have the "right to have rights". As a result anything they receive is a charity not a right and "nothing they think matters anyhow".³²⁶ However, the research in this thesis aims to show that refugees are far removed from the innocent, passive and apolitical subjects Arendt described. They engage with local communities, resist the isolation and institutionalisation of the camp by

³²¹ (Arendt, 1968, p. 9)

³²² (Ibid, p.9)

³²³ (Larking, 2014, p. 135)

³²⁴ (Ibid, pp. 67-68)

³²⁵ (Larking, 2014, p. 44)

³²⁶ (Arendt, 1968, p. 296)

living in squats, they protest and they go on air to prove that what they think does in fact matter. They make a home for themselves within communities of solidarity and within actual cities and places, challenging the state of transience and vulnerability that the border regime forces upon them.

In the Arendtian sense therefore, refugees are in fact strikingly political. For Arendt human beings are political when they insert themselves into the public sphere through speech and action. The public sphere comes into being through human plurality, and this precisely is what makes it indispensable: plurality is more likely to disclose reality than minds in isolation.³²⁷ Action “is a very broad category of human activity that covers interactions with other people that are not matters of routine behaviour but require personal initiative.”³²⁸ To act, for Arendt is to “set something into motion”³²⁹ and it becomes relevant through speech. Moreover, as discussed in the preceding chapter, speech reveals the agent of the action. An action without a name, without a “who” attached to it, is meaningless.³³⁰ Thus action and speech both arise from human plurality and disclose the uniqueness of every individual. “A life without speech and without action ... is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.”³³¹

Setting something into motion can also be applied to the concept of the political as it calls to mind Rancière’s understanding of politics as a rupture of the pervading social logic by a “surplus subject” which does not have a part in the police.³³² Similarly, Isin’s acts of citizenship as acts that challenge the habitus are no “matters of routine behaviour,”³³³ The preceding chapters have illustrated that the actions refugees are engaging in can be understood, with some reservations, in both these frameworks. While perhaps refugees constitute themselves as citizens following Isin’s definition, this does not change the intrinsic contradiction between the exclusive nature of citizenship rights or the

³²⁷ (Canovan, 1992, p. 115)

³²⁸ (Canovan, 1992, p. 131)

³²⁹ (Arendt, 1958, p. 177)

³³⁰ (Ibid, p. 181)

³³¹ (Arendt, 1958, p. 176)

³³² (Kesby, 2012)

³³³ (Canovan, 1992, p. 131)

contradictions of territorial citizenship and human rights. It does not change the fact that the punitive border regime has a steep human cost, and threatens the life and dignity not just of those at Europe's borders, but also in an indirect way of those still safely within its citizenship protection. What will happen when the polity chooses to strip away the citizenship from other groups it may deem undesirable?³³⁴ Frontiers themselves are radically antidemocratic as long as they are applied at one group's discretion only, and those who are affected by them have no influence on how they are administered or the rules that apply.³³⁵

For Cohen refugees embody the inevitable tension between democracy and justice³³⁶-or, equally, between republican citizenship and human rights. A democratic closed society may decide to withhold rights from outsiders, such as refugees, or from minorities within it. At the same time democracy and justice legitimise one another. "Democracy cannot guarantee justice, nor can moral justification appeal to some absolute truth that exists independently of consensus."³³⁷ The tension between the two concepts cannot be completely overcome, however, Cohen argues that the exclusionary dimension of citizenship can be tempered if it is divorced from exclusive territoriality or absolute sovereignty of the body that confers citizenship. Moreover citizenship has to have at its core certain universalistic concepts of justice, which guarantee the treatment of outsiders.³³⁸

Larking puts forward a more concrete suggestion: the right to have rights could be realised on the basis of membership of a global community in which a whole range of rights are specified and secured³³⁹ through a global citizenship convention. While membership of a global community does not equal membership within particular states, it would give those legal personality and political agency who would otherwise be treated as legal anomalies within states³⁴⁰, and the rights they would have would no longer be understood as rights

³³⁴ (Larking, 2014, pp. 49-65)

³³⁵ (Balibar, 2003, p. 43)

³³⁶ (1999, p. 265)

³³⁷ (Ibid, p. 265)

³³⁸ (Ibid, p. 251)

³³⁹ (2014, p. 161)

³⁴⁰ (Larking, 2014, pp. 164-166)

of exception that can be overridden anytime³⁴¹ (p 149). At the same time political engagement as equals in a global human community, as Larking sees it, would have to be organised in a democratic way whether this includes a global system of liberal states or a politics that while transnational is “centred in concrete localities” such as local communities.³⁴² Arendt suggests that an opportunity for better democratic governance lies in council systems, as they were organised in the February revolution of 1917 in Russia, or in 1918 and 1919 when in Germany *Arbeiter-* and *Soldatenräte*³⁴³ constituted themselves in the short lived Bavarian *Räterepublik*.³⁴⁴ (Arendt, 1963) (p266) For Arendt these councils functioned as public spaces where people could discuss and plan action in a way that was very different from the party system of modern liberal democracies. “the remarkable thing about the councils was of course not only that they crossed all party lines, that members of the various parties sat in them together but that such party membership played no role whatsoever.”³⁴⁵

This brings to mind the assembly of Syntagma Square in Athens, or the weekly assemblies in the squats which include inhabitants, solidararians and the local community to discuss issues together. These initiatives show a level of individual democratic involvement in the public sphere, a sense of responsibility for the world we share that, Arendt and Larking both believe has been absent in liberal democracies.³⁴⁶

Theo described how he believed self-organising, rather than protesting or pressuring the government, was the way to improve situations like that of the stranded refugees in Greece.

“..any political action is an action that demands...the naivety of these political gestures of just going on the streets and having demos and demanding always stop the pollution stop this or the other doing this or that always demanding. ..I mean all the anarchist section that is creating squats they don’t say, ok lets ask the

³⁴¹ (ibid, p. 149)

³⁴² (Sassen, 2005, p. 92)

³⁴³ worker and soldier councils

³⁴⁴ (Arendt, 1963, p. 266)

³⁴⁵ (Ibid, p. 267)

³⁴⁶ (Larking, 2014, p. 158)

government. They do it because it's in their political beliefs and they do it" (*Theo, Solidarian*)

Self-organising is an integral part of all solidarity initiatives, be they for Greek citizens or refugees. Alternative forms of political community emerge between refugees and solidarians, as they organise through assemblies. Cabot argues that this can be understood as a new practice of citizenship that is not grounded in a relationship to the state.³⁴⁷ Following this idea refugees would have a type of citizenship, and attendant rights and responsibilities within solidarity initiatives, though they do not have them within the state. I would point out, however, that it seems refugees are often not as involved as solidarians are in the running of initiatives (for various reasons) and would not be involved in the creation and maintenance of rights in the Marshallian sense, in the same way. Additionally communities of solidarity only spring up where and because the services by the state are insufficient. Phevos hoped that collectives and solidarity initiatives would proliferate and become a main part of Greek life, involving both Greeks and refugees. However, he conceded that such a radical change became possible because of the dire economic situation of the country.

"Greece is fucked up enough, yeah. In a country that is successful enough there would not be space for that. The.. population has a set up they are ok with."
(*Phevos, solidarian*)

Moreover, for refugees at least, their situation of vulnerability stemming from their statelessness and their right to have rights is directly linked to EU and state policies. Therefore simply setting up alternative structures can only help but not be an alternative to equal participation in the political community that has jurisdiction over them.

However, refugees can and do fight for their right to be a part of the public sphere, they engage in acts of citizenship, and they engage in acts that set them up as individuals with the rights to participate in the public sphere and have some say in their treatment. Kesby points out that there is a central weakness in Rancière's account. For Rancière the rights a person has depend on whether they can demonstrate that they are a subject of the rights

³⁴⁷ (Cabot, 2016, p. 160)

they are denied and that they do in fact belong equally to the community they are excluded from. This, however, “risks excluding from his (Rancière’s) account those who do not have the capacity to militate for their equal treatment.”³⁴⁸ The mentally disabled for example may be likely to be excluded from certain rights if they could not act or protest in Rancière’s sense. Refugees too are constrained in their actions as they are trying to avoid deportation, are unfamiliar with the country and perhaps feel they have no political say (as described in the chapters above). This makes a “community of justice”³⁴⁹ even more crucial to rights claiming. Refugees constitute themselves as subjects of the “right to have rights” together with citizens who can actively support them. Thus “solidarity as it emerges from a practice of politics that asserts noncitizenship as an independent and not contingent subjectivity places at its heart a responsibility to act for both the noncitizen and for the citizen expanding the normative political community to include multiple categories.”³⁵⁰ Those who expand the political community include both the Greek citizens and citizens from across Europe and beyond who have participated in “communities of justice” in their own countries or have come to help in Greece who have taken on this responsibility to act.

Establishing a global community based on a system of councils and a form of global citizenship may be a tall order. Instead perhaps it would be possible to decouple the different aspects of citizenship and deterritorialise them to a certain extent, as Cohen suggests. In such a system perhaps the undemocratic nature of borders could be improved by allowing those under a political community’s jurisdiction to contribute to it as equals. A first step could be to include refugees in local, national and European politics.³⁵¹ This would have to be done in a real, and tangible way: equal participation in politics should be a right, not a further charitable concession. Perhaps initiatives like the Refugee Conference in Hamburg could be the forebears of a more organised form of representation for refugees. Cohen also emphasises this decoupled citizenship and resulting policies should be oriented along “universalistic concepts of justice.”³⁵² While human rights

³⁴⁸ (Kesby, 2012)

³⁴⁹ (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, pp. 191-192)

³⁵⁰ (Johnson, 2015, p. 961)

³⁵¹ (De La Rosa, 2015)

³⁵² (Cohen, 1999, p. 251)

instruments and institutions have been insufficient to ensure the rights of refugees, they certainly do provide “universalistic concepts of justice.” More so than refugee law, Chetail argues, human rights law is now the main gravitational pull for issues of refugee protection.³⁵³ Additionally the potential normative reach of human rights law is considerable and the status and worldwide ratification of human rights instruments do point to the values expressed therein being if not universalistic, at least very widespread.³⁵⁴ Finally, Cohen points out that the fact that human rights norms are not completely definite means they are flexible and open to further development by civil society and changing societal norms.³⁵⁵ Thus strengthening human rights norms by making them the core of local, national and supranational politics, combined with including opportunities for political participation to refugees can only result in a more just, and more democratic society.

I would add a further factor that could ensure refugees right to have rights is respected, and this is something that according to the preceding chapters refugees have already been setting into motion. Refugees must be involved in the public discourse, must have a voice and a say in framing the reality that so affects them. Hopefully this will become a greater part of the media mainstream, and of cultural life, as the people newly arrived in Europe constitute a place in the world for themselves, building on the networks of other refugee led initiatives such as Refugee Radio Network.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to show refugees as rights claimants, as political actors in different senses of the word. In a way, the very act of crossing borders, in defiance of states’ restrictions of the ‘prototypical’ freedom of movement³⁵⁶ is politically charged because it throws up questions about citizenship, sovereignty and the democratic and moral legitimacy underlying such a “completely organised humanity”.³⁵⁷ The paradox of

³⁵³ (2014 in (Harvey, 2015, pp. 45-46))

³⁵⁴ (Harvey, 2015, p. 59)

³⁵⁵ (Cohen, 1999, p. 252)

³⁵⁶ (DeGenova, 2010, p. 8)

³⁵⁷ (Arendt, 1968, p. 297)

European States recognising that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’³⁵⁸ yet pursuing policies of deterrence at Europe’s borders has become increasingly evident in recent years. Arendt argues that refugees’ vulnerability stems from being denied the “right to have rights”³⁵⁹. Arendt’s analysis supposes that rights belong to “definite or permanent subjects”³⁶⁰, Rancière counters that this ignores the “struggles led outside the frame of the national constitutional state”³⁶¹. Similarly, Isin suggests changing the phrase instead to the “right to claim rights”³⁶², which leaves much more room for agency. This is a right that I would argue is enacted by refugees.

The research presented here shows that refugees engage in struggles, on many different levels and at many different scales: “bodies, courts, street, media, networks, and borders”³⁶³ become sites of contest. Refugees are engaged in tactics of subversion, overtly or more discreetly. They engage in homing and create a place for themselves within local communities and solidarity initiatives in direct defiance of isolating and institutionalising government run refugee camps. Where the acts are collective and of larger scale, they appear to be highly successful. In Athens, a squat is completely run by refugees and is not only integrated into the neighbourhood but provides support for other refugees from all over Athens. In Hamburg a radio station run completely by refugees is continually expanding its programmes and sparks similar projects in other countries. These things disrupt the conventional discourse and understanding of social reality when it comes to refugees. If politics is “setting something into motion”³⁶⁴, if it is dissensus³⁶⁵ then this is politics.

At the same time, a community of support, be it Europe-wide or more local, strengthens and provides the framework for these actions to come to fruition. At the moment solidarity in Greece is offering emergency help such as housing or medical care where the state is not able to provide these things satisfactorily. But solidarity is also a highly political

³⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted 10th December 1948, 217 A (III), available at <https://treaties.un.org> (accessed 11th June 2016)

³⁵⁹ (Arendt, 1968, p. 296)

³⁶⁰ (Rancière, 2004, p. 206)

³⁶¹ (Ibid, p. 306)

³⁶² (Isin, 2009, p. 371)

³⁶³ (Ibid, p. 371)

³⁶⁴ (Arendt, 1958, p. 177)

³⁶⁵ (Rancière, 2004, p. 304)

movement, and has more long term goals. While this is not without its challenges, I would assert that these communities are highly important for refugees to become an assertive part of the political community. Building on this I argue therefore for the necessity, and the possibility, of a new guarantee for rights that is linked to democracy and equality. Rights should never be accorded as a form of goodwill, instead they can be best guaranteed to those who have a say in political communities' rights formation and enforcement.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Society for afghans

What did the society do when crisis started

Crisis in Greece was 2009, 2010, the greeks were not so much friends with the refugees. It became, the way they were accepting the people was becoming hard and difficult. Especially during 200,10,11 when the golden dawn was getting more power, they were telling people these refugees they are not real, they used names for this like, ..., it means migrants who come illegally from another country seeking a better life. They were telling to the people that these people are .. they come here to take our jobs, make problems in our health system, make problems in our society. Things like that

Do you feel it became more dangerous?

Yes, it became more dangerous. From the side of this party, the situation, was getting harder. Yes. They were trying to make people hate the refugees.

Did it work?

It worked in some cases. At that time every day we had five people, more than five people who were attacked by this racists in the street. IT was a kind of effect of economic crisis in Greece.

All this anger I guess,

2012, 13, many people left Greece. Went back to Pakistan, Iran, turkey. Especially in 2015, when borders were opened and they went from here.

When the refugees started coming, what did your organisation do for them?

2015, when the flow of people was getting more and more they came to Athens and didn't have anywhere to sleep, they were coming to sleep on the floor(?) and from that time our activities were to help them somehow, to give them information, to give somewhere, somehow, they would be hungry, there were children women, pregnant women, with small children they were living in the port. So all the people were trying to help them to not face more problems

We gave food, clothes, water to take children to the hospital

I guess maybe at that point it doesn't matter where they are from

They were from different countries. We would make the facility of communication. Translation

What do you do now?

Different activities. In different ... now, at the moment the problem is the newcomers. They want help from us, from the community. We say we are not the government, not an ngo. We don't have things to give you, how can we help?

What do they want?

Financial help, advice for the greek asylum service, family reunification, everything they need to do. The organisations don't accept them. The greek system is not good(?) to accept so many

people. So they come here and ask help from us, this organisation. So we started to register them from here, to call skype to arrange an appointment for them, also to give them information about the situation in Greece.

It might be good, to come here to get help from people from their own culture, country..

Yeah, they come here to get help but they don't understand the role of the community. The community is not made for this to give people food, or a house or asylum. That is the role of the government or other organisations. We are not here to do this.

It is very difficult

We tell them, they say we don't have anyone to help us here. They have not their husbands, mothers, alone. From one side you don't have the financial resources to help, from the other side they are left in the way. It's the kind of problem you don't know what do with it. We must link them with other organisations, tell them what is the possibilities here, what can we do. In some cases we find houses for them with our people. But its temporary.

