Pilot study: identifying and developing effective measures

TransSOL: European paths to transnational solidarity at times of crisis: Conditions, forms, role models and policy responses

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Introduction

This pilot study looks at three cases of solidarity in practice, attempting to discern and describe the presence and meaning of a transnational element in this solidarity, and evaluating the effectiveness of these forms of practice. The three pilot studies are:

1. The transnational organisation of workers in the gig economy and the Transnational Social Strike

The experience of transnational coordination in actions by Deliveroo and Foodora riders is investigated in this case study. Recent protest actions, notably in the gig economy, may be beginning to prefigure self-organised, transnational industrial action. Following 2016 industrial action in London against the Deliveroo platform, the UK model was replicated in Italy, with delivery workers in Turin staging coordinated protests against Foodora. In Spain, Deliveroo workers went on strike in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid on 2 July 2017. More recently, workers from the Netherlands, Austria and Greece have joined international organising meetings led by German, Italian and Spanish riders. In early 2017, the Transnational Social Strike Platform brought together in London 160 people from forty organisations and nine countries to discuss, organise and plan around questions on the social strike and coordinated transnational action in the gig economy, with follow-ups in Berlin and Turin.

The Transnational Social Strike was born in 2014 with the aim of linking diverse movements of precarious workers, migrants and the unemployed. Rather than an institution such as a trade union, the space is one of communication for the exchange of knowledge and tactics across borders, and in particular concerning the question of withdrawing labour. The Transnational Social Strike holds regular international meetings and publishes materials in several European languages. This is a case study already touched upon in WP4, exemplifying cross-border solidarity actions in the field of precarity and unemployment.

2. Cities of solidarity

Almost all countries involved in the TransSOL project were affected, since Summer 2015, by the so-called "refugee crisis". European Union institutions are facing increasing difficulties in external and internal borders management, while countries of first arrival are experiencing strong pressure on their systems and facilities of reception, as well as on their urban and social fabric. Cities are the preferred destination of migration flows, and often the place of highest concentration.

Faced with the obvious limitations of migration policies put in place by single national governments, civil society has been organising in innovative ways, with numerous associations and networking experiences springing up all across the continent. These are focused on both emergency and more stable reception, education and placement in the labour market, as well as social integration processes.. These initiatives met, in a significant number of cases, with a willingness to cooperate on the part of local and municipal

authorities. This case study analyses the innovative interaction between civil society actions and city administration, in the context of jointly organised transnational cooperation initiatives.

3. Krytyka Polityczna

The question of the intellectual and cultural marginalisation of Central and Eastern European countries, and particularly the Visegrad group since the fall of communism, has demonstrated the need for a re-invention of democratic culture in the region and within the context of the EU. Krytyka Politcyzna is a civil society organisation based in Poland, but active across Central and Eastern Europe, that considers solidarity as one of their main driving forces. In this concluding case study, we investigate the work of a specific organisation and its attempts, successes and failures in developing a transnational working practices in the Visegrad region and Ukraine.

Overview of the Case Studies

In each of our case studies the social actors, in seeking to address a concrete and specifiable socio-political situation, were driven rapidly to a transnational approach in which 'Europe' as a crucial and critical term rapidly came into play.

In a way that may be different, for example, from generalised mobilisations for global justice or against climate change, addressing practically the exploitation of precarious delivery workers in Bologna or London, the reception and integration of refugees in the Grande-Synthe or Palermo, or nationalism and xenophobia in Poland, activists very rapidly come to the understanding that their struggle goes beyond their immediate locality, requires effective organisation with others in other parts of Europe, and implies a symbolic struggle over the meaning, values and direction of 'Europe' itself. This seems to suggest that the form of solidarity involved in each of these cases goes beyond *sympathy*, *imitation* or even *co-ordination*, and implies something closer to a Durkheimian 'collective representation': the actors understand themselves as part of a common society. As Agnieszka from Krytyka Politcznya says 'there is no us and them, only we'.

This is very clear in the very beginnings of Krytyka Polityczna, which started with an open letter from Polish-speaking intellectuals to the European public, and quickly developed into an organisation running meetings and joint projects and activities with other actors from throughout Europe.

The European maps produced by food delivery worker activists, their expressions of solidarity with other strikers, and their very rapid attempts at meeting and discussion of transnational action all demonstrate a quasi-spontaneous understanding of the struggle as transnational. This may perhaps appear as unsurprising, given that the employers in question are active throughout Europe, and take advantage of their non-local character, and

yet it represents a new development in the self-perception and autonomous organisation of employment struggles in Europe. Underscoring the self-conscious development of a new transnational awareness, the European coordination of these labour initiatives is most often launched by workers and activists themselves, rather than by professional labour unions.

In the case of cities welcoming refugees, the process of coming to an understanding that the problem required a practical transnational approach may have been slower, if we are considering the attitudes of local elected officials who are inserted in administrative structures embedded in nation states. But faced with the reality of problems arising from vulnerable mobile populations, which by definition come under the responsibility of more than one locality, as well as with ineffective or non-existent national solutions, many local administrations working with civil society came to a Europe-wide vision of the crisis and the possible practical solutions to be taken.

Of course, the difficulties in effective organisation across borders are highlighted in each of the case studies. It is one thing for the actors to have a transnational collective representation, and it is another thing for them to have an effective organisational model. But here each of the studies shows that it is a taking into consideration of the disarticulated, uneven nature of the transnational space and transnational polities which are a crucial element in the strategies adopted by the actors.

The food-delivery strikers show an acute awareness of the fact that differences in national legislations combined with a multinational corporate structure allow companies such as Deliveroo and Uber to play legislations against each other in an attempt to undermine social protections, create a race to the bottom and evade corporate responsibility. Faced with such a context, it would not be an effective strategy of Deliveroo strikers to have one hierarchical organisation promoting one kind of action with one common demand: rather, a flexible organisation able to articulate together different claims in different contexts is likely to be the most successful model.

In the case of solidarity cities, it is precisely the lack of a common European refugee welcome policy, as well as obstructionism by member states arising from divergent political attitudes and priorities, which leads cities to take the lead and attempt to form transnational networks.

The case of Krytyka Politcznya perhaps provides the most insightful terms for describing this form of solidarity: *translation* between contexts, which enables a common discourse, understanding and symbols to emerge whilst maintaining a diversity of origins and different communicative effects.

The organization and the effectivity of the actions may be limited, and, in some occasions, they may be classified as failures or as showing the low-impact of transnational actions. But are witnessing the first sprouts of a new kind of transnational organizing?

Each of the case studies is concerned with practical solidarity which turns out to be transnational, and it is striking that at least two of the contexts of the emergence of this solidarity are those which might seem to promote the greatest atomisation. Food delivery

workers are atomised, considered as self-employed, not the responsibility of the company, and do not share a common workspace or even channels of communication. Refugees are perhaps a paradigm of atomised individuals, forced to leave a social collectivity which is no longer providing safety, and at risk precisely because of their lack of social insertion. The case of Krytyka Polityczna is of course rather different, but the call to a European public which launched the movement demonstrates a sociological pre-occupation with individualism, a-politicisation and anomie which the movement seeks to address. In each case, the political action involved forms of solidarity between actors which go beyond their calling for political change, but their working together for the improvement of their social situation.

Methodological notes

Each of the three studies follows a slightly different methodological approach and writing style.

1. Transnational networks in the gig economy and the transnational social strike

The case study shows a clear example of diffused, informal transnational organising, one that proceeds by a mix of emulation, informal contact, dissemination of best practices and self-organised collaboration.