Most of refugees want to stay or

No, never. They say we don't want to stay in Greece.

Other afghani orgs in Europe?

Yes. There are, organisations.

Are you in contact with them? so you can tell a family, for example if you go to Sweden there is an organisaiton in Sweden you can talk to?

It is not organised so good. We do it and finish it and get results. There are organisations yes, we know that they are there. There is not any organised cooperation. To start something do it and finish it. It wants a kind of management. The management needs staff, the staff needs finance.

And all of them are voluntary organisation?

Yeah

How many people are working here?

40, 50 people. We don't have someone to do something on a daily base. They do it in part, part of their work, their life. I cannot tell you we have 10 persons. They are working 8 hours a day and they are doing this this this and this.

All voluntary?

no people can do it. Again, they need support, to be organised. It is anything an organisation which has the finance and possibilities can do this.

How did you start helping here?

I am here in Greece thirteen years, from 2003, 2004. We were thinking about an organisation for the reason like I gave before

You were one of the people that founded it?

Yes

What will be its role in future?

Now. In the future, the next months or years. I told you the situation, what is our goal and our possibilities and our economic instead of management or staff. We are trying to achieve the goals I mentioned before. Now after this, before this, throughout our activities are on that. But in some cases the people come and ask us for other things that are not in our responsibilities or possibilities.

You know if you have three children with one mother and you want to give them house and food you must have the financial possibilities

You can offer contacts maybe

We must do that. But sometimes the organisations, are swamped. For example now they say everywhere is full, there is no way to help, no place, nothing.

It is a big problem. I don't know what we will do. If you stay here, they will want help from you. They ask for asylum I say, I cannot. So you tell them the way, go do this. They say I am not able to do this. For example the person cannot get an appointment via skype. But this organisation is not founded for this. We are trying to make the situation in greek society to help people to integrate, to make the society feel better about us and about the future. To know the reasons they leave their country

Its another thing, its separate from everyday problems. All this situation, to live in this society freely. TO make a possibility for people when they want to progress.

IN any case, this kind of problems, make us everyday in charge of this. We forget balance. For example we have many people here in Greece from 5 years before from 10 years before. They also need to be integrated. They need to learn the language, get information about how to live and how to survive in this society. IF there are any possibilities for jobs for occupation. Cultural, social activities, we do here. Our focus is on those things.

Annex 2

Helliniko Social Clinic, Petros (translated from Greek to English by Yorgos)

In october social clinic in an assembly decided to help refugees. So we started to go to ellinko, in the place where refugees would stay. It was the old airport. And because the government sent only one young person, it was impossible. They sent a very young person to run the camp. Because we had experience in this clinic, we organised teams and visited the place. So we started to organise, and our cooperation with the section of the government.(?) So we organised day by day, we did not go every day but about 3 times (a week?) we had to be here also. Also there were many persons who wanted to help, so we would give information and organise people to organise clothes and food. There were independent people who wanted to help but there was no way to get information for them. So the clinic gave information to the volunteers on how to do really everything. We also tried to involve the refugees. That was a good cooperation. There was no

translators, so we mimed our way to communicate. We found a way. That was a very good relationship with the refugees. So later we tried to press the government, with press releases.

The press releases were about the whole situation but with hints of what was going on in ellinko, with the view to pressure the government to improve the situation. We had the opportunity to visit and to see the situation, and the situation was not good, but we do not want to substitute the government, that is not the point of the clinic. We just want to pressure and help with the basics. After a while, we started to organise. We visited the place and also we organised the first clinic there in elliniko. We sent a lot of medicine, and the doctors from here, and also we continued to pressure. 07.00

The clinic was first established by the people from here, both in terms of material things and staff. It continued erratically from some people from the government like who did let's say a lousy job and various ngos like doctors without borders. But it was not with a schedule, but sporadically whether they were there. SO they tried to put pressure again in order to be staffed on all days. 8.20

Now in this place, in the hockey stadium, there were three points, the first was the hockey stadium, then in front of the airport, then the buildings of baseball. Now there are three places with about 5000 people.

The old airport at some time was used for the Olympic games, that's why we say hockey, baseball etc

Now the hockey place is ok, the organisation of the situation. And we visit now very often. But in order to oversee the place what happens, and also to give different. He is trying to give another way of doing things in the place. The government is ok, it does its job, but it does its job. I mean, they are very strict, bureaucratic, putting stamps on papers without a smile on their face. They don't have to but they are cold and machinalist. So they go (the clinic) and because they are openhearted and free, it is not like doing our job as doctors, they are openhearted they feel like they are helping people they have a smile. So the refugees are expecting them are waiting for them

I had a present from a girl 8 years old, she gave me flowers.

That is as far as the hockey stadium. For the EU turkey collaboration things have changed. Now activists in the centre of Athens have made several squats, one of them the fifth, the school that is run by refugees. Because what we see, activists, solidarians they are trying again to take these people and put them at the outskirts of society. So they make the squats in order to keep refugees as close to society as they can. The clinic are not directly involved but when they are asked to they send medicine to the squats and solidarians if they have a supply. Here the clinic is very organised, so the whole of Europe is sending medicine here. They have a lot of equipment, sent from Germany.

Every month one person from Austria is coming and bringing medicine. Just donations from people who want to help. One of the guys that was sending medicine, his car when he was in the ferry coming here, it burned, so some time afterwards he got a new car and brought medicine.

There is a big influx of medicine here, a surplus so if anyone asks they will gladly give medicine. This kind of .. usually, other kind of squats or organisations ask for medicine. And now official hospitals are asking for medicine as well because they are running out.

One week ago there was a happening in syntagma square and several organisations wanted to collect things for refugees and migrants and all the medicine was sent to the clinic and they sent them on to idomeni or Lesvos. The clinic was full of boxes, the doctors had trouble to see patients. There were a lot of volunteers working day and night for four to five days to categorise and organise the medicine. In the pharmacy there are 60 volunteers. About 150 doctors work there, there are about 300 volunteers. The doctors are doctors here, and in their normal job. They use their free time for the clinic.

The clinic started after the initiative in syntagma square, the occupy there. In the summer of 2011. The clinic started in december. There were 6 persons who were in syntagma square and they understood that there would be problems for patients. So they asked the mayor of elliniko to give them a place so they could give free services. And the mayor said yes I will give it to you and pay the electric bill and water. After 3 months the 6 persons were 60 and after one or two years, 200 and now 300 maybe more than (?) There are other clinics in Athens, this clinic was the first, not just in elliniko, also Athens and the islands. But now all over Greece there are about 50 social clinics. IN Athens there are 14. So many people go to clinics that are close to their houses. But now that Greece becomes deeper, there is need to increase. Refugees can go to the other clinics. We help refugees also for dentist. We go to the camp with a car, bring the refugees here. Because we have dentist equipment here. We don't only go to the places to offer skills and medicine, but if there is a need we take them here and take them back.

There are guys that were immigrants but are now greek citizens (from ceylan, Ecuador) and they are volunteers. Most of the refugees would stay here 3, 4 days and then would move on. But now they have closed the borders they see the same people again and again.

We have decided with other clinics we will not go to closed camps. We will not help the government with this, we want open camps.

All the clinics gathered in a big meeting in Thessaloniki and decided they will not participate and help in closed camps. They are taking a stand.

They were against the EU turkey agreement, they made a statement, they don't agree or recognise it as an option.

(they also took a stand when they won a prize from the EU, they did an excellent press release rejecting the prize. IT was a big prize, but they rejected it and explained why. They came to brussels, to make a press release there to explain why they reject the prize, it got more press coverage than the official ceremony and event.).

We have three (principles?) 1. we do not advertise anyone who is offering the clinic something. 2. We do not want to have the parties we vote here. Everyone can support whatever party they want but outside of the clinic. We had some politicians that wanted to come here and we said just come without tv or any publicity but they didn't want to come. 3. We do not accept money. Only medicine and equipment and service. So sometimes from other European countries, they say we want to send money, we say now. We send a catalogues of our needs of medicine and we say buy them and bring them come here, we want to see you. We also say that to greek people who want to send money. Ok buy them bring them and come here so you can see it. We try to create a spirit of solidarity and not charity. It is quite different. In solidarity you are equal with the other and

you help him to have an action for himself. Charity is something you are upper and you give them and I don't want to have a relationship . We try to involve people in solidarity. 11:40

We speak we give papers- leaflets. We are speaking to people, they feel trust. For example to me, two different people said I say to you for the first time in my life that I have decided suicide. And I stopped the last time. And they trust to say their problems.

We see day by day when a patient comes for the first time he is looking down and he does not feel good because he has to come here, although he was working and he ought to have an insurance. But after three to four visits it changes. The picture of body (body language) changes, he says hello how are you. And people say they prefer to come here instead of the hospitals where we used to go to in the past. Because they feel these feelings.

Annex 3

Margarita

centre for migrants and refugees started in 1990 and is a political group and it has to do with political and economic migrants and refugees. Besides helping in legal department many who had problems who were able to come without being afraid. Also started antiracist festival. Its now the 18th or 19th year. It's a big festival. I was there from the start.

How did it start?

With need to start raising awareness and money for the place and the purpose throughout the rest of the year. We have no sponsors. Every year the festival started growing and growing. So it was not something new for this place-the crisis. It was simply too much too soon. It escalated in numbers too much.

The centre has to do a lot with people who came from turkey from Kurdistan from Syria from wherever that had problems facing the political situation in their own countries and they needed help and that was not possible in some other way. Mainly legal help so they can get papers. And integration if they want to stay in Greece. Or what are the legal situations in Europe to move on. Until syryza became the government it was anyway much too hard to go the state and ask for papers. They would not give them to you they would not make appointments they would easily dismiss asylum requests. That meant maybe they were detaining you and sending you back and that meant many things, torture for a lot of people. So its different when there are lawyers, because that's the way it started, to help and who can relate and make the request for you if you are a refugee in a difficult situation or a migrant who wants to stay and you can be represented by a lawyer. So you cannot be detained, get papers and move on, so you just face a different situation. So that was very helpful.

Changes during crisis?

We are not in a position to provide anything more than that really. We are not getting paid, it's a group where everyone comes voluntarily in solidarity and with the same political thoughts. So what happens now, if that's what you want to know is that we were thinking after Piraeus and the camps that we saw that were in terrible living conditions-it was not even a jail, it was less

than a jail and they were beginning to act the same way as the rightwing before. Detaining people not giving food or clean water or heat. The conditions were horrible. Of course we had people who committed suicide before in these camps. So imagine you are a refugee you survived war or you are a migrant who comes, makes this journey, this illegal journey out of hiding or something and you come here and they detain you and you commit suicide I mean, its torture.

I don't think, any of us thinks that this should be kept secret because this is the face of Europe this is the face of our world today.

As an organisation we have a site. It's a net for political and economical refugees and migrants and it has a website and makes announcements from time to time when we see laws are coming through that are not in the interests of people that are coming through we inform them, we protest and we make activism. We had a group that was trying to become more active.

Now that the situation with housing or the conditions of housing of refugees was urgent and there were thousands on the street and they were coming in lines for some juice, biscuits and baby cloth. It was obvious that the state was not and will not do anything. We knew there was money for that, there was a situation where they could follow a different tactic in politics and they didn't. they showed that we gave time, and they showed that they are not going to do it. They will comply with the European parliament in everything they say. So we have to do something

Do you think the crisis has changed people living here? Athens or exarchia?

Yes. From the last summer of 2015 unfortunately the news through the tv makes a big impact on the mass of people. In the beginning the situation was portrayed in a way that was giving a lot of time and space for solidarity to grow and it did. And that was nice and not nice because it was something like a trend. Because when the TV stopped paying attention a lot of people stopped. And they turned around and started saying whatever they were saying before. On a large scale but on a small scale a lot of people got activated to help. And they remembered what happened in 1922 when people were coming from smirni, which created a refugee wave which came to Greece, many still have refugee family members. From turkey, from minor asia. So that helped a lot, knowing and having a member, a grandmother a grandfather who was a refugee. So you know how it is, you know what they want what they have been through and you are not afraid of it. People who came close and got involved in it didn't just leave a shirt or something and they left. They have lived this way of solidarity where you stop being just for yourself, you can give your time and self and get a lot out of it. More than what you give.

It doesn't have an age. We have seen many things, from young people to grandmothers of 90. Yes, because the older people know exactly what its like. Its like this phenomenon where a poor person will give you to eat if you are hungry because he knows what hunger is. A rich person will never give you will be afraid to tend his hand and give you something. The amazing thing is coming from people who came. Its amazing because they have nothing different from being my mother my sister my friends my aunt. Its, they don't speak our language but that's the least of difficulties. Its nothing different, nothing at all.

A lot of situations that occur occur in any society. But you know that you don't expect people to be saints, you don't expect people to be criminals. Its normal people from next door and most of them are very patient, I admire their patience, and the other surprising thing is how they come in

this place and you see multicultural ways flourish. I mean the other day we came here with a Syrian girl she was 16 and very sweet she never had a ride in Athens she just wanted to go to school. So I told her come with me and I could tell from the way she was shaking she never had a ride with a bike before, she had never been in Athens so I took her around to show her something. We came here to take some keys from aziz the big black guy here, and she got scared. And aziz was smiling because he knew what she was expecting already, he gave a very big smile. And then we got her clothes, she chose what she wanted and then she went out to see and wrote her program down. And the next time she came I was expecting her, she already smiled at aziz and she said the keys I want more blouses. It was amazing. The first time she was -ah, the second time she knew she could count on him. These little things. 15:32 From people who I know they come from other ways, they are more closed then they open in a second. With a smile you might say

In some freedom

Yes. Imagine they were not allowed to show themselves. Only blouses with long sleeves. So to talk to a man being sixteen it was already too much for her. Something that I could not imagine but I have to know that. A giant leap of faith.

Do you keep in touch with refugees who have moved on? Yes. When I can, because they don't all have phones. They are lending their phones and numbers to one another and when they leave Greece they often don't have the same numbers to keep in contact (they don't have emails either) But with the ones who are still here yes we do.

We do events and discussions, in various places yes. All kinds of things.

We are connected with a lot of parties in Europe. There are many, no borders and they are very interested, also in the left government that proved to not be left and what is happening with the refugee issue. They support us a lot, from physical appearance they come here, or in islands in Lesvos and so on. There were people from skandinavia who came to cook for pedion areas. This was very difficult (in pedion areas). It was very short but it lasted for two and a half months last summer. And the way people responded was amazing. They were bringing stuff from little stuff to a lot of things.

Were refugees themselves involved? Some not many, that's to be expected. Most of them did not want to stay in Greece. At the time the borders were open and they were really flowing out. And now they have closed them and people are getting stuck. In idomeni its horrible there, its shocking. Its windy and pouring rain there now. And people stay there in camps for months.

Do you think it will change?

I have no idea what is going to happen. Because the variables of the situation are many and different. <It doesn't come from inside Greece or from the refugees alone It's a very strict policy that they follow in Europe, since Greece is the border for them and we are in a very difficult economical situation they are threatening us openly. We will starve you to death if you ever think of opening borders. If you want to be friendly to refugees you will pay for that. Its not justifying anything because human rights are above everything but that is the situation . and the government closed the borders.

Greece will be a big refugee holding centre?

We hope so because we will live with them and they bring much more hope. They have seen death so this life seems like a place for possibilities for them. Something we have already lost. For me it's hopeful. We can make things if they stay. If all of us stop having kids because we have no money or pensions or anything. If we stay in Greece as we are I can imagine that the right wing will pick up and we will have wars. But I really see them as a hope and a solution.