Our goals and evaluation criteria were the following:

Assessing the state of development of transnational solidarity networks among precarious / intermittent workers, notably to discover whether they provide an embryo for a transnational re-organisation of labour struggles;

Investigating the structure of transnational organising, notably regarding its centralisation / hierarchy or diffused nature;

Establishing the impact the Transnational Social Strike has had on national groups working to further the rights of precarious workers, looking at specific case studies;

Ascertain to what extent the Transnational Strike has united social or 'class' groups that might have otherwise remained separate into a shared political framework;

Ascertain to what extent the Transnational Strike has built solidarity between migrant groups and precarious workers and identified points of common political interest.

2. Cities of Solidarity

This case study shows a novel model of cooperation between self-organised migrant groups, informal associations and structured NGOs, on the one hand, and City governments on the other. At the same time, such cooperation has fostered new transnational networks, with

relationships and connections built between single cities, with the aim of presenting shared proposals for asylum and migration policy and of coordinating their practical efforts in solving daily and long-term problems in the reception and social inclusion of migrants.

The pilot study considers how the networking between Solidarity Cities can contribute to define single solutions and more strategic proposals for alternative policies on asylum, migration and people mobility across national borders, developing innovative social solidarity practices at European Union level.

Differently from (1) and (3), in this case study we investigate a plurality of inter-connected practices. Individual cases were investigated through a collection of media literature, the examination of documentation produced by movements, associations and institutions themselves, field visits and interviews aimed at particularly meaningful witnesses (especially people in charge in municipal governments, experts and local operators). The questions concerned the narration of individual cases, starting from the problems faced, a description of the different actors involved, the working method followed (with particular attention to the forms of participation), the relationship with national governments and European institutions, the lessons learned so far and main future goals.

Our goals and evaluation criteria were the following:

Assessing the capacity of moving from informal initiatives to more structured and longer-term projects, formalising transnational cooperation;

Isolating practices capable of being developed and tested as models of transnational solidarity practices;

Identifying which of these experiences are effective in their premises and results; sustainable from an environmental, social and financial point of view; appealing in terms of creation of positive values, culture and imagination; and reproducible on larger scale;

Defining application-oriented guidelines destined to be re-produced and re-propagated in the coming years across Europe.

3. Krytyka Polityczna

The organisation is involved in several initiatives, the centre of which is a journal and independent news platform. In addition, the network runs a publishing house while managing over 20 social clubs in Poland and Ukraine. The organisation is a good example of 'horizontal' or geographical solidarity among and between the Visegrad countries, and beyond, but also shows vertical, political solidarity with local grassroots initiatives, bringing the divide between intellectuals and the public.

Our goals and evaluation criteria are the following:

Establishing how Krytyka Polityczna is creating an ongoing public debate about Europe while explicitly tackling different forms of marginalisation and isolation;

Exploring how the organisation is developing solidarity across dividing lines that have separated Europe in its history, most notably between the Visegrad countries, through its work with civil society actors in the region;

Assessing to what extent Krytyka Polityczna has successfully bridged a discursive gap between the intellectual and mass media environment, thereby contributing to the construction of a wider public debate on transnational solidarity;

Investing self-perception of the founders, employees and activists of Krytika Polityczna regarding the transnational nature of their work.

Case-Study 1. Gig economy platforms and transnational labour activism

Prepared by Lorenzo Zamponi

Introduction

Processes of labour flexibilisation and precarisation have been taking place in Europe for at least two decades. The introduction of online platforms in the labour market in the last few years have reshaped and accelerated these processes, giving birth to the so-called "gig economy", a system in which working activities "imply completing a series of tasks through online platforms" (Di Stefano, 2016: 1). In this organisation of labour, "those who work in it carry out a series of 'gigs', i.e. one off jobs, in order to create an income. This must mean that they are either self-employed working perhaps for a number of employers or that they are employed on a series of employed contracts and are employees during their working periods" and "they are to be paid for a particular task or tasks, rather than receive a guaranteed income" (Sargeant, 2017: 2). Labour becomes an on-demand service that can be easily accessed through an app. Thanks to digital technologies, platforms can function as databases that make supply and demand of work meet, while making a profit out of this process and exploiting at the maximum level the flexibility of a "pay-as-you-go" workforce. Human work becomes less and less visible as such and risk is passed on from the company to the worker (De Stefano, 2018). This organisation of labour is posing new challenges to labour activism (Rogers, 2017). Nevertheless, episodes of struggle are taking place in different countries, both in the context of traditional union activism and in the social movements scene (Cotton, 2016; Körfer and Röthig, 2017; Rutkin, 2015).

This happens in a context in which the transnationalisation of labour activism has been increasingly under the scrutiny of social research. The international element is grounded on two observations: first, the globalized nature of contemporary capitalism is considered to require trade union responses expanding beyond national borders (Fairbrother et al., 2007; McIlroy, 2012; Waterman, 2004). Second, the transnational turn of protest and other relevant social movement activity during the alter-globalization movement (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2004; Tarrow, 2005) provided opportunities for both local and international trade unions to collaborate with other social actors and to contribute to a reconfiguration of contentious politics in the era of globalisation. The current economic crisis has been significantly impacting on these tendencies in the last few years (Zamponi and Vogiatzoglou, 2017).

The struggles of gig-economy workers provide an interesting chance to investigate the relationship between technological innovation, social contention and transnational activism. This project aims at shedding light on these aspects focusing on the attempts to establish transnational connections between the struggles of digital platform workers. The research focuses on the ongoing mobilisations of digital platform workers in Italy and on their relationship with analogous processes taking place elsewhere. The topic has been addressed

through qualitative interviews[1] to actors involved in the struggles and to key informants (researchers who have been addressing this issue), through the direct participation to assemblies and protest events and through the analysis of the social media production of different collectives. The overarching idea is to explore the tactics and the forms of organisation chosen by digital platform workers, investigating in particular the relationship between the local and the transnational level.

This report points out that, although food delivery struggles have mainly taken place at the local level, embryonic forms of transnational organisation are in process, and the transnational component of action is particularly significant with regards to the discursive, communicative and narrative level, creating the shared feeling of being part of a transnational struggle. Furthermore, these connections partly rely on pre-existing movement networks and strongly exploit the potential for "thin diffusion" that social media provide and that have characterised anti-austerity movements in several European countries.

Case study: food delivery workers' struggles

In the context of the gig economy, the sector which has been characterised by the most significant cases of organisation and contention has been the one of food delivery. Young adults riding on bicycles while carrying big boxes marked by the logos of companies like Foodora, Deliveroo, Justeat, Glovo, and so on, are at this point a common sight in most European cities. Customers order food from a restaurant of their choice through a website or an app, and riders delivery it as quickly as they can, notwithstanding time and weather. Their forms of employment tend to vary significantly across countries and companies, and even inside the same country and the same company, as well as the way is which they are paid. What they have in common in most cases is the fact that they are not considered to be regular employees of the food delivery platforms, but instead free-lance workers that perform a series of "gigs", thanks to the service provided by platforms. Each company, in the gig economy "claims to be a database via which supply and demand are matched. The companies argue that they do not have any control over workers, and therefore they are classified as self-employee"(Todolí-Signes, 2017: 11). Thus, this type of labour relation "lacks heteronomous regulation and functions" (Donini et al., 2017). In most case, riders do not have any insurance, any right to sickness leave or any help in the purchase and maintenance of the bicycle. What is more, every choice made by the platform, from the number of "gigs" to offer every rider to the management of shifts and turns, is hidden behind "the

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[1] Interviews to activists of rider collectives were conducted with the goal of reconstructing the individual and collective experiences of mobilisation. Activists were asked to reconstruct the development of the mobilisation, the construction of collectives, their main strength and weaknesses, their partial outcomes, and the national and transnational networks in which they are involved.