The most difficult thing is dealing with the outside world, with the hostility, with the fascists is having to answer. To think that the reasonable or expected in our point of view. Like this last thing that happened. There was an empty building for seven years and the occupation took it over. The most difficult thing was answering why an empty hotel in the middle of Athens was good for housing a lot of families that are in the streets living in tents. The discussion that came up, is creating something that must not be left unanswered. There were very disgusting things said like that people who made the occupation were taking money from the refugees. Or that they were getting paid or there were political interests behind the occupation. The gentrification of the area being driven. There were people from the left who were saying if it's not an open public space you are not allowed to occupy. There is an elephant in the room and it is not the one you are showing me. We are not putting it up for rent. I conclude personally that when you are not actually involved and you don't care and the tv has stopped showing refugees, it is a matter that is maybe degraded in your way of thinking, it has disappeared. You don't know that there is a problem and still a need. They simply think that the issue is the property that is being occupied. But the people who were working in the occupied hotel were left unpaid for many months and that is one of the reasons the business went bankrupt. SO they came and declared that they show solidarity with the migrant and they declared that they prefer this to happen while the hotel is closed. So people with a real interest in getting money out of it were showing solidarity. 31:41

What refugees needed as well, was to learn to communicate. So there are classes here and in other groups. There are classes in greek, in german in English, and we have people for it. And also on Saturday and Sunday, we eat all together and cook all together.

Do refugees sometimes cook their home meals? Yes

With time we have refugees involved in translating. We have people who stayed and they have stayed in the political group, like nasim who is from Afghanistan, he has the keys and opens the office for our group. And other people when they speak greek they can translate and help. They can also translate when people want to communicate with the media which is not often. It's difficult to bring out what people want and they all want the same thing.

Are you able to contact orgs in other countries?

Yes but the legal way is the only way to do this. You need the right petition for relocation (which they are never given) and write the right things on the petition. And to take the interview. So they can say they are from Syria or a warzone or a political refugee. Yes, it's almost impossible without help.

There is not just one group involved in the new squat. We do assemblies. Discussions. Yes, it works well so far. It's a different thing when the purpose involves someone else. It's less difficult for us to decide this when it's a higher cause, a different one.

People are helping and they are involved. And that involves many men helping, cleaning and so on, cooking and keeping the children. The thing is when you have been through so much anyway and no one is forcing you to do things you don't want they adjust and we adjust.

How do refugees find out about squats?

There was an assembly and people like nasim who know the people at the assembly brought some people they knew. We told them how we expected it to work what we thought would happen, certain things we would not tolerate, any sexism, any violence, anything vulgar. And that would be a rule they would have to keep. Just through friends.

Eleonas camp: it was the first official camp of the state. It was created from the state when we were expecting things to go in a different manner. Of all the camps in Greece its one of the better ones. Containers. Depends on how you see it, if you see it compared to other camps its paradise, compared to real life how you normally live it needs a lot of work. No airconditioning. One bath two families. However, compared to Piraeus... some containers have airconditioning. The ones for the NGOs, doctors. Etc. These are airconditioned. Now they have extended the fields. Double bed on one side and double bed on the other side. Toilet in the middle. That's it. That's the paradise we are talking about.

Do the squats work together sometimes? For the refugees that are staying at squats it's a bit difficult. There are different languages involved, and they cant travel so easily. The worst ever camp in ritsona which is in the middle of nowhere there is nothing, its like the sahara desert and there are containers in it. The worst apart from chios, an abandoned factory that is now a camp, and they are not even giving milk for babies. People scale fences so they can pick fruits to eat. It's a closed camp. But after 28 days of first detainment they let them out. But they have to return in the night and they cant leave the island. They are putting them again in the situation of using smugglers.

I want the kids from the squat to draw banners for all over Athens. For me its going to be antiracist slogans and slogans for immigrants to integrate and so on. Simple childrens drawings.

My grandmother came as a refugee, and what you grow up with as a child you don't quite understand what is normal. I know that all these children if they will not get integrated or loved or feel like children at some point in their lives, they will miss things. They will be right to be angry at things.

Is there counselling?

Yes. For me it would be a basic thing to provide, like food, but its difficult. There are few trained psychiatrists but there are difficult cases. Some kids would not go out from under their beds. It would not take a psychiatrist to see this is a child that lived in a warzone. It is always ready to leave, does not take off his jacket.

There would come the state as we imagine it. If the state gave the advantages for some people who want to offer counselling to do it. For example, for each refugee child that we have, we reduce your taxes, this would be spread out on everybody. You need more, you need an incentive from the state. For people to host refugees for example.

Psychological counselling does not really exist. There are so few people who can do it and are willing. The percentage is very low, the basic needs are covered but not more.

I have hosted people as well in the past. Now I want to work differently. I am far away from the centre as well it is not very convenient. They want to be around here, exarchia. It's a very welcoming area.

Annex 4

Ali

I went to Lesvos, then came here, and then returned to Lesvos.

Is that how you became involved with noborders?

The Noborders group, I met them here, not in Lesvos. In Lesvos I just tried to find what is the situation. Because we came here very quickly and we had no idea about the place we are going. Some friends of mine had some information about this but I came very rapidly. I had only 3 days to gather my things, and I left some of my documents, I forgot to bring them. I just left because it a necessary movement.

From iran

And then from Lesvos you came to Athens. At the port. The first night we came there was no supply, only food. We bought a tent and stayed in it. We were in the port for about 3 weeks or more. It's a very bad place.

Are there many Iranians?

Yes. For afghans and Syrians its obvious why they are coming. Because of the war. So many things are happening. For Pakistanis its all about the cruelty, they are not in war. About Iranians its about policy, politics. Or about religion. Most about. My situation is a little bit complicated. For example I was not informed of policy. But something happened and some group of people for 12 years were trying to get access to me again. But I didn't know exactly what are they going to do. These days I realized something about some family of mine that they are trying to get access again. And you know, in iran one of the things that is interesting for you, in iran when you are called before a court it doesn't matter if you are right or your opponenets. Only your friends in the party or the court or the regime or government matter. You must have one person. Hotami, somehow this problem was going to be improved, it was becoming better and better, then the other presidents came, day after day the leaders of the regime, decreased moralities everyday. For example if you are calling someone before a court it is the only thing that matter if your family is more powerful or their family. The middle east somehow has similar problems.

The middle east for me is a jungle. I came here I saw people have got some problems, the afghans, Iranians Syrians have some problems together. I managed to speak with them. I told them when you left your country, its finished. You have no nation anymore, you are human. Here.

I was pretty successful talking to them, sometimes no sometimes yes

Do you feel it's a good thing to not feel like you have a nation anymore?

Yes, its very good. It's a village. These lines on a map its just to show you are home. For example you have got a home. But you have no rights to hurt anybody in your home. Yes, its

your house, your home. But it was your home in the village. Its not your home in Greece, in iran. Its your home on the planet earth, and the planet earth has nothing else like this. It is far away from nowhere. For me it is like this. It's a very small village.

And we are fighting absurdly/ very heavily for what? For some lines? For some things?

You were translating?

Yes. There were from each nation people who were able to speak English.

With noborders?

With noborders or sometimes with afghans? Even when I was in iran and on my profile in fb I do this all the time. For example I see smth is happening and it is going to bring a bad view of afghans in iran. Because I know them they are just living, they are not dangerous for Iranians. But some fascist people are trying to do this. And I told, I have no problem with afghans, if someone has its their problem.

I think Iranians are 80% optimistic with people, about accepting others

And greek people?

Better, better than, of course its better than iran. In Greece I only say 5 persons not very good. They had no good behaviour. However they did not realize I was a refugee. Because I don't look like a refugee. But I saw something with others.

So you feel safe in Greece?

Yes, even none of the police ask me for papers. Even when I go to the port to meet friends the police does not ask me for papers. But I got a good point of view from refugees, I was trying to show them put your garbage away, don't get into fights. Because, to show you are not dangerous. You are not going to change anything. For example about the beliefs. When I was in iran I was very harsh with religious people but its not about all religious people. Someone who carries a religion in himself or herself ok, its your religion I have nothing to do with it. But if you make an announcement about other ideologies I am going to destroy your mind. I am able. I was a super religious person, I have a background in it and I know the main points. For example fundamentalists, I know the main points. And I studied a lot, because of the problems I had, about religion. Sources of policies and religion.

Policy has a big background, people are always afraid of policies. Politicians are ... people. If you have a job, what problem do you have to become a politician? I think there might be some bad point of view in the person's mind. Because they don't know how to do in normal society, they become a politician.

Would it be a good thing for refugees to have political representation?

You don't need to become a politician but you need 5 % of policies. In iran the problem is all the people are cheated everyday, because they don't have 5% or 10% of knowledge. People need to be educated. We need to know psychology as well... If a person knows this, no politician is able to cheat him. Or at least not easily .

One of the problems in the middle east, is debate is very hard for them. And one of the good leassons they can get in Greece is that. In Greece people speak to each other for 2, 3 hours

without having a fight even if they disagree. We can disagree and afterwards go to a café and drink beer. That is a very good lesson.

Even here everything is not perfect. You know, some groups here they are not able to speak with other groups even here. For example they see someone with a uniform, very rapidly they will react against it. This may be a normal person, he needed a job. He just thought it might be good to become a policeman. For example becoming a policeman, it can be just a job. Maybe the person is a fascist, maybe not. For example it is very easy to get educated in that sense, I was always asking directions from police. You pay respect, you get it back.

We changed politicians, and we do that in every society. But it's very hard. For example we had some acid attacks in Iran. And after that we realized it was an order from a priest to punish those not wearing hijab. And after that, there was a big program to change this ideology. But it seems it was just changed 1%, but this 1% is very valuable.

What were you doing in Iran?

I had a few jobs, but it was seasonal jobs. Like a nightguard, I was able to work in summer. I was in front of the ? I don't know what he is saying unfortunately.

The main job I had was interior designer and decorator. I liked the decorator part, interior design seems like a very showy thing. A decorator is a very communicative thing. I got lots of friends. I like woodwork. However I lost my fingers in an accident

Yeah it's dangerous

But if you like your job you take the risk

Would you like to continue

Yes of course. I like painting things and all this

Are you going to continue to work with refugees, translate with noborders

Working voluntarily I only found here that it's very interesting to get in contact with refugees and most of all people who are working with refugees. You know it's not just refugees who need help, the people who are working with the refugees need help. Because all the people are thinking about refugees, they need help, they need help, they need help but no one speaks with someone who is a volunteer. I did this in Lesbos and it was the first experience I had. It was a girl from Germany and she was depressed, completely broken from the thing she was doing and I spoke with her for about 3 days and maybe I don't know maybe I managed to give her a good point of view about what you are doing here. Because I studied psychology. Because of my problems, my problems about the accident I had during work, the problems I had about being tortured in the army I studied psychology. It was not official, it was unofficial just for myself. And I had only 10% of this knowledge but it's very easy for me to speak and share sympathy, share kindness. This is a thing every person can do.

When you were in Lesbos you were helping the volunteers?

Sometimes yes. Translating, helping, sharing things, cleaning places.

So now in Athens what are you doing, are you still volunteering?

I try to stay in local communities. It is better than staying with refugees. It is good to stay with refugees but it is just for fun. Its got nothing to do with the next plan, you need to plan for the future. And it is better to help others, so I helped and received something.

I saw so many people helping here. I saw so many people coming even from US, even from the other rich countries of Europe, from Germany Switzerland, Belgium, England.

You want to stay here?

If I find a job sure. For sure. It's the best place. And I don't need a job that makes a lot of money, just money to live. Before I came here I thought money was very important, but much more important than money is communication. Without money you manage to get along, she knows what I am saying, I have no money for one month or more. But communication is much more worthy, more valuable for one person.

Annex 5

Theo

So you got involved last summer?

Yes, we had around 350 afghani refugees in a park nearby, near exarchia (pedion areos) So, the people went to that park because there was nowhere else to stay. And they were stranded in a way because when people travel they do not have all their money with them , so when they came to Athens they called their relatives for the rest of the money. But what happed at the time because Greece was under capital control, all the companies like western unionamerican express, money exchange all these things that you can use for money stopped working for Greece. Even paypal didn't work. So they came to Athens and couldn't get their money to continue their journey. Very little, like 60 euro per day or something. And if you have a family of five, you have to wait for five days to collect 60 euros times 5 to buy your bus tickets to go to idomeni, northern border and from there across to Macedonia, Hungary and so on. So they were stranded in that park, the state was non existent. So what we did was we called for an assembly. And many people attended. And for a month we were providing tents, healthcare three meals a day, clothing, toys, psychological support everything

Who attended assembly

Everyone. It started mainly from the anarchist political area. People from anarchism and many radical leftists, apolitical people, rightwingers with sensitivities..you know it was a babel(?) of various political and religious creeds that attended the assembly. And we were trying to have a balance. Specifically because it was very easy for people who were more political to take control of the assembly. So what we did was try to have that everyone was equal here. And actually it worked. We created working groups for different things: medical, social media group, food etc. And one of the first ideas we had was its good to activate the refugees, to have their own assembly. So the two assemblies come together and discuss it all together. But they couldn't do that because they were in a fast transit state. That meant that the most that they would stay in the park was three days and when they left on their journey someone else would take their place. So the people that we met the first day on the third day were gone. So it was very difficult to establish something like that. So only minor things like cleaning the place or helping us out in on the spot translation, serving food or things like that. It was more like political philanthropy that we provided everything through people than an actual self

organising-I mean we self organised ourselves, but we as a self organised entity we would provide for people who couldn't organise at any level because they would go. They couldn't stay there. And in places like that, also in Lesbos where we created another self organised initiative there, it was at the frontline, again refugees come out of the boat rest, eat, medical and go. They don't have the time to do anything. Only sometimes some of them would stay late at night to help translate for us. Because they felt that yes ok, because you are not the state because you are here of your own volition that I want to help as well. To pay in kind what you are doing. So they would stay even with wet clothes they would stay through the night to translate translate translate. Even when we would ask, go, go don't stay. They said no no I will stay

But now the squats the refugees who stay in those buildings have been stuck in Greece.

For how long have they been there?

It depends there are refugees that have been for two months there, in the squat. Its interesting to see how things are... the squat in Notara is the first housing squat. And they have refugees that are active, doing things, attending assemblies as far as possible.

Assemblies are for everyone living in the squat, they usually have translators. And also the solidarians that are, that help out. But then again, the balance is more solidarians, less refugees. So in a way they expect solidarians to do everything, to provide for everything. Of course it is very difficult get activated in a country where you don't know the language, and you don't have explanations. So usually what we do is that yes ok they take care of guard duty, the reception area of the squat, or cleaning cooking stuff like that. So that yes that's good. But apart from that at the more political level, to start writing political manifestos or stuff like that, that's completely different. You have to count in that these people are not anarchists coming from Syria. They are people from various classes of-

Is politics discussed a lot in squats?

As far as I know. Because I don't attend assemblies at squats I don't want to. I am part of a group that usually we act when we are needed in very difficult situations. I mean I have seen ? try to mash together and try to create something but usually it doesn't work out. The thing about self organising with someone who hasn't done it before or comes from a different cultural and political environment something-I want to go and earn money and buy a Porsche and a nice flat you know- some of them specifically young ones, the little guys, you know grasp, that's the interesting thing as I see it, they grasp what self organising is and they like it because they find it as a gain. So in a way for me the bet is to plant seeds in the little guys, so when they move on one day somewhere in the future they can self organising squats or initiatives.

But its more or less this is what is happening in these squats. But the interesting thing, in this public school, the person that is the driving force is a Turkish Syrian ex immigrant who has been in Greece for decades. And he speaks the language. Now, last time I went five days ago, he has actually, the whole squat is run only by the refugees they have created working teams they have teachers and doctors everything. The squat is called the fifth. The fifth public school. I was really surprised when I saw it was so active.

Do you think it's the language barrier (that stops this happening in other squats)?

Yes, I think it's the language. And also the person who is in a way leading the squat is quite a powerful figure. They respect him a lot so what he says is the rule. So he says, guys in order to survive in this building, we are more than 200 people, we have to do this and this and this and they do it. And they are quite motivated by this, you see people are doing things all the time. Actually they also have a womens group that is only for women. No men are allowed inside, its like an early feminist group. And its very interesting because they come from a country were the woman is quite locked in a way. So its quite interesting that even the men are very respectful of that.

Are these ideas that came from the people themselves?

That I don't know, you have to ask. I have the notion that no. That some people implemented the ideas to them. But that doesn't matter I mean ideas always come from somewhere. If you read a book, it comes from there, if you have a person who brought the book and will tell you that it's the same thing in a way.