algorithm", making invisible the power relations that structure wage labour. This organisation of work pushes the known limits of precarisation, disarticulating not only employment regulations, physical compresence and access to welfare (Zamponi and Vogiatzoglou, 2017), but work itself as the one identifiable source through which a person accesses the distribution of the socially produced wealth. In this context, "unemployment is not be considered as the lack of wage labour, but as the permanent activation of the subject in search of a formally defined occupation in the context of structural precarity" (Ciccarelli, 2018a). It is not by chance that gig economy struggles, and in particular the mobilisation of food delivery riders have started spreading throughout Europe in the last two years, representing one of the frontiers of labour activism in the 21st century (Cant, 2017, 2018)

The European context

The mobilisation of gig economy workers in general, and in particular of the employees of food delivery platform companies, has been significantly spreading across Europe in the last two years. The "Transnational Food Platform Strike Map" built by French activists shows only three protest events for 2016: the protest in front of the Deliveroo headquarters in London in August (Woodcock, 2016); the strike of Foodora rider in Turin in October

(Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2017a); and the protest of Deliveroo rider in Bordeaux in December (Saint-Sernin, 2016). Interestingly enough, all these episodes are characterised by the same trigger point, that is the change in the payment structure, with the transition from an hourly pay system to a payment-by-delivery system. For the following year, 2017, the same map reports 40 protest events, in 8 different countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and United Kingdom). The range of tactics that were used was rather broad: from small demonstrations to the choice to carefully respect traffic laws, from circling company buildings to distributing leaflets in the restaurants that use the platform, from striking to occupying company offices, from refusing to take the streets in case of bad weather conditions to marching with activists in solidarity, and so on. The same variety regards the actors involved: although grassroots collectives of riders, such as the *Collectif Livreurs Autonomes de Paris* or *Riders Union Bologna*, have almost always been at the core of every episode of mobilisation, their internal composition (between platform workers and political activists mobilised in solidarity with them) and their structure of relations with grassroots or established unions tended to vary. Furthermore, in most cases there is a clear role, in supporting the development of the mobilisation, of established

network of activists, such as *Plan C* in the United Kingdom or *Critical Workers* in Germany, either belonging to long-standing political areas of the radical left (such as post-autonomous social centres or post-Trotskyist groups) or formed as crystallisations of the recent wave of anti-austerity mobilisations that has characterised several European countries in the last few years (della Porta et al., 2017).

The Italian case

The first episode of protest by digital platform workers in Italy took place in Turin in October 2016, when a group of riders employed by the food delivery company Foodora and organised under the label *Deliverance Project* went on strike to reject the transition from an hourly pay system to a payment-by-delivery system. The protest "successfully won over public opinion, including segments of the media normally hostile to labor struggles" (Tassinari and Maccarone, 2017a), triggering a series of different experiences across the country. The example of Turin was followed by a group of Deliveroo employees in Milan, that in July 2017, using the labels *Deliverance Milano* and *Deliveroo Strike Raiders*, organised a "strike mass", merging the concepts of strike and critical mass, to claim better working conditions and attract public attention on the peculiar nature of their status in the labour market (Sarcinelli, 2017). A few months later, on November 13th, an unforeseen snowfall in Bologna provided the chance for a day of complete block of deliveries, with workers, organised under the label *Riders Union Bologna*, refusing to risk their health riding on ice (Giordano and Candioli, 2017). These actions were characterised by an almost exclusively local scope, with later attempts of national organisations, such as the common list of demands to Deliveroo signed by the groups of Bologna and Milan in November 2017, that included the application of the national bargaining agreement on transportation, the introduction of a real employment contract, the renewal of all the contracts about the expire, a minimum hourly wage of 7.50 Euros, the guarantee of at least 20 hours a week, a 30% raise in case of rain or snow, a 50% raise in case of deliveries that go beyond the planned shift, a 30% raise as a compensation to the exposure to smog, insurance coverage, the reimbursement of the maintenance expenses for bicycle and phone, a safety kit with a helmet (Fana, 2017). Various protest events characterised Bologna, Milan and Turin towards the end of 2017, culminating in the organisation of the first national assembly of riders, that took place in Bologna on April 15th, 2018 and planned common actions for May Day. For what regards outcomes, they are still mixed: on the one hand, the lawsuit started by some riders against Foodora in Turin was not successful; on the other hand, in Bologna, *Riders Union*, official trade unions and the municipality signed in April a "Charter of rights".

The social constituency addressed by these episodes of collective action encompasses a rather broad variety of people: some riders are university students who make a delivery from time to time, while others are older and do as many shifts as possible because food delivery is their main source of income. The big majority of riders are men in their 20s or 30s, although there is a non-insignificant share of over-50, while the presence of migrants tends to vary depending on the context. Geographical dispersion is the rule, and riders are generally discouraged to frequent the company offices, although there are cases in which riders wait for their call in the same place, and the experience of sharing the same space fosters the construction of the personal connections that are the base element of collective solidarity. In general, companies tend to prefer to communicate with riders only through the platform, through phone calls and through chats. These choices discourage collective action but they cannot make it impossible: even through a chat, workers will talk to each other, establishing links and relations, or they will do it while randomly meeting on the street. Furthermore, the development of a mutual system of services has proven central in the development of solidarity in various cases: Riders Union Bologna, for example, has published an online map of the spaces in the city that offer solidarity-based assistance in repairing bicycles, counselling on labour issues and even spare bikes in case of malfunctions, while Milanese riders can count on Punto di Svolta, a self-organised service that provides counselling on contract, tax and legal issues. While relationships with unions are still weak, and mainly limited to radical grassroots unions (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2017b), there has also been a first partial success in invading the field of collective bargaining, with the explicit mention of riders in the new national agreement on transportation that was signed by CGIL, CISL and UIL (the largest trade union confederations in the country) in December 2017. Although the innovation lacks any formal effect, given that food delivery platforms are not members of the employers' organisations that signed the agreement (Franchi, 2017), it has been welcomed as a first symbolic step towards the exit of riders from their current condition of invisibility

Transnationalisation in action

Thin diffusion

The study of the so called "Global Justice Movement", the wave of mobilisation against neoliberal globalisation that characterised the early 2000s (Daphi, 2017; Della Porta, 2007), has provided an unprecedented chance to theorise the capacity of movements to organise

beyond national borders and the diffusion of ideas and practices from a national context to another, through networks of exchanges and organisation (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2004; Tarrow, 2005). The wave of protest of 2011, with the quick and widespread diffusion of symbols and practices between movements that had no structured channel of exchange and cooperation, has triggered a renewed reflection of how diffusion takes place. Sidney Tarrow (2012) has distinguished between *thick* and *thin* diffusion. While, in the former case, "the Global Justice Movement was an example of thick diffusion, based on a global organisational network in which social-movement organisations as well as grassroots activist groups had a relevant role in supporting (and spreading) transnational mobilisations", the recent wave of protests has been an example of thin diffusion: information travelled quickly from individual to individual through social networking sites, frequently in combination with portable mobile devices such as smart phones" (Mattoni and della Porta, 2014: 287-288).

In this case, the examples of thin diffusion are widespread. Even without structured exchanges between Italian and foreign collectives, experiences in different countries influence each other through the media. The first mobilisations in Turin are retold by activists as the result of an emulation of what had been happening in France and Britain:

> In them [workers in Turin] there was a will to emulate what had happened abroad. In the meantime, the first things had been done in France and in Britain and there was the first verdict on Uber, stating that drivers were not managers but para-subordinate employees, to whom a certain level of protection should be granted. We went on from there, we studied, we collected the contracts, we prepared files, we mapped the situation, the workers' conditions, the players in the sector… (I2)

The peculiar generational composition of gig workers, combined with the multinational nature of many of the companies employing them, creates favourable conditions for thin diffusion, with news, ideas and practices easily travelling between the metropolitan youths of different European cities even without the existence of structured and organised exchanges.