And people interpret it in their own way

Yes they adapt it in a way they can understand it and make things with it. Now there is also the city plaza hotel squat. It is very early to judge but I went there as well a few days ago. The whole place was closed for 6 years and now its spotless. (11:20) solidarians and refugees together they cleaned the whole place up, they cook, I mean, it's a nice thing because in the school I was telling you about its mainly refugees and very few solidarians. In city plaza it's a lot of refugees but a lot of solidarians who live in the hotel. They have 20-30 people living in the hotel every day.

That makes a difference doesn't it? that greek people are living together with them

Its not only greeks, its germans, Europeans lets say and refugees living together. Of course solidarians have specific jobs to do. Like guard duty, they speak the language the greeks. They have a more, they are the operators of the building. But with the refugees together I believe they can stuff like they did in the public school and activate them so that the refugees can run it one day by themselves.

How many people from other countries come here? Do they do it sepecifically to be a part of it

The solidarity of various activists from across Europe is huge. They do many many things from fixing up squats, cooking, transportation, many things

How do you get into contact with them through other organisations?

Usually you find them wandering around exarchia. I don't know if you know about exarchia it's a very rebellious area. So usually they end up here. Or they find someone, they contact you know. Its not an official process where you go to an office and say oh I want to be in a squat, oh yes we have space here and that's where you go and help out. Its personal connections and they end up meeting other people and so on and so forth.

Do you think it will spread, this form of organising, of squats in other countries?

Usually this happens when people are stranded. IN Calais the jungle, have you been there? No but you know it? There they had self organising, the whole thing was self organised. But again the driving force behind it was a bunch of anarchists at the beginning. So people that are

stranded they can't go anywhere they start trying to survive. So you implement the idea of self organising and you might have that. But in places like Germany for instance I doubt that there is self organising. Because they want to be assimilated by the system you know have jobs have their life as it was. I believe also that in our squats in Athens if for instance, there is an argument that the state has created all these open camps. Say the open camps are fine, they are great, they are little houses with say grass or whatever they will go to the refugees in the squat and say look we have nice houses for you. You have your own shower, heat, food a nice environment why don't you come? They will go. Because there they know that someone else will take care of them. All this it comes down to always giving responsibility to an action to someone else and not doing it yourself. So some, I want to believe, some of the refugees in the buildings they might stand and say no I want to be here in the squat. But I find it very slim.

So its kind of a waiting period for most people

Exactly it's a waiting period. SO what they do now is like arranging the interviews for asylum, to seek asylum. So as soon as they get that and have legal papers. The next step most likely is to find a job and place to stay and get out of the squat. And people that don't get asylum all of a sudden they are illegals and have to be deported. SO they are in a status, in the squat they are safe but as soon as they are out of the squat and wandering around Athens and they get caught that's it. You cannot do anything.

What will happen in future?

I don't know. As I said I think most likely since solidarity movement the refugees it is in disarray. Its not the same as it was a few months ago. Gradually its going down. And the state opening all these camps and as soon as they are ready and feel confident that they will know how to fit them or start deporting a lot of people they will come for the squats. But I think we need to do something more, what people want is to move on. What we have to do as a movement in general is to put political pressure so people can move on

To your own government?

To the governments in general. The European governments. Also the Macedonians, the solidarity from Macedonia should do the same for their own government because Macedonia is a path to it (a buffer?)

Do you think that will succeed?

That depends because that is demanding something from the states. Its one thing to put political pressure but at the same time if you at the same time for instance destroy the camps, put them on fire, so all those who are running lose are going to the border and there is a huge hoard of people at the border they might say ok fuck it. Open the borders and let them go. That happened actually in Italy, they started destroying the camps and the state opened the borders so they could go

That is pretty dangerous.

Of course that's the thing, the problem. Its easy for you and me to discuss have these brilliant or stupid ideas. But we have to count the refugee. We do it because of him, but if its to fulfil our political ego it's a problematic situation already. I think the only safe bet is to put so much pressure to the governments through demonstration or other means, but all together, all

Europeans together that they say ok lets open the fucking borders one last time so these 50 000 people can cross to Germany. But then again if it's the last time opening the borders, by that I recognize there are borders and they have to be closed again. That's a double edged knife.

I guess that's a problem of political organising with refugees they have more to lose than you do.

Of course they have more to lose. If for instance the police goes to the squat and says to the refugees you are in a squat come out now and we take you to a camp. Otherwise, you are violating the law by being in a squat and we could deport you on the spot-what can they do?

Since last summer, mid july I am involved with refugees, various activities. The only political discussion I ever had with a refugee was at one point in Lesvos when I took a boat out of the water full of iraqis, I walked them back to the platanos camp to change clothes, eat and stuff like that and I had my sleeves rolled up and I have a star there. And one of the refugees said "ah communista communista" no, Im not communista "ah comrade comrade" that was it. That was the only political discussion I had in nearly one year now. And some people, some comrades want to find that you know they are our borthers, they are our class, the working class. No so first of all at the at the moment they are classless, if you define class by the work (the power?) and the income, lower, or higher class it's a mix. And people at the moment they don't give a shit about self organising and all that stuff. They just want to move, seek asylum and start working and be as they were. Then you can judge if they will become political or not.

Its almost inherently political, people wanting what they are not given. Its in itself political that the yare here.

Well, I disagree with that notion. For me no, every person is a political being but the political situation. For me living in asquat is not a political statement. I go four hours and then I leave and I have this house with my computer and my bills and everything. If refugees demand something from the state the political stand would be: Ok we are lets say anarchists or aliens or whales or whatever, we have this political manifesto we have to live in this political system self organising horizontal without a legal (?) without leaders and that's our political stand. We will be a self organizing village or we will cross the borders because we believe in that. That would have a certain political force behind it, we believe in a certain political system in a way or we have a political flag.

Do you think that would be a good thing?

I mean, in between. In the other hand, any political action is an action that demands.. Its like recognizing that we always have governments or people ruling us and by the naivity of these political gestures of just going on the streets and having demos and demanding always stop the pollution stop this or the other doing this or that always demanding. No, if you have a political background and create a political movement it has to have A, B, C 1, 2,3,4,5 what you are what you believe in you have a focus point and start not counting the government. I mean all the anarchist section that is creating squats they don't say, ok lets ask the government, they do it because its in their political beliefs and they do it. Otherwise they would go to sytagma square in front of the parliament and ask the government to create squats for us. Because, they don't say please self organise us, its in their political belief.

Yeah but the government can make it more difficult for you

When there is a movement when the government makes it more difficult for the movement usually it breaks, it stays connected to the political groups that are in the movement. Because they know how to stand that, they know the history. And usually people come and join forces to those that have a core, that have a belief. Self organising and all these things are part of the anarchist ideology. So people know ok these guys might be fucked up they might be 17 year olds forever but at least they know what they are doing so I will stay with them.

In syntagma sytagma movement in 2011, there were these nice peoples assemblies on the square but they didn't have a focal point. It was like playing voting you know, a real democracy, ok lets play real democracy. But where do you want to go then? Lets go squat, lets create something lets create a different kind of system and let them come to take it if they come. Not just demanding. We are having real democracy but at the end of the day we demand they do it for us. But that's wrong, that doesn't work.

Just the point of view that a refugee demanding that. Ok it's a certain political action because it's a political being that is performing that action. It comes into a discussion with a state and at that time creates a space of political discussion but after that he is back waiting for someone to feed him dress him. He is not like ok I am doing that because I want to go on but now I turn back and we cook together, self organise together write pamphlets together its not like that. He will sit here and wait now.

Ok not all of them, some of them are doing other things as well but the majority of the population of the refugee population are doing that. Ok lets go across the borders, lets put pressure to the borders that's a political action but after that what are you doing. You are just like that waiting for you or me the solidarians to come. So for me the political action I can understand it I can respect it but it is not for me the right political action. It is like for me trying to baptize various things political in order to feel nicer and say yes ok we are a political movement as well we are doing things. No we are not. If we have an enemy that is so focused, so concentrated so well built in order to win that enemy that opponenet that is the state and government you have to create a movement that is so solid and does not form only when there is something happening. Most of the guys that started the assembly, a year ago it was the initiative we created back then it was the spark for everything that was to happen afterwards. Because many of the people now doing squats and stuff were part of that assembly. Back then it was the first time in the years of the movement that the state was running behind the initiative begging them begging us to take care of the open camps and stuff like that to organise them because they didn't know how to do it. Because we were very solid. We had open, put the political manifestos down a bit so everyone could join us and through action become more political in certain ways. But when things got tough we would raise again the political, the core of political speech of the initiative was made from anti authoritarian anarchist radical left spectrum. It wasn't we are all good Christians lets love each other.

Has being involved with refugees changed the movement?

The initiative? They say that initiative back then is the one that is responsible for all these squats and initiatives that happened all around Greece. It was the first that happened and a rolling stone for everything that was to follow. So that's quite important.

And it has changed the political landscape?

It hasn't changed the political landscape, but for me it has changed the political being. Because I remember there were people coming saying ok. I remember for instance there was a young guy (26?) years old. He came and said I am a volunteer. I told him here we are not volunteers we are people in solidarity. And he asked what's the difference? I said you will find it out yourself. And at the end of the days of the initiative in peritarius? (the park) he said to the assembly I came as a volunteer and now I am in solidarity and I believe in autonomy and self organising. So that's a political win.

So you change people's minds

Through action. But you know I have a huge dislike of demos where we go in front of the parliament demanding things. Do this do that. No, fuck them. We want the borders down, ok. Lets organise, go to the borders with bulldozers and bring them down no matter the cost. But you have to have the refugees with them. Again you do it, by doing things without the refugees you are always in a position of power. You are not horizontal with them.

Its difficult because they are in a different position anyway

On that. On the question of whether refugees can become political, no they cannot because you are always on two different levels. You can know if they have understood what self organising is, horizontalism. And say one day why don't you all and us all go somewhere squat something a land and make a life there. As a greek as a European I throw all my rights that I have from the system I was born in and become as much as possible like you I burn my id card and passport, sacrifice all my commodities so we are on the same level. And then we go together and create something and we know that if something happens it will have the same impact on all of us. But that's very difficult to do anyway, even between greeks

Annex 6

Phevos

Back in july there were three people (theo among them nicos and nasim(?)) sitting in a coffee shop in ixarthia, nasim comes to them and tells them there are people in pedion areos who are stranded, have some tents and they are staying there and its really hot and we need to get them some water. SO they buy some water, like 400 bottles and they decide to start an assembly to invite people to do something. They didn't know what to expect. What is important is though alex and nicos are anarchists, and nasim is very friendly to the cause they decided to not invite anarchists only. The call was from anarchists because they were but the call was for anyone who wishes to stand in solidarity with the people of pedion areos and the refugees in general.

How many people were in pedion areos

400. On a rotation basis. Because the borders were open, the smugglers were ok to go, so it was 2 days and go. And only people from Afghanistan and some from Pakistan. The Syrians would rent a hotel and had money back then, we wouldn't even see them. So, they invited the assembly. And that's how it created the self organised solidarity initiative with the refugees and migrants of pedion areos. This assembly was going on in tsamadou, on the other side of the garden. And it was the biggest project the movement of solidarity had done until then. The assembly was almost 100 people. And using the ... as an operational base we were providing to the people healthcare, food three times a day, breakfast lunch dinner, a playground for children

in pedion areas, guarding team, a communication team. Anything you could ask for, we fixed the showers, there were some chemical toilets, drinkable water, clothing.

No ngo, no organisations and the state was completely absent.

Pedion areas, on 14th of august we issued a paper saying that we are stopping what we do, we go away from pedion areas. Because we believe that the state is just using us to maintain a problem and not find a solution. OF course we said to the refugees if nothing happens we will continue but we want to press the state for your own good, so you go to a better place. Because pedion areas is the main drug trafficking prostitution place in Athens and its not the best place to keep children, playing with needles you know. The state reacted in a positive way, they created eleonas. And they created it in a really good way, I mean. They put aircondition and isoboxes, a playground, nice things. So the people were moved and we closed up shop. Finished what we were doing. The one month of pedion areas and the next month of closing up stuff, there was a group of people that stood out as the most responsible I would say. The people that were in it. So some of us when it all finished we kept in touch. Some because they were couples, or for example me and alex because we had a connection so we kept on company. We didn't really know what to do. So one of the people who was in the park but not in the closed circle she went to Lesvos to help. She comes back freaked out. It was crazy. She said that the few people that are helping are from abroad and they just fall down when they see somebody. And they cry. They need people that can do it. So me and alexs girlfriend we announced to the rest we are going to Lesvos. So alex says let us talk with Lesvos because we had connections there and lets see how we can do something together

Yeah, we were in contact with solidarity there. We were collecting lots of stuff and sending it to the islands. We talked to an ngo with a strange story. It was built up by a priest, but a priest who denied church money, state money, he only worked with private donations. The last picture we have of him is in a van with a tank of oxygen in the seat next to him...He was an old guy, helping people, the definition of a Christian by the book. But he didn't like the church. So he died during the months of pedion areas, but the guy who took over afterwards, he is really more political or even more anarchistic than most of the people I know. He said, look, father stratis died and a lot of people donated money because that is what he asked as a last wish. We don't need things or money, we need commandos to set up something. We need people who will not cry, people who will not faint, people who can be strong, I mean, not like when you have a baby in your hands I don't want you to cry and say oh no, I want you to take it and give it to the doctor and then you can cry all you want. I want strong people on the field

So we assembled a team of ten, two translators one for farsi one for Arabic, a doctor a drugstore owner, a sociologist of health, a paramedic, an old dentist,me and another guy. Mostly in construction.(and alex?) And it was all in Lesvos and we created platanos and scalas et ... (?) . It was, the idea was to create a pedion areas in Lesvos, so healthcare, warm food, clothing..

So international volunteers as well?

Not yet, no in the first month it was totally us. It was not viral, it became viral. This team of people the close core lets say, we extracted ourselves, created an unofficial team we called (e) migrante just a name for ourselves, its not public and we all joined the noborders Athens group which was run by two people. Because we liked the idea behind it and you know, that's how this company started.

Did you know the people?

Personally I didn't. I happened to be involved in solidarity in a funny way. Ixarthia has a problem, its difficult to blend in if you don't know anybody. So I knew people my age who weren't really active in a real way. But if you want to get involved in a project and you are not involved from day 0 that's a problem. So with my anarchy group we went to get some vegetables from the flea market and get to pedion areos. We unloaded them, a guy approached me and said he was a friend of my mothers. So he said, we need people here and I said ok, I will stay for a day. So I worked at the storage. And that how I spent the rest of the month. I was the biscuit guy.

That's how I got involved with those people, really.

Back to Lesvos. So Lesvos got its own way. I can tell you about Lesvos later. So Lesvos is operating. The problem is what happens in Athens now and what happens in idomeni. The other islands have structures, but really lowly minded, few people. Chios had some solidarity individuals, samos, kos didn't have many. They also had a problem with fascists

So Athens faces the first problem of hosting people. Because eleonas and elliniko were the only camps that were working. The anarchists who weren't part of pedion areos felt guilty about it and they asked us what to do about it, so they made notara. That's how notara was made, it was th epeople who weren't involved in pedion areos, strongly political, anti authoritarian people who wanted finally to be involved. What was really positive was that those people weren't arrogant. They said we don't know shit about this, tell us.

First meeting in Victoria. They thought it was Syrians in Victoria, and we told them no guys, its afghans! But they were pretty talkative,open, communicative, still are. That was six months ago, they started notara. Which is, first days of December. Something like that. I was, the day notara opened, I was in Athens. At first the refugees didn't want to come. Because they had their own community in Victoria, the people were near. But most of the fragile families and sensitive people that needed help they eventually came in. People were going to Victoria and telling people, they were looking because the deal was notara would be for families and handicapped, sensitive people and so on. So we were going to Victoria and distributing food and medical help and saying come to notara if you need something.

After notara was almost full already there was a new assembly in yini building called by some swiss guys to make another squat. They introduced themselves as kind of professional squatters. So they started speaking about making a new squat but it was sort of a slow process. So one night the swiss called us and said we opened the building in themistokleus, come on (the cops are here?). So they maintained the building and that's how themistoleus squat opened. Themistokleus was really more political than notara, not only in their thoughts but also their actions. They like were no ngos, not even something from ngos. Anarchy anarchy anarchy, which is really bad in a way because you play political games on the backs of refugees. They were also hosting single men, because they said notara is hosting families and women so we do the other thing. So the people from themistokleus also squatted gini (in the polytechnio) later. Gini hosts all kinds of people, families and all that. Its even more political! OF course in all the squats, there isn't a squat that says we accept only Syrians or Afghans, never. The people are accepted based on themselves, and their financial situation, their vulnerabilities. And their

willingness to cooperate. If they cause problems we tell them please go we are not a charity organisation

Gini started running also, about three months ago.

And the last two squats are carnegos 22, which we have been to and is not yet operational and scolio (the fifth, with castro) so these are the squats in athnes

In Thessaloniki there are also squats around. IN Thessaloniki there is a squat that was evicted by police a few years ago but now they have resquatted it for refugees. SO also in Thessaloniki. And idomeni volunteers arriving. Park hotel. The team of people were assembled through one guy, that I met in Lesvos, aslam obeid, he was a refugee himself, came to Greece. But he didn't fill in his asylum process. He came in a boat and knows really good English. He created a lot of good teams of people, he is actually organising international volunteers. He is really good at it and he is also a refugee, which gives him huge trust with people. He speaks Arabic and he says look guys I am also here, I am illegal, I don't have papers, I came with a boat, so what do you want to tell me? I was helped therefore I give back.

So idomeni is mostly international volunteers?

Yes. People from noborders are going there on a biweekly base to see how things are going and how to help aslam. But we don't maintain people there because there are so many people doing volunteering. And they come and make sandwiches wichi is ok, which is great but that's where it stops.

Yeah, no long term, that is the main thing. But I will tell you about the long term project later.

Does it politicize refugees being in squats?

Ok, look. I am not against it. My theory is against it but my feeling are brought to it to what the squats are doing. Squats do not try to politicize people, they try to get them to self organise. So I believe people should be politicized, I don't say anarchised even, to become more aggressive and offensive and practically involved in the fight as we call it because it concerns them a lot. On the other side I get, all the squats decided that those people have a need for stability and then we will see how it goes.

A squats in Thessaloniki and and scolio are two squats run by refugees. I went to the one in Thessaloniki, and I didn't know the refugees there. I tried to go in and it was a closed squat, for safety reasons. They said who are you, I said I know these greeks. They said those are the greek guys here, but we run it! They say, its ok for greek people to come but we run it. So the greek people set it up but they run it.

I think some people are politicising. Not a huge part of them. Mostly those that speak good English and-actually they don't politicise, they self organise. Which is the first part to be political. For example when I was in the storage unit I sent some stuff to pirates, and one of the girls in our group eleni and she was talking to the refugees there. So the refugees asked where do the things come from and she said the storage unit, there is a guy that works there and assembles them. And they said why didn't you tell us! We want to help! The next Saturday I had twenty refugees that came to fix all the storage and they said whenever you want us again just tell us.

When they realise they can be part of it. For example we have our translators, because the translators of the movement are really busy, some are in plaza some in ntoara. So we found some people from piraesus and we have them as translators, available full time. So you have this kind of thing.

For example I can learn ud from a Syrian, a kurdisch guy, I prefer it from learning from a greek guy. Even to play with him to listen, that's a real benefit. You cant talk about differentiability and no borders without getting into their tradition as they get into yours.

Plan B as I call it: most probably the borders are not going to open. But even if they do these people will have to be a part of society. So what we have, we have a society a which is afghani, Syrian, iran, Iraq, Pakistan ,Nigeria, in society B which is European south, north and ussr. There are all very different backgrounds. So somebody wants to be free, it doesn't have to be refugees can be me and you also. You are not free as long as you don't produce what you consume. As long as you have to live in a capitalist system. So based on this idea and those people are free to go wherever they want from us. I would never tell them don't go to Germany because you will become cheap labour stay here even though I strongly believe that, I would help them. I feel its imperative to think about a plan b, say those 50 000 people get stuck in Athens or anywhere, they have to be socially integrated. And that is the biggest project we will try to work on, how they can be integrated on equal terms, facing equal laws, having equal jobs all that. Which extends a lot more than the refugee crisis itself. Its also a question of greeks, not just refuges. Refugees have a problem but that doesn't mean greeks are totally fine. Btu that's a nice way to get people involved in self organisation.

When I find the musicians, I will not only say I have a collective of 15 musicians, I am a maestro, lets pla.y No. you make collective, play with them, invite solidarity musicians,the unemployed, people who have time to join in. You could do the same with journalists, you could find Syrian journalists, give them a pen and paper and they create something, with unemployed greek journalists do the same. Make a collective Create a blog a newspaper, more antimedia. You could do the same with cooks, have some Syrian, greek, Eritrean, Ethiopian place! Ethnic food street. As a business in a way that it wont cost five euros, it can be 1 euro, you get what you have to to sustain yourself and that's it.

That's why its plan B. Because those people right now don't even want to stay in Greece, if they stay two years more, they might think,hm.

If it could work anywhere, it would be Greece-

Greece is fucked up enough yeah. Because in a country that is successful enough there would not be space for that. The indigenous population has a set up they are ok with. In Greece we have many angry people.

We are in solidarity with the refugees not for the refugees. Which is a big difference. People tend to be charitable, and I have been in Lesvos too but you have to get away from that. Because charity doesn't help anybody.

I speak about mutual respect. People get into passivity, we try to activate them. That's how we get them to stand next to us because we live in the same city. For two days, five weeks, two years, it doesn't happen.

Also children, you have to involve refugee children indigenous children all the children of the world! They are going to live together.

I want to create a network in Europe of groups and individuals that help with social organisation and create some contacts and hubs. I want to go all over Europe.

Annex 7

George:

Motivation for going to Lesvos: In September when the picture of aylan kurdi was in the media, ever since then he sort of wanted to do something. But at that time he had to be in venice to study. But he did go to Calais to drop off some donations. And now he has spent three weeks in Lesvos (in april)

There were loads of international volunteers there. The main charities arrived long after the big numbers of refugees arrived in Lesvos, they only arrived this year in 2016. Before then it was just motivated individuals, and small organisations. George worked for a charity that was founded by a british guy who had arrived, seen people going from their landing point all the way to the other side of the island with no food or water to catch a ferry to the mainland and wanted to help them. This guy handed out water and food and provided transportation. Now working together with MSF. Bringing people to the MSF tents.

It was impossible to tell what was needed, things would change so fast. One time a charity would say we are full, then suddenly, we need volunteers.

A lot of foreign volunteers come for only one or two weeks. A lot of people come and go, but then again a lot of people extend their time there. There are volunteers that have regular jobs and are using their holidays to come and help, for the first time. Others have clearly done it before.

After the EU turkey deal arrivals slowed and volunteers started leaving Lesvos for mainland Greece.

Everyone in Lesvos was on whatsapp, all the ngos and volunteers. You could contact ngos constantly through whatsapp.

Voluntourism definitely a thing. People come, take photos, write a long post on fb.

Some islanders did not get on with volunteers. Big dispute about turning an old cheese factory into a reception centre. It took months to open it because the islanders did not want refugees there. Others however really wanted to help (MEDARASI organisation)

Noborders kitchen was destroyed, refugees there taken to camp. Thinks that was the point, don't want refugees out of their control.

The problem: refugees are denied a voice not just by government but also by volunteers sometimes. Volunteers think they know whats best. Refugees have skills but cant use them. Eg volunteers build a house, refugee may know much more about it.. Postcolonialist attitude. Very us vs them, which comes from an impression we get from the media.

He is planning to go back, maybe in the summer

Deaths have gone down significantly, since these charity and ngo structures in place. 2014 3500 people died at sea. And there were 200 000 arrivals. 2015, 3700 died at sea and there were 1 mio arrivals. That is the NGOs and volunteer structures in place making a big difference. There is a brigade of Spanish firefighters, trained for sea rescue who step in if there is a boat sinking near the coast. And off coast there is a sea watch patrolling day and night.

Now however , FRONTEX has taken over and the sea watch is not patrolling as much. The firefighters as well are pulling out. Now that the more “official” structures are taking over, the volunteers and smallscale are pulling out a bit. But he believes that when (he believes it will) the EU turkey deal falls through and more people arrive again in the summer, civil society can return and will be quick to respond and more effective, with experience.

Annex 8

Mohammed (and Rabee)

I decided to leave turkey one week before coming to greece just like that. Because I had a lot of problems with the Turkish people. They don't give you the money, they give you your salary sometimes on the fourth, sometimes on the tenth, sometimes they give you two salaries, sometimes just half. And half later after maybe 15 days.

I didn't have a contract. Its not available, if you want a residence permit in turkey you should give at least 4000 dollars to get it. Plus you should have in a bank account including 6000 dollars if you want to get just a resident permit. Which is pretty hard for me for anybody. If I had six thousand dollars man, you wouldn't see me. Those kind of rule sin turkey make me hate turkey. At the same time the people in turkey don't give you this kind of- if you want to do something and they find out you are from Syria or a refugee they feel its disgusting. And they think about themselves like they are above you. Because I am from Syria and at the same time because I am a refugee. And no one appreciates your work in turkey, what does that mean if you are a refugee. And if you start doing more work than them they will fire you, right away. Yeah, because they feel like I am threatening him: I am going to take his place in the future. That's why he fires me right away. These kind of people in turkey make me think ok, that's enough. So I go back to Syria to see my family in the last month to see if there is a hope to live in my country and it turns out there is no hope at all. I stayed there about one month and in that month 175 people had been killed. In one month. You cant live, that's what it turns out. You cant live in Syria. There is no life, there are no principal things like electricity, water, all that stuff is not available. That made me say, that's it. I decided to go in general anywhere. But I need something. Not someone to care about me, I don't need anyone to care about me. Im young, Im 25 years old I can do any kind of job. But at the same time give me some dignity. Its life about dignity. That's the most important thing for any human being, before money before anything. Just dignity and any kind of job and I can help myself. That's why I started thinking about going to Europe. In the first place its hard because you don't have that big amount of money. Lets go back in time say two years ago its not available to you if you want to travel from Syria to any European country. That costs at least 5000 dollars, which is not available at all. Like 5000 dollars that's a lot of money. Yeah, plus you are gonna take the sea. Just because you want to have a safe place.

People take advantage

Sure you are going to take advantage. When you take refugees from Syria, you got nothing to lose. If im going to die in the sea just try it. If I make it im going to be lucky. If I don't make it I am not going to be lucky.

Its yeah, most people die from the cold of water. If they drop in the sea, something happens to the boat they die from the cold.

People know, most people know the risks. But like there is no place to go. And you cant go back. And if you go to turkey no one is going to help you, no one gives you any hand.

Refugees returned to turkey from Greece (under deal) they will go back to Syria. Cause turkey its expensive. If you want a job you should go to Istanbul. You know Istanbul, its expensive. At the same time if you stay without a job, you are going to be broke. Its pretty expensive.

No jobs in smaller cities, and if you have a job its half the salary of in Istanbul. Its kind of normal rules. No help in turkey, nothing, I was two years in Istanbul and I never heard of anything, no help for refugees. They don't call you a refugee, are you from Syria? That's it. There is no one, there is no organisation that gives you a hand, nothing.

Protest in Athens against eu turkey deal? 9:00

Yeah. Turkey wants to go to the European union, without visas because of us. Think about it. What kind of country who owns the sea doesn't have cops on the sea to stop refugees from going to the sea. Only if you take money from the refugees at the same time. Smugglers are turkisch. That's why it costs a lot. At least what I think about the money they take from us, at least half of it goes to the turkisch government. The government is involved, sure. You own the sea. They sell the points, the start point. If I am the government and you are the smugglers, I am going to sell you this point for two hours, for lets say 50 000 dollars.

And then they get money from the eu to stop the smugglers at the same time-

Like, right now the EU signed the whole agreement with turkey, they are not going to find any kind of boat. What does that mean? Oh one day, like, now you wake up?

Did you go to this protest?

Its not allowed to me. If you think about it , I do not belong to you. Who am I?

Well, you are affected by this

Affected, but who am I? Like I am affected but I cant make an offense to anyone(?)

If anyone has the right to protest, its those affected by it-

Yeah, but I cant do anything, its not my country. People will start thinking about me, not in a positive way, in a negative way. Like who are you staying in our country,..(?)

Then who can you protest against, if not the country that is trying to deport you, then you cant open your mouth and protest anything

You cant. In my situation you cant. Cuz, no its not my country, we don't have the right to go to protest, some kind of activity that does not belong to me. Yeah, if they want to help me, I appreciate that. If the people who own the land want to protect me or give me some kind of

hand I appreciate that but I don't have the right to make any kind of activities that are not available to me as a refugee

You have a right to protection, and if someone is trying to bring you back to a country where you don't have rights, that is being violated.

Yeah, if they make some kind of decisions like, im not going to make any kind of protest. If they want to kill me kill me, but I don't have any place to go that's the point. Like me him, any people, end this war, and im going to go back. Somebody end this war and im going to go back, im not going to stay here forever, its not my country, I don't belong here. A different culture. Its ok with me, I can go down with another culture, yeah im ok with it, but I don't belong here.

That is a misconception people have, they think everyone wants to stay

No, no, even if the war ends after one year, two years, three years, even ten years im going to go back. Its not my country! Its not my country that's why- like just people just want a safe place, a temporary safe place. Whenever it goes, maybe for the next ten years. But I am gonna make sure for you everyone is going to go back. First, our country is more cheap and you can make a lot of money and you can save it. And everything is available for you almost for free. Because its your country, and your right(?)

Like whenever I go anyplace, I am not going to be a normal citizen. Not like you. You are 100% Austrian.

Maybe after some time, you will become?

It could be but, you don't feel it. Right now you live in Ireland right? Do you feel like an irish citizen?

But if I lived there for 20 or 30 years-

I don't know if I am available for me with this amount of people. If I want to go there and I find more than 100 000 syrians living in the same country its not even a chance.

Speaking about Greece, the greeks right now have a crisis. Especially the economics. If the crisis stays in this country for the next lets say five years. In five years it's the same situation whats going to happen in five years. You will not be able to find euros in pockets, people will just be making exchanges. But I told you its not my country, I cant make any kind of comments. No comments please!

Even if you want to find a job, there are a lot of homeless people in this place who have the right to find a job first? Me or the one who owns this land?

Who has the right to a good life? Everyone.

Everyone, but it depends. Im not saying people are stupid, no there is not even one I would call stupid, there is one interested there is one uninterested. If you are still interested you may have a life. Who wants to have a life he will work for it, whatever it takes.

It doesn't always work out

Yeah. Like me and him. We go out from the war, and this kind of war, and trust me you don't want for Europe to have the same kind of war. A lot of issues, and we came out for what? To

start a new kind of life? No! definitely not! I just want to continue. Continue my life. Everybody has a purpose. If something happened with our country and the war had not happened you would not find me right now sitting right next to you. Cuz, whatever, its still my country. Its ok for me to go and travel for ten years, after that I go back. But right now in this kind of situation especially the war, you don't even have the hope to go back.

Do you think the war will end?

Of course not. If it ends right now, if the president goes down. Its not gonna be safe, just like Iraq. Every couple of days, there is like several wars right now. Its going to be several wars. What I found, its really hard.

You cant plan can you

Nonono. Its hard. No one feels it Whenever Im describing the war. You cant feel it. You cant feel-when you wake up and you hear the airplane coming. You don't have time, you will go to the shelter, probably im not going to make it. Cause when the airforce comes it takes about 13-15 seconds. That's all it takes.

So you just hope.

Don't hope. Just pray. Like ok, maybe I am going to be dead after 15 seconds, maybe I am not. No one feels it. Only the ones who tried it, me and him.

I cant understand.

Yeah, no one can feel it. If you walk down the street you have the chance 50% to stay alive 50% to die. Any minute, I told you, it only takes the airforce 15 seconds to drop a bomb. 15 maybe 10 seconds. You heard the sounds, the drop the bomb, at least 17 people are going to be dead. At least. If the street is empty. 17, 18 , 20, you are on your luck. If you are walking down the street anything is possible.

Do you have family still in Syria.

Yeah, all my family are back in Syria. I am the last one. At least if something happens, my dad told me, if something happens to the family, at least we just want one person to stay alive.

Are they going to try and leave?

No. There is a lot of properties for us. Lands properties. You cant just leave it and walk away.