Attempts of coordination and submerged networks

Nevertheless, the transnational projection of gig workers' struggles in Italy is not limited to thin diffusion. Representatives of Italian riders' collectives did participate in international meeting attempting the sketch the blueprint of a transnational mobilisation, together with British, French and German colleagues: the first in Berlin, in occasion of a conference on workers' struggles in the age if digital capitalism organised by the Humboldt University and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, in July 2017; the second in Turin, during the protest against the G7 meeting on labour in September 2017; the third, again, in Berlin, in the context of the meeting of the Transnational Social Strike process[2]. The experience of these meeting is retold by an activist from the Milanese collective:

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[2] The Transnational Social Strike Platform self-defines as "a political open process that involves groups, workers and unions across Europe and beyond" and connects movement networks and

> Together with them [the workers of Turin], a worker from Milan went to Berlin and met other workers in a European assembly. It was organised by Berlin Migrant Strikers, that is the network of Italian workers living in Berlin, linked to the experience of the Transnational Social Strike, that were also among the most active political references in the mobilisations in Hamburg [the anti-G7 protest of July 2017]. They organised this assembly, it was a first moment of dialogue, we self-narrated a bit. […] We are connected, but it is hard to coordinate, first because there are not common claims yet, well, there are common claims but a common platform has not been built yet. There are difficulties to communicate and related to the phase: when the French pushed for action, in Italy we were working on workers' assemblies, etc. […] The work of transnational connection is in a germinal phase, there is the will to coordinate, but there are structural difficulties. (I2)

A few elements emerge rather clearly from the interviews. First of all, the construction of a transnational coordination between gig workers is at a very early stage, and this is far from surprising if we think that none of the Italian collective are more than 18 months old, and their French, British and German counterparts are not significantly older. Rather, it is surprising that local collectives engaged in labour struggles sought to engage in transnational coordination so soon in their trajectory. Furthermore, these connections seem to be substantially based on pre-existing activist networks, as for example the Transnational Social Strike, with politicised activists inside workers' collectives acting as brokers in the transnational sphere.

> The interesting thing [about gig economy workers' collectives] is that there is the coexistence of different souls belonging to different movement areas […]. Thus, my take is that in these cases, when there are international events, who is interested in that particular event goes, often because he is already linked to that specific political area, while then people try to find unity on the concrete things that they can do at the local level. (I4)

In general, the construction of concrete mechanisms of coordination of struggles between different countries is yet to come, mainly due to the fact that, in the Italian context, this movement is living its first phase of real growth and development in these months, between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. Most activists are primarily focused on building their local struggle, accumulating strength, recruiting riders, and so on. Thus, on the one hand, the resources to be dedicated to transnational connections are rather limited and, on the other hand, it is rather difficult to build a common transnational agenda when legislative contexts are different from each other:

> There is the problem that national contexts are different. Then, they [activists] tell us: "We have to structure our struggle, now. Then, we'll talk about it". Nevertheless, they had had contacts, even before the transnational assemblies, with some of the English activists, but these contacts were not formalised and did not lead to common initiatives

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collectives, mainly rooted in the post-autonomous tradition, in several European countries, with the goal of organising shared events at the European level. The concept of "social strike" aims to "redefine the idea of the strike, by extending it to a wider set of struggles (Zamponi and Vogiatzoglou, 2017: 92).

at the European level, that actually would be nice if they emerged, because the problems are similar. (I4)

The most problematic aspect in activating such a process at the transnational level is the huge difference in labour law. For example, in Italy they are struggling for minimal wage, in Germany it already exists, and thus the lines of contention move on different planes. The important thing is try to build common keywords. […] Labour struggles, especially in the case of precarious workers, function like this. They are karstic, they never have a linear evolution. (I6)

This idea that the main issues are rather similar across national contexts emerges rather often, in conversations with activists and in particular with researchers that have been analysing food delivery struggles in different European countries:

[In Turin] there was no direct link [with other European experiences], but there was a contextualisation of the struggle in a broader framework, the one of the gig economy and more specifically of food delivery. The experience is London was rather similar, even if there wasn't something organised at the transnational level immediately. […] There are several analogies [between the struggles in Turin and London], and they are linked to the type of claims that emerged and to very similar models of production in companies that are different but belong to the same sectors, such as Foodora and Deliveroo. In both cases the triggering reason for the struggle was a change in the payment policy, from hourly pay to piecework. There many things that are common to the two contexts: the maintenance of bikes, that is always up to rider, the organisation of turns, that is not as flexible as company would like us to believe, because the algorithm is a pretext, and often turns are fixed manually. (I4)

Notwithstanding the structural weakness of the transnational network ties between gig workers' collectives in different countries, no Italian activist denies the need to strengthen them. The priority that this process has in the future evolution of the movement is made very clear by the words on an activist, reflecting on the company representatives the collective met in Milan:

They were not executive officers, but only administrators, in companies that are multinational, that are managed abroad. This says a lot on the refusal to take responsibility of the company at the local level, because they tell you: "We have no power, we are not your counterparts. They are in Germany, go to Germany". Germany in the case of Foodora, for Deliveroo they are in Britain, for Glovo in Spain. (I2)

Workers and activists deeply feel the need to broaden the scope of their struggle as to reach the same transnational level on which companies are placed. In the same vein, researchers point out how bringing the struggle to the level on which companies are based, that is transnational, may be much more fruitful than waiting for an intervention by policy-makers:

If there was the capacity to have a coordinated and simultaneous transnational struggle, notwithstanding the differences in labour, law, there may be an expansive harmonisation of companies' policies. A legislative intervention at the EU level, instead, given the positions of the Commission, would probably go in the direction of new forms of free-lance work, regulating what exists more than trying to change it. (I5)

Mediating solidarity

The most advanced component in the transnationalisation of food delivery struggles seems to be the one situated at the narrative level. In the last few months, in particular, in parallel with the intensification of mobilisation in many countries, there has been a significant increase in the frequency with which different riders' collectives narrate what is happening elsewhere in Europe through their own social media outlets, and explicitly state their solidarity. This dynamic is clearly visible for whoever follows the Facebook accounts of riders' collectives, and has also been pointed out by researchers:

> There has not been a transnational strike of the riders of Foodora or Deliveroo […], but there is the narrative of "We are uniting, and we are in solidarity with each other". (I5)

The centrality of narratives in building a sense of collective belonging, and, thus, in the identity-construction process that is vital for the development of any social movement, is well known (Jasper, 1997; Polletta, 2006; Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Furthermore, media practices have already proven to be fundamental in the development of the capacity of actors to deploy their identity in the public sphere and create the feeling of urgency, shared belonging and excitement that is strategic to motivate people to action (Gerbaudo, 2012; Milan and Zamponi, 2014).

This is particularly the case when trans-national connections are concerned: reproducing the idea that other people are mobilising for similar reasons elsewhere, that there are colleagues that share the same condition who are showing courage and organisation in standing up to employers, is a strategic tool in the creation of a shared transnational identity. Furthermore, riders' collectives do not only reciprocally share the news reports of their action on social media, they also publicly state their solidarity. When *Riders Union Bologna* published the picture of the occupation of the Deliveroo offices in Bruxelles, they wrote on it: "We are in solidarity and we are complicit with our colleagues", proposing a direct identification with the action. Moreover, sharing with a certain frequency news on struggles happening elsewhere can help foster the idea of a growing movement, another significant element in motivating

to action. When sharing a picture of Dutch riders going to Belgium to participate to a protest action taking place in Belgium, the French collective CLAP wrote that what was happening between Belgian and Dutch riders would soon happen between Belgian, Dutch, British, Italian, Spanish, German, French and Austrian riders. Even if an actual and effective transnational coordination of struggles is yet to come, still, advertising cases of transnational solidarity is a step forward in the development of a shared identity.

From this point of view, social media provide a powerful