You cant do anything in this situation. They told me we just want one person to stay alive so just leave. Cause if something happens to the family and all of us die, just one member of the family.

Its really hard to go with the whole family. One family in Syria that is at least 5 persons. And if you want to pay for one person, that's at least 1000 dollars each. If you want to just go with a small boat, a thousand dollars each.

So people must make these decisions.

Nobody has this kind of money. Only if you sell the house, car, everything back in Syria.

And if you want to talk about Syria, are there safe places. There is. Im not going to lie to you. There is maybe one city. As a capital city. Its not safe, safe maybe for families. But at the same time its not just expensive, its EXPENSIVE. And there are no jobs, so that means there is no income. And if there is no income you cant pay rent. Lets say a 50 m2 home costs you about 1500 dollars at least per month.

That's like London or New York

Yeah, yeah and there is no income. That's why people walk away. And young people, young men lets say. Cause when you are 18, if you aren't studying, you should go to the army. And in this war right now, if you go to the army a million percent you are not coming back. And that's why we are just running. After we finished our studies. Just let me go out, I don't want to get involved in any kind of weapons. Me and him we don't want to get involved with any weapons. If you start with weapons its just like cigarettes. Its going to take forever. And that's why we tried to get out.

So its like if you are a young man any militant group wants you.

Oh yeah. Anyone, the free army the Syrian army, is going to take you. And that's why you just run. I don't want to get involved. I don't want to kill any kind of people. And that's why we walk out. For the young people, all Syrians its not available. Especially if you go to the checkpoints you are stopped right away, like go down.

And they suspect you are with someone? Some militants?

Yeah, yeah yeah exactly what happens right now.

And that's why its mainly young men coming?

There are a lot of young men coming by themselves. Just like me. Thats the reason I just wanted to go. If you stay you have two choices, the free army or the Syrian army. If you are stuck in the middle, no no chance.

Why did you start with translating and volunteering in the squat and piraues

In the squat just a couple of days ago. But back in e2, I was living and working in e3. E3 was just a small camp but in E2 there was a lot of people. And they needed hundred percent they needed translators. I started working there for the last two months, one month and a half you can say. Working in e2 as a translator, cause there were a lot of people who needed translators. Like, especially when someone needed clothes or whatever, none of them spoke so much English. But all the volunteers spoke English and that why I started doing translations.

At the squat?

I translate a lot of stuff. Like yesterday I translated a paper, telling some kind of statement, a new decision for the board. To get the stone building empty (?) so I translate for them.

Do you like it at the squat?

I like it, at the same time, it's a safe place. But most important thing is you don't want to go to the camps. Because the camps its not that much (?). And you cant do anything in the camps. The most important thing in the squats its city centre, there is a life. Yeah, you are just waiting

in camps. Stay in line for food, the bathroom, stand in line. Blabla. And the squats are so much better than camps.

Also you are doing something there.

Yeah. Its about being as an equal. The whole refugees are volunteering at the squats its pretty cool. Its more level. That's why the squats are more, you can say, not beautiful. How can you express? A wonderful place to live.

It's a beautiful idea isn't it. Everyone is-

Sharing. Yeah. Self-organisation. That makes it more beautiful than the camps. In the camps the state is responsible for you. You cant do anything. Only stay in line if you want to do anything. But here its very different.

There is a lot of people who want to come to the squat. If its up to refugees definitely they want to come to squats.

How did you hear about it?

Facebook. And there are a lot of relatives for us. From Greece. Who introduced us to people who were responsible. We started to make relationships inside the squat, and I hope that's going to work.

I hope the squat stays.

But the squat is only available to families. Not to young people. No one cares about the young people, I don't know why!

The idea is they can take care of themselves more..

People get afraid of the young people. Yeah, Im a youth come on!

Yeah look at you in your cap, so suspicious.. who makes the decision in the squat if you can live there?

Its not, there is no head between the people. Its decisions, it made by some kind of meeting between the volunteers and the people. And these kind of decisions are taken by them. There is no head, no boss. You are responsible for yourself but I hope. I hope I can get a place. Stay in the city centre and at the same time help people with their translations.

It's about helping, in the first instance it's about helping. I will still hope.

Would you go to a different squat?

We will think about it. To go to another squat, see what's up over there and what's going on. Then go to other squats. And we are just waiting right now for the relocation. And if they need anything, whats needed right now is a lot of things and organisation for the translations and stuff. They need a lot we are both just waiting. Cause you cant work at the same time, but if you take the card after you make the first interview they give you a card and then another interview. So you can work until you go. That's what matters for me. SO I can get a job.

Would you like to stay in Greece

Raabi: I don't care about Greece. Its nice, but I don't care which place. All the places, are ok for me.

So its easier to just stay in Greece.

Yes, its easier for me. Im looking for relocation as well. After that I will see which country has a place for me, if its not good for me I will stay here.

Some countries are out of the relocation program now, Austria, Norway, Sweden, all out. I hope to be out too.

Mo: I have nothing against merkel. I have nothing against any European helping. At least she is giving a hand

Raabi: no. She is a weak lady. She has lied to the world. She said, I will help them, I will do it. But then you can see merkel behind putin, she is like a cat..

J: you don't like her huh? Im not her biggest fan. She has too much power in the EU, because only the germans voted for her..

Mo: At the same time it's a country like Germany, you cant say anything about it. They have their own politics to follow. Its not about controlling the people. Its about be who you are do your think. In Germany, after the war Germany was nothing.

J: but it got a lot of help from the US at the time that's why they were able to rebuild economically.

Mo: they take the rule, if you want to be on top you have to fight. Nothing in this life is free.

Its about the rules Germany makes for the EU. Don't produce things in your country, bring the factories to Germany. Take a look around you right now in Greece. There is nothing they are exporting. If they want something they get it form the EU. In this country. In that kind of countries where you have no countries, nothing to export, everything imported. At the same time I told oyu in the next five years you will see Greece change, there will be no more euros.

If they say the borders are open, I am not going to stay here for another 10 hours. But its some kind of punishment right now of the greek government.

Other eu countries are punishing Greece for the economic crisis?

Yeah.

Annex 9

Rabee

From syria. From turkey, from Izmir came to greece. I like being in Greece, its like damaskus before it got destroyed, the same streets, the building. The same (symbol?)

In Istanbul you can see a huge city. Huge buildings, And you have to work 15 hours, all the people in the train when they are waiting in the station they are serious and stressed. Here you can see the smiles and the hugs its very nice.

In Piraeus: I am working, not really a volunteer but I help volunteers there, American guys, from the UK, when they came as a team. I gave the food because I can speak Arabic with people, we also had a guy from Afghanistan, because he can speak with afghanis and one from iran. So we were like a big team and when they came we gave the food one by one.

I talked to people, had a connection with all the people in E3. Now E3 is empty, all the people to the camps or E1, Then E2 was emptied and people came to E1. It will continue.

I am in contact with people in the camps I have one friend here one there. And in e1. And some people left Greece for other countries. Some people at the border they gave money to a guy, 1400 euro to cross. But I don't have that much money. He would take them to other countries.

I wrote my name in the organisation so on the 15th of march. Now they will call people on the 11th of march (for relocation). That's why I will know soon. I am not nervous. I don't care about the country I get. If the country is not good I will stay here. If you want to stay here its very fast if you have a passport. Its two months to take the legal form, and 4 or five months it takes without a passport (Im not sure..)

But there is a problem, with work and the economy here. Maybe I will move into the new squat.

If they say you have to go to Germany I will stay here. I hate Germany, and I hate angela merkel. Almost all of the problem with refugees come from angela merkel. From this side she says I help the refugees, from the other side her government is a big force in the world to help sell the weapons. From this side you help sell the weapons from the other you say you help refugees. They came to your country because of the weapons. Its angela merkel and the government of Germany that created the problem in Greece.

I have a lot of friends from Greece and the UK and America. Some people left, but we are still in contact over facebook and whatsapp. Almost all the friends are women, because most volunteers are women.

Do you use different websites to stay informed on whats happening at borders?

On facebook. I have friends on the border. They are now waiting ther ein the tents. But they have three meals every day they have medicine they have organisation and media. But there it is very cold because the area is open. In idomeni. Its not closed and its far away from everything.

My friends there said we are ok, but we are waiting. And every day they are trying to cross but there police cars and the army and there is some stress between the people and the police guards and army.

Do you think they will open the borders? No never. Because these countries, like Serbia and so on they need to meet in parliament to make a decision. And they cannot open them because angela merkel said no. Its like England. The government of England says oh yes we will receive everyone, only you cant cross the border.

If europes countries need or want to help people they will take the people from turkey, then people can take a plane. And not the death trip, what people call the trip on the boat over the sea.

I have about 10 plans for my future. Let me tell you the first of my plans. I will go to one of these countries of relocation and continue my studies and will work will make friends, and

when the war is finished in Syria I will go back. Because I love my country, I love my city, and I love my bed and my house. I have a car there. I will have my dog, because my dog is there. This is my future

But if the war is not finished, I will continue my studies, I will have a relationship with a girl there, maybe I will marry. Its good.

Why I want to live at a squat? Because I do not want to go back to the camp. Because when you grow up you have to go forwards not go back. I went from mytilini to the e3 tent and lived in a luxury tent there. You know the tent was like a house! And I was close to the families, and I lived alone in the tent. After that I went to a hotel. After that I lived in a nice place. I have to go forward, I need to go to the squat. Its not difficult for me to go back to e3, but I need to go forward.

In the new squat I saw a lot of people I can help. Me and my friend. My friend is better in English. He has an American accent. But when he sits down with a guy from America you can see the difference.

And now I have maybe one week more in the house. I go to the squat every day to help and then maybe we live there. I will help after that I will maybe take one room and I will cook. Im good. Maybe I will clean the dishes too. I am very good at cleaning.

Annex 10

Yiannis (with Yorgos)

Notara involved for fourth months. I am no longer involved. I felt that I was much more involved than I wanted to be. And then people who I appreciated were insulted by the assembly and that was a reason for me to step back. And it is functional, refugees are making it functional. But it is not so tidy anymore.

First refugees would only stay for two or three days. The problem started with people who want to ask for asylum now the borders are closed. Till December people came, stayed 2 3 days, had a bath and some new clothes and things and then they went on their way to idomeni and then Germany most of them. But from December on most people are trapped in Greece. They are not organised because they don't know where they are, they cant plan for the future.

From the early 90s people who transitted Greece were always a problem. For the immigrants as well. Because they wont keep up with your rules because they know they are here today and tomorrow they are somewhere else. And many of them tried to take whatever they can to get on their way. But now its different but not organised. They are organised in idomeni. People that make struggles and occupy the railway. Here they are not organised in the same way. There are some national organisations they try to persuade them to help them but most of them are not organised in some way. They expect to be helped by greek organisations.

Yes, it will change. Its already changing. Now they realised, the people from Afghanistan, especially the tribe hasara. They are afghanis with the almond like eyes. They were treated as outcasts in Afghanistan and iran and we had some translators from that tribe in notara and people tried to organise them for good and bad reasons. Good reasons to help them to know their rights, the bad reason for money to promise them to help them to get to Germany. People from Afghanistan who have been here for 10, 15 years are doing this. They have a major role in

this whole refugee crisis. We don't have many of them but they are involved in many roles. Some of them work for doctors without borders in mytilini and help them translate, others are involved in squats like in notara to help people, others are in Victoria to persuade people to give them money to help get through the money.

You met one. Nadir. He was working at pedion areos and he is a self taught photographer but he was an interpreter. He has been here for many many years, ten years. And now he is working for the camp for the ministry.(yorgos interfering)

Yes, found the job he needed. Watch the movie vividanja (?) it will be very helpful when you see that movie.

People who are in real need will not apply to your rules in every way, to your ethics. That's human. And some of them, for some people who I helped, I felt ashamed that I was in a place to help them. They were so proud. But others they could steal me blind just to survive. And I know that. Many interpreters are involved to find this kind of job. Other are involved to help their countrymen. For example mohammed, mohammed was in a strike. Some years ago there was a strike to gain the rights for all refugees in Greece. A hungerstrike. And he almost died. Because he was political even in morocco. And now he is doing that just to help them organise themselves. For example he was one of the very few to agree with me when we disagreed with others that said that refugees must not do something in the squat, they are just here for us to take care of them. And the thing got worse because there is a misunderstanding because of the arab culture. The arab world its a bit like crete, when you are in my house you don't do anything. I will do everything for you and its an insult if you try to take a glass of water. Why are you doing that? I will bring it to you, you are in my house. When you just push them a little and say no, now we want you to help us, they started. And mohammed was one of the very few that helped me make them realise that here we are doing everything by ourselves, all of us. You are not just a guest.

It means that is their house as well.

yes that is happening now in city plaza. From the start everyone that comes is informed that he must take care of his room. TO clean the corridor with the other and so on.

How is it in other squats?

It has many variations. Because for example in the school they have a school of their own. There are three ladies there that organise the children to have lessons. In notara greeks come to teach and it depends. It depends on the, at some point it has to do with the political organisations involved in the squats

Are refugees becoming more political in squats?

No. They have much bigger problems. Survival problems. No. But no, I was- by the example they see a place working without bosses, without presidents, without, just by an assembly discussing the problems. And many of them participate. That's a way to be more political. But they have much more major problems. And for me its wrong to have as a goal to make them more anarchist, more leftist whatever. Whatever they become is by example. I mean we have a place, are running it just by assembly, without any state help, without a boss, without a boards. That is more than enough as an example for me. I don't want to- there are people in the squat in

notara, in city plaza who wanted people to have books translated. Leftist, anarchist books. For me its more than enough for example. I have been many times in Victoria square, that the text we delivered there that said policemen do not have the right to tell immigrants to get off the bench. There are always policemen that say to people who just sit on the bench to get up, very politely. They have the order to be very polite they dontwant to start a fight. But when they see someone who is a different color to you sit on the bench they come and tell you please get up and go out. The mayor of Athens said that we don't want this mess in Victoria square and they gave policemen the order not to let immigrants stay in the square.

That's already an act to say no I wont get up from the bench to a policeman

No they don't do that they don't want to get in any trouble. Most of them the papers are expired, they live in camps, they want to get back to the camp there they have food. They have experience from the police from their countries, they don't want to get in any trouble. So they just get up. But when we are there and tell the policemen: What kind of law allows you to tell people to get up off the bench when he or she is just sitting there, what law allows you to tell him that? After two or three, a very small dialogue, the policemen go away. But that's only for a few hours four or five hours when we are there. But the leaflet we were delivering about that we translated it in farsi urdu and Arabic. And we gave it to people, we had a microphone to read it. When someone in farsi or dari reads it, many people gather around to try to listen and then have a conversation.

What do you hope to achieve by that?

I want them to be informed of the situation. For example we also wrote a paper about the eu turkey agreement and perhaps at some point they will have their own assembly. At some point when we read this paper they have a discussion for some hours, for half an hour. They stay there they talk to each other. But my experience in a situation where people are in a great need unfortunately they try to find personal solutions on their own. It should happen the other way around. But when people are in great need I see people trying to find personal solutions.

Most of them do not help one another without benefit, wihtouts something to gain. I mean, I benefit as well. I have a more meaningful life. I feel human. I benefit as well, I don't do it just for the other person. But they have very specific problems of survival, so they don't have the luxe to do it (for that). There are people like mohammed. Mohammed will not go to an NGO like Nadir did. Because he is an anarchist he does not believe he should work in this field. But most of them, in my experiences, that participate to help their countrymen but with the hope that they will find a job in this field at some point.

In the long run, do you think this can make people politically aware, aware of tactics?

I really want to be more optimistic but I am not. Its my disappointment but I cant see really how this would happen in the real future. Because when we try to make them participate in our assembly in notara for example by having our translators translate everything they had a really pathetic role.

Its difficult though with all these strong opinioned people.

Very difficult, very strong opinioned people.

And in a foreign country

Of course. And to add to what you are saying, when a refugee suggested that they should have a different assembly of their own, only the refugees that live in notara, the assembly did not pay attention to the suggestion. They did not even discuss it. That's the situation.

They participated in a march we had, against the EU turkey agreement. That was the first time in my life that I saw immigrants participate in a march without being agitated, promoted by a political organisation.

For example, Javet Aslam (president of the Pakistani community in Greece), he is collaborating with a specific political party. So the people he knows who go to the march of this political party they are going there because they have this collaboration. But in the march we did against the agreement we just handed out a leaflet that said we open the borders and all of a sudden some 500 immigrants participated in this march, just from the leaflet. The sign on the leaf was initiative of solidarity for refugees. We organised it but they participated even though it was risky for them, just as persons, as individuals. I was impressed. So I might be- I want to be optimistic I think things might change.

It can put people in a vulnerable situation when they participate in marches or protests, do people think about that?

Look I feel very controversial about this subject because there is this accusation from the media that people especially people from abroad exploit refugees for their own causes. And that happens, I have seen it happen. But on the other hand, if we didn't have max, nina and said to prepare the breakfast for notara people would starve to death. And max nina and said just came from England to help. They did not want to exploit anyone, they didn't have any other causes they just wanted to help. From Austria, from hungary, from England, from Switzerland. So some people try to exploit refugees for their own political causes but it is a very small minority. And they make it a big deal in the media to discredit the whole solidarity movement. When you deliver a leaflet that informs the refugee that the borders are closed, don't believe anyone who says to you leave from here, or if you inform them about the real situation in the concentration camps. You don't exploit him or her for political reasons, you inform him. That's a concentration camp with police and when you get there you will have food and a bed to sleep but it will be something like a prison. That's not exploitation that's information.

But the government doesn't like that-

Yes, they say, they say that we, the whole solidarity movement tries to exploit.

Backlash against volunteers, they have to be vetted to work in camps?

Something like three months now they are becoming more and more aggressive against anything that is not NGO or BGO yes, they are becoming more and more aggressive. Now that they have attacked this week only four structures that were not certified. No border kitchen (which delivered thousands of meals for many people) in Lesvos, in Chios as well, in Thessaloniki they have attacked. They have been warned two months ago that you should evacuate. The police evacuated it.

For Lesvos for no border kitchen they just went with bulldozers in and just crashed it. They levelled it. Completely. (yorgos)

Why is it happening now?

The summer is here. The tourists will come. That is the funny side I would say. (yorgos)

That's a very good reason, they were on the coast they have tents-

That's the obvious thing about tourism. But I think now they are trying to take all the power from the solidarity division of people and take it to the NGOs to take money from the EU or UN (yorgos)

83 million euros. TO be delivered to the NGOs from the municipalities. From the EU.

That's the budget, I don't think it's the same budget as the UN budget. The UN gives other money. There have been hundreds of NGOs blooming out of nothing suddenly. (yorgos)

That's why for example, I was very focused from the beginning to urge and provoke immigrants to organise themselves. Not to leave them just as guests. That was my main concern and that's why I was accused of being bossy. Because every time things would arrive in notara or pedion areas things from people who wanted to help. Food or whatever. I demonstrated them, and asked for help, I couldn't do it by myself. That's why I was accused of being bossy. Because for some people, we as a political structure of solidarity must do everything for them and they should just sit and-

Probably not nice situation for them either-

No its not! It institutionalizes them. It makes them institutionalized. For me it was very clear from the start if we do not do many squats, self organised with the migrants to help with them being really involved we will have concentration camps. Like its happening now. Its not something I didn't expect. It was either this or that. We did not manage to make as many squats as we should. We did not help the immigrants to get involved and self-organised and now we have concentration camps with police, ngos and all the other things.

The ultra anarchists that made the squat of themistokleus had one thing right. Immigrants should organise themselves and they were very strict about it. I do not agree with them about many things, but this they had it right. We wont provide a place, they will realize from the start that when you get in this house you will do everything by your own. Apart from legal and medical help. All the other things, cooking, cleaning, you should do it on your own. Yes it worked. It has other problems as a squat. I don't want to be misunderstood, I disagree on many things, but this thing they had it right.

When they criticised us in notara for being too pro charity as an accusation. Not solidarity not struggle. They were very wrong. But they had one thing right. That you cant do it just by providing a place and giving food and so on, you always have to have the concern too to remind people who are institutionalized and in a void. They don't have a place to stand they are not in their countries or where they want to be, they feel like, for many of them I think its like a posttraumatic shock. They are in shock. So we should help them by reminding them that they should be organised. Not organise them by our own standards. The most healthy are the people who I saw were in a better condition were those that were doing something. Were helping in the squat were trying to find asylum. But many of them are just waiting.

But how many of the squats involve refugees in this way?

All the squats try to involve refugees in some way. For example in the school they have a squat the refugees have organised. In notara all the cleaning for some months now is happening by the refugees with the help of the others. In city plaza from the start they are given a leaflet that says that all the things that happen here are the responsibility of all the people involved, especially those that live there. All the squats try to do it. But there is a difficulty from the state they are in and from the political organisations to really let them do it. From both sides.

I think we don't really want them to do it by themselves because then it will happen in a way we cannot really control but they are not in a place to do it by themselves as well. They better leave it to us. That sounds a bit absolute but it's close to the reality.

How do you think refugees have changed Athens and the people living here?

It's the first time in my life- I was doing lessons for refugees here in the 90s. Before that in..(?) for 20 years now. It was the first time I really had an emotional involvement. And I tried to learn from them, learned the stories. I am a person who has been involved 20 years now with refugees. It's the first time in my life I have realized the whole spectrum of their problems of their mentality. Now that I have spent hours with them. And that is happening with many people in Greece. And you saw I am not really optimistic, you can't accuse me of optimism, but I think it's really the truth to say that with the majority of the people in this country, even people you would not expect to be involved, socially, they used to say things you could call racist. The majority of the people in this country because of this problem have slightly moved towards solidarity and against racism. And you can feel that from people who give food to people who are walking from lamia(?) to idomeni, people who are involved in Piraeus, from all the political spectrum. They are not leftists and anarchists, conservative people, right wing people but yes. You feel powerful when you can help someone else. And because of the crisis in Greece, many people who are in crisis themselves that don't have money, that have basic problems felt powerful to help other people. But I don't want to judge their motives, anyway. This whole refugee problem makes some people move towards solidarity, others to exploit refugees, be more racist. Two extremes. It's not unexpected, that right wing is rising in Greece. They had ceased their activities for a long time. But now they feel they would find a new audience. Same in other countries.

People are more open now and I am trying to learn more. It's a general thing yes. There are still people who want to promote their political agenda, there are still people who are afraid. Some things haven't changed but in general I have seen the change in many ways, in many people.

We have letters coming from Germany, thank you for your help, and phone calls.

I saw (some refugee friends) living in doctors of the word, in notara again because they said that due to bureaucratic problems they cannot have food at doctors of the world till the end of the month.

[Annex 11](#)

Castro (translated by Phevos)

How did you become involved in the squat?

Castro was involved from Lesbos. He was in Lesbos when the first people started coming. Like the big majority of the people, the big flow as we call it. He was deeply involved in the squat that was in the former social workers house as we call it, the centre. It started in really bad conditions. It was raining and bad weather and a lot of people on the streets. And it came to the point that it hosted 520 people which of course was not only to cover their basic needs but to protect them from the huge exploitation that the local people were doing. And of course that created some arguments kinds of. With the local people. And I can ask him because that was evicted..

So this party belonged to the communistic party youth. The people from the communistic party youth came to reclaim it. Not to throw the refugees out but to manage it. But of course the refugees freaked out they thought the police had come and would arrest them. So most of them fled. And then the communists tried to maintain a small population in the building but they made the mistake of close the corridor. And the refugees thought the police really came and are going to arrest us and they started jumping out of the windows and they started fleeing out of the windows

They were really aggressive

They were really aggressive yeah, and of course nobody stayed there and it was totally empty. SO now its closed, with steel.

It was in the days when mytilini had almost 12 000 people and the camps were all full. It was totally full because the ships were on strike, the ships couldn't move people to the mainland and the weather was bad as well.

Why did you go to Lesbos in the first place?

How he got involved. Something you should know that he is part of the Syrian refugee organisation which is located in Greece. It is one of the many organisations around the world of Syrian people who are out of Syria. So he was active in this group supporting a makeshift camp that was at the border between turkey and Syria. The name of the camp was katme and it was designed to fit around 12 000 people and here they were sending loads of stuff and supporting actively. Mainly because they thought the problems in Syria would stop soon. The problems they thought would be solved by start 2013, they thought this would not go on. It was really difficult at that time to go from Syria to turkey. So they thought ok, people can wait there for some time and then eventually this will be solved so no problem. But six months before (later?), after like 20 years after he hadn't been in Syria he went to Syria and he stayed there for 10 days and he saw what was happening, he saw the situation. And he decided when he came back that I have to go to an island and I have to be involved and work on an island. I have to be on the frontline I have to be where the people come. And that why one of the first things he did in Lesbos was to open the Syrian solidarity house which was a place where some people could be hosted. Some families, some children. And which was of course in total cooperation with the Syrian house of athens and us. and you know, the Syrian refugee group. 10:40

And the Syrian refugee group is it run by the Syrians themselves?

Lets make a distinction here. There is the house of Syrians, but actually the name of the group he is a part of is called club of free Syrian immigrants. That's the name of it. So you asked if it was run by Syrians. There is a distinction between the Athens part and Lesbos part. Of course

both have Syrians, especially the Athens one which is based here and is going on for years and there are also some greek friends and benefactors, honorary members and so on. On the other side in the Lesvos house, right now its still active, there is one guy from Lebanon and one Syrian guy and other volunteers and solidarity individuals. Because the last two families that were living there were evicted by the police in order to go to kalatape which is one of the registration camps to fix some problems of their papers. So it is still active but it hosts now volunteers and solidarity individuals.

So they work together closely with solidarity people?

Yes

So this squat was it originally run by solidararians?

So of course with all the people that passed through the solidarity house in Lesvos they had a close communication. Whatever they might need for papers, journeys. So there was an incident that some people came to the port of piraeus, a group of 46 people including 4 women from Iraq one turkish guy some Palestinians, Syrians and stuff like that. And there was also, the last of them were a group of 12 people. Castro went, so all of them were in the port, conditions were pretty bad, so castro went to the port to see what was happening and to actually try to prevent those people from going up to the borders. Because he thought you know since the border is so fucked up, why should they go there? He couldn't convince them, they went up to the border, they were stuck in idomeni. They were stuck actually before idomeni, in something called the gas station, have you heard of it? Actually 6 km before. SO they stayed there for 8 or 9 days in really bad conditions. SO he had some communication with a Thessaloniki solidarity group who were going to provide people with tents and stuff like that. So but of course Thessaloniki groups could not just go over days long for everything. SO he decided with someone else to go to Thessaloniki and find hosting for these people for at least one night and then they would come together back to Athens to decide what to do and find a viable solution. One of the social centres we have in Athens, its called nosotros, its located near exarthia square. Its an autonomous kind of place, for many years it runs. Accepted those people for at first one or two days. Of course the 46 people came up to the number of 162. And after 4 days nosotros was like, guys we cannot handle it anymore, we need help. So with other people who were giving solidarity he thought ok we must find a place and squat something. Someone told him about this school which was empty for two years. In the social gene lets say of those people, the refugees especially from Syria and many other places, a school is a building that is used in times of need. If people came from Lebanon or Palestine, Syrians would open schools for them to host people and provide care. And they were like ok, since we found a school to open, why not do it? That's how they chose the buildings. There was an assembly of workers, of schoolguards that was hosted in the building. And he approached them saying we want to squat the school. They were pretty negative on that based, on the excuse the municipality might take action. Anyway. One night after, which was about one month and a half ago, with some solidarity people, they opened the squat. Only one month and a half ago.

So its entirely run by refugees? Not by solidarity people?

When it started there were some solidarity people and volunteers who came here to help. There were some issues with some of them, not the majority, but some, because some people decided to play the role of good humanitarian, you know, lets open something for the refugees, some

others, when it opened, were playing the role of police, don't take it as a word, but like guarding and solving problems. Like we are the ones to solve problems. It was clear that they didn't want to open, the majority of the people, something for refugees. They wanted to open something with refugees, to create an open place where refugees could stay and commute and self-organise. That was the idea from the beginning. Of course also at first there were some problems with the neighbourhood you know at first but it was clear from the assembly of the building that mainly consisted of refugees (now it's actually the main assembly is by refugees themselves) to have good terms with the neighbourhood because they didn't want problems with the church, with the surrounding buildings. And of course the refugees were helped by knowledge people had from movemental operations-you know how to make an assembly, a team to work all together, to self organise. So instead of solidarity people self organising and inviting refugees to do that. The refugees were put in the position, kind of, you are the ones, you want to run it, you create the teams. The teams were guarding of the building, which is now mainly done by refugees, it's the communication team, the kitchen which works on rotation base, the health team, which consists of syrian former medics or paramedics, or drugstore owners, and if something is more important they send people to the hospital so they have this healthcare going on. There is a team for women. And there are two assemblies, one is the general one that also invites solidarity people which happens every Saturday, another is the assembly of the refugees which is also the main one to deal with all the problems of the building.

He wants to adapt to a school, because it is a school. So only four days after they entered the building there were already school classes all primary school plus mathematics, three English classes and one german class. 26 kids were inscribed in a greek school in gazi. Another 26 are waiting to go in a school here in ixarthia in coletti. They are looking forward to inscribe also kids from 13 to 18, so teenagers. There is also a theatrical team that is going to put up a play in the upcoming weeks.

And of course, when we speak about school we don't speak about greek teachers or goodwill people, we speak about Syrian teachers, professional educators that came from Syria, so that the children can learn from their own people, without a language barrier, plus they can continue where they left off at school of course those people know the education system. They are people that live in the squat, refugees.

So the idea is to involve the squat with the local community a lot as well?

About the hosting of people and all that. He say there are 63 families that live outside this place, they are not part of the squat but they have access to it. These are people who have found places to stay or somebody gave them a place to stay or they rent a small amount(?).

Does he feel its important people have a community to come to?

So to connect it, these 63 families and many other people that live in Athens in many place, they have contact with this squat for both physical and psychological needs. So for physical what this building can offer there is washing rooms, a bathroom, and two storage units one with clothes and one with food. Of course the food one is providing people outside the squat with food. So that's why they are low on many things right now as we speak. SO some people come to take food, but what surprised him in a way is that those people say, for example, Saturday Sunday I will go to the squat they go back to the community.

Does he think there will be more self organised squats in the future

He says its definitely needed. Even now there are people coming from idomeni and moving around the greek territory. Right now this squat is housing almost 362 people. The max it happened to have was 416, though it was supposed to be for 180 people, the measurements they made at first, they said 180 people can live here in good conditions. Because one of the main reasons was to fight the conditions that were in the camp, overcrowded bad hygiene and stuff. But of course, as it happens with these projects, somebody heard about it, somebody came, was sent here. And he said it was clear for us from the beginning, we cant say no, even if there is no space. Of course when it reached 416 they said ok, stop it, they already had a conversation when there was 340 but they were like, ok, now we have to do something. But he says, against the idea of the other squats, we cannot deny especially to women with children, like or a child we cannot deny access. We are not here to deny access to those people, even if it's a million people, if its women with children we will open the house we will get them inside and they will be treated as best as we can with overpopulation. He also says some people don't have the chance to go somewhere apart from the squat. For example people who go to skaramangas, if they came alone from idomeni and not with a group or a camp or if they weren't in piraues port and they don't have a stamp they cannot get inside. And they get the same response from the squat like city plaza or notara. No we don't have space. Those people eventually come here and he says its pretty difficult to deny them access. 48:37

There is also a barbershop in the squat

One of the squats they have really good connections with is notara. There is an exchange of supplies, both sided and medical equipment if needed and everything. There are also people who come from Notara to visit, like refugees, so they come to visit and help in the storage, so actually with Notara there is good cooperation both on the squat to squat level and refugee to refugee. With other squats they did not manage to have that kind of good communication because they were like ok you have a bigger place, take some people. It was like the usual stuff.

Here they also had the problem that another squat accused them of choosing people based on nationality. Which is not true of course there are African people and afghan people living here. It started from Syrians but that does not mean it excludes people from other nationalities. And I asked about what do they want. Most of them are in relocation programs so they will eventually go to Europe, most have applied for asylum and others are asking about it and some people are asking for jobs and say if they find a job they will stay.

And they will stay at the squat?

No they would move out I guess.

[Annex 12](#)

Larry

How did it start with refugee radio network?

Well, refugee radio started in 2014. And there was a necessity for us to start something like that in Germany because the media were portraying refugees in a negative way, calling people coming terrorists, suicide bombers and so on and so forth. Based On the negative narrative civil society also didn't know so much, that was a shock for us we were surprised that how come you didn't know that. SO working with them and discussion , working in organisations, in meeting places like here. The.. came up to me and I looked at it because I have been involved in pro

democracy in Africa. So I was like why don't you just have a radio as a platform to get messages out. Because we have a problem where people say they don't know what's happening about the flüchtlings situation in Italy. That's why we started.

Its for german people?

For everybody, for both. That is why we say we like to bridge the gap. The gap is information and conversation. Information means everything that has to do with telling stories, with engaging. So yes, its empowering refugees and also informing society, empowering the society. That's the idea behind it

There is one in Italy?

Its done by us in Italy. Us and other refugees, a network of refugees across Europe. Some may not have heard about it but its spreading. France is very important, and Greece. Its not our fault that there.. in Italy or france or elsewhere. As you said, Greece is a transit and gateway, I know and that is why I say refugee radio is not focusing on people who are already on the move. Our focus centred on people who are here and people who are thinking about making the move. That is to say these stories you hear on refugee radio, people are listening to it and can have information and an idea of what they are coming to face. The dangers, the realities. We don't need phantom stories. And the people here are working with them to revisit it and empower themselves through So that's what we do.

You were talking about a network, is it formal or just people in contact.

People in contact yeah. Refugees. Civil society, ngos. We work with them. that's the network, people like you y ou are already in the network. We are not talking about the bbc, or something.

Is the goal to have radios in different countries in Europe?

We don't say have radios, what we say is produce what you can produce. No one says go out and create a radio. You have the power to do that you are welcome to, if you do not, create something and share it with others. Its like having a book, you have read your book and you want to give it out you want to lend it to someone or leave it out so someone can make use of the book. Tell me your stories in your refugee camps, tell your stories as you are moving-there are people who are doing it now- tell your stories of the daily life the discrimination that you face. You have digital equipment to do that. With mobile phones smartphones, you can make use of it.

That is definitely happening-

Yeah there is a lot of that now all over the place, but when we started it was like a no go area it was impossible. People were like that is not even possible, for me nothing is impossible. That's why we decided to create a platform, engage with civil society, engage with non governmental, anybody we can engage with. As long as we are visible. There are people who disagree with us with tha philosophy but well we leave them to their own, we are the refugees, we know what we represent, we know, its our problem and we are the ones who know how to tackle this problem

What is the biggest challenge?

There are a lot! The biggest challenge has to do with discrimination and funding also. Discrimination, is that people discriminate against refugee radio because it doesn't represent

what they want of it. Some want us to be very violent. Some want us to talk violent things on radio, fuck the police or some shit like that. No. If I say fuck the police on radio and I get picked up or arrested, where are the people that are agitating for that? They all disappear. Nobody encourages us to do negative things. We are here for positivity.

Funding is also a problem. Cause we are one of the few if not the only refugee run project in Deutschland at least. So that has got no white face on it. the people in society, not all of them, but a majority(?) are not comfortable with that they always want to tell us our story. We have a system which has to do with colonisation and imperialism that wants always to be right. You know, they always want us to follow their narrative. That's not a reality I would want. So because of these things that is this...(?) For us hamburg is quite a bit better, hamburg is a little bit liberal in issues like that for example in Berlin it would be absolutely impossible to have refugee radio.

So you would have all these political groups telling you what to do?

Not just that, no, you have to look at legal issues also that are involved. And there was Lampedusa in berlin, it was crushed. The uranian platz, it was destroyed. Lampedusa in hamburg it is still there. In Leipzig it was not possible, in Nuremberg-so every region in Germany or in Europe has its own way of doing it. So we just have to target areas where we can build a structure and from there spread. That's why for us in hamburg, we were surprised, we just built refugee radio for problems we were facing in hamburg. It started in our basement, we never believed it would grow viral, people would be calling us from America, for everywhere, Australia you know. So that means, one thing we are doing in a corner of Europe is affecting peoples understanding outside of this corner.

SO its changing people's perceptions?

Yes, its changing. Definitely, of course! When we came they didn't even know what was happening in Italy. They didn't even believe refugees could have laptops or smartphones. So now, that has changed. Now they feel ashamed of it because we also caricatured that on the radio on the tv show and people are a little bit ashamed. And that's ok that's fair enough, people are learning.

Languages?

There is no language barrier in refugee radio platform. As I would call it a multilingual platform. We do have some events or timeslots for different shows, the Deri, the Pashtu, the Arabic, they all have different slots. But most of the programs you see there are affiliate programs by mainstream media. Because they approached us and they wanted to, but I still watch bbc, I watch and listen to nearly all media. We also have a lot of people who listen to (german media I think) and the other programs. That is good, that is what we meant from the beginning to engage with mainstream media. Ours was to say what you are doing is wrong, we are here now and this is the way it should be done. And that's cool and now they are coming down to our frequency. And yes we have some of their programmes, people still listen to that anyway, only they would not be on refugee radio. So that's why we try to incorporate their programmes into our slots and they have a wider audience which is good for them. Also we have a way to have refugee voices on radio free Europe and on the BOA slot, so that's an international thing.

Yeah, the idea was to do something in the music community but when we saw that the impact was huge, why remain local.

We have now a space to assemble people who are arriving here to talk about issues. When we came here in 2011 it was quite difficult. But now we have struggled and built a foundation for people who come now. Be that as it may, this is an individual thing. If you identify a problem you must cry out to have these problems heard and solved. The afghan voices for example, the afghan refugees they were here only 6 months, 3 months and they became political one way or the other and they approached me. They called me in fact someone from the afghan community and said we heard about refugee radio and we want to know if this refugee radio is for African refugees. I said when you read the website did you see anywhere African refugee radio. He said no. I said, this is what it is, a radio for refugees, no matter where you came from. He said I am a refugee and I want to be part of it. An awful lot of people say they want to be part of it. And I said come to kampnagel and meet us and well see what you can do. And they came about 10 or 14 of them and we met and engaged with them and asked them why they wanted to do it. The narrative was the same thing. We have serious problems in the camps. The living conditions are not good . And then we found out that many people don't know about this. We want to have a program to tell what we are facing. And they also spoke about discrimination along ethnic lines, in the administrative processes and so on. Its not new, its institutional and its been there for decades. It may never change, but there is nothing wrong in fighting back. So that's why, and today they have their afghan voice problem. And they talk about everything that affects them. News in the local city they talk about that.

Do you think you would reach people with prejudices?

Yes. But, listen there are still people who don't know coca cola. There is no point in telling you a lie, refugee radio can reach every refugee. That is a lie. I travel as much as I can, to different camps. When I was going to Calais area, tealling them to start a radio there. Today they have jungala radio and we cooperate with them, help them and support them. That is the only way I can help. I cant be superman and be everywhere. You must understand that we are refugees and most refugees don't have free mobility. Its only few of us that have that and can travel. SO what have I done? I have engaged with refugees, I do it every day, engaging with civil society, different cultural intitatives, meetings, workshops and that's the way I can go.

To build this network

We are building it already. It is mostly not online.

Refugee Conference? Success?

Yes. It was a success in a certain area, and also not successful in other aspects. But overall it was a success. Because it was one of the first refugee organised conferences. And the place was filled up, they had never seen a capacity like that at least in this institution.

Who came?

Activists, supporters from the UK, france, all over Europe. It was divided into different workshops and discussions of how to move forward and to go and so on. More than 2000 people were here. Everywhere was filled up and I think kampnagel was forced to open the back(?) there is another one coming up in Leipzig. 10th or 12th I think. You are welcome to

stay. Those are the ways we engage with each other, with activists with civil society and you carry the media along.

What issues did you talk about in the workshop?

My own workshop had to do with media. Others don't see that. So I come in from a media perspective. We need to fight mainstream media and the way we are being portrayed in the news. So those are the kind of workshops I give. Show and tell refugees that and all refugees support that. Next thing is alternative media. Of course the mainstream media will not change so you have an alternative to get concrete news. SO we try to give them workshops to show that. And tell them how to do it. Practical means with modern technology and my own approach to it. We all know the solution. But your political leaders will not follow, they will not follow the solutions we recognise so why should I waste my time on something like that. I am someone I don't like to waste my time on things that are not practical. My area is to use this radio and media platform to encourage every individual to tap into their inner resources. Anything you are gifted in doing, I will use the media to get you out. We have musicians, refugee musicians, springing up all over the place now, play their music on air. Not possible on mainstream media. They are artists. IF we find them we work with them, we document them and we show it on the tv show as well. We have tons of material we have just not published it yet. We have people doing sports, tabletennis, boxing, they are refugees and they are following their passion. We don't want to tell the same story Europe wants to hear, oh they are hungry, we are failing them, they need help.

We also have the refugee voices tv show. It's a platform of discovery, the next one is on Friday and we choose topics that affect us and we talk about them. The first one had to do with the fearfactor of migration what are we afraid of? We got experts and people to come over and share their insights. The next one has got to do with ...? These are the ways we can help. We are starting a reality tv show also. There are different things we are thinking of just to change the negative narrative. Visual is also very important.

And its not just for Germany, people contact me outside of Germany more than inside. And that now brings me to my argument-when we wanted to start apart from one or two radios said you are free to do what you like, the rest said they would like us to do it in german. And that was a problem for us, many of us don't speak german very well. I don't like to do rubbish on air. So I said ok, I found a way around it I played around with it a program came up and we mixed a lot of things together. I am glad we did not switch to german totally

In Italy its different. They are not as accepting when it comes to language. We have to change everything we have done to Italian. WE have a lot of people who can give their time.

Hard to make decisions?

The running of the project is done by a collective of experts. I am a professional so this is nothing compared to what I have done in my life I have run a big company so I know how that is. Runing a project and finding the right people to come onboard-we don't like too many things in one basket. We advise them, everyone who wants to partner with us refugees and others. Produce your programs independently. Send it to us and we help distribute it. That's what we can do. Of course we can help oyu in the beginning teach you how to do it in some cases. We cant provide you with all the equipment because we have limited funding but we can give you the basics. Some of them are getting it now.

We have 8 partners across Europe. We have 2 partners in Italy. We have done special programmes with them. With Vatican radio. Also with radio ona rosa(I think) a leftist radio in rome. In france I did a special program with Africa nr 1. In Calais jungala radio. Another radio by a Syrian group, sponsored by mainstream people in Qatar. So that's the way its done with many other radio stations also outside of Europe. My target is now to focus on radios in the home countries of refugees, so potential refugees can be informed. We are already starting with that.

Do you think people have unrealistic ideas of Europe?

There are those that have such ideas. The majority are moving because of war and violence. There are a few who are thinking of coming just for coming to Europe. We have to target those people because they are dying uselessly. It will also negatively impact the economies of the sending country. A generation of people who die in the Mediterranean, in the sahara. Its not anything the government can do. But we always rely on the government government will solve it. The government is not adequate to solve any problem in my opinion, we as human beings are the ones that can solve our problems ourselves. How can we do that? We do it local. WE got to local villages, community leaders, about the reality of dangers of trafficking. You know this migration of people has a lot of ugly parts that maybe you guys don't know in Europe. We know about a sort of human trafficking for example, girls are forced into prostitution, men are forced into slavery, men, women children killed for their organs. They kill innocent people and remove their organs to sell on the black market. Many people in many countries don't even know their children are dead. They have the dream they are somewhere in Europe.

NGOs are not doing it right that's the problem. Because if ngos are doing it right, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Governments too though

Everybody must come on board, don't get me wrong. Everybody must come together, fashion a way out. IN my opinion information and communication is key. All this welcome this, welcome that. How long can you welcome someone? Like a guest in your house? How long can you be a guest in someones house?

The most important thing is to inform the person before he becomes a guest, a forced guest in your community. Let him be informed let him be equipped with knowledge. The welcoming industry is also a multi million dollar investment. There are people who are benefitting from all this. The small and big companies.

Rightwing elements portray this rubbish idea we are coming to take your job. What job? I have been in Europe for five years I haven't had a job I cant even get a job. What are the benefits that I get? Refugees get 300 euros. Nearly all of that goes back to the governments pocket.

What do you think will happen in the future?

I don't believe in the future, I believe in now. I am optimistic. One way or the other we will all find a way to get along. Whether we like it or not. There are certain things we know for sure. All the refugees cannot be kicked out of Europe. Unless there is a pogrom and I don't think Europe will go that line. For now. We have seen them shoot refugees in turkey, and in hungary.

For now we are optimistic that we must find a way to get along. The direction is to look at people as people who are coming to contribute.

If you stop looking at people because of their color or where they come from. Today the mayor of London is from Pakistan, that is diversity.

How many black faces do you see on your mainstream media? In my opinion that is what they are all afraid of. They are afraid of diversity, of change of multiculturalism. They don't want to see a black president of Germany for them that is unacceptable for now. That is what they are afraid of. But the minute we cross that line the fear will be eliminated.

I think that will change, its just a matter of time. The generation that believes in the old ways and is creating this problem is slowly dying so lets be optimistic that we will get there. It may not be in my lifetime but we will get there. GO read my articles in the zeit, in the welt.

Challenge pegida in a political discourse, in an open discourse and let the people decide.

I have sent invitations to fpö to come and talk on the show. But they will not come (I think that is what he said) He will not come to people like me because people like me will say you are racist. Accept it and lets move on and talk.

If you look at the rightwing leaders that go to the media, none of them come to a black host, always a white host. They feel more comfortable to a white face. When it comes to them engaging a black journalist they feel very uncomfortable. They cant talk about some things. But we hope. I have been sending even the last time, in kampnagel they were angry I would invite these people. I said, we need to engage with them, let them come and talk. We will talk with them. So people that follow them can see.

[Annex 13](#)

Nadir, notes from interview

Is from Afghanistan, has been in Greece since 2003. Worked as a translator then intercultural mediator now runs camp in Elliniko.

He also is a street photographer and editor of a new magazine: Solomon

The Greek ministry called him and asked him if he would manage the camp. Camp grounds were donated, it is an open camp. People can leave it between 8 am and 10 pm. Most challenging about camp: people don't know Greek culture.

He got involvled because there are things in the Greek system he wants to change. The system doesn't work well (there is not enough staff, not enough money) people have to wait to long to make their asylum claims, their papers expire and they risk being put in detention. Also there is a problem of unaccompanied minors, homes for minors are full.

Volunteers now have to register and get background checks for working in camps-> they get vetted, this is safer for refugees.

Activities in the camp:

Plans for a classroom, save the children (program for kids), refugees do sport activities (but all of this is very new.

He takes care to involve refugees themselves eg. They give out food or clean. This is so they realize it is hard work and don't complain as much and are more understanding.

Being an intercultural mediator:

He knows greek culture very well and likes it a lot.. Solved cultural problems, still does so in job now (often emphasized refugees don't know so much about greek culture and this can cause difficulties). He thinks, speaks, writes in greek.

Being an interpreter:

He translated farsi and deri into greek. An organisation just called him and asked him to do it. He did a seminar and became an interpreter.

The running of the camp is really intense and very busy. He hasn't had a day off for two months (has been running the camp for 3 months). But he is sure it will become less stressful as time goes on. He runs the camp with one partner and several NGOs that are involved.

He does not have many afghani friends, the only ones are the ones he came to Greece with.

“If you are a migrant people don't look at you the same, they look down on you. That's why I have to write and show pictures. To show we are the same, we can discuss problems. For example the problems of your papers expiring and becoming an illegal. You cant work/rent a room /have the same relationship with the government. If you don't have papers what can you do to survive?”

For now he feels safe. But the golden dawn is the third strongest party in the parliament. So he doesn't know about the future.

He would not go to another European country if he could. He knows the culture and language in Greece “ I would be too old to start over somewhere new”

In the camp fighting between groups or nationalities doesn't really happen, rather between individuals, but he mediates. His camp, he has been told, is more successful than other camps. Doesn't know why. Maybe because he has personal experience and is more aware of problems and issues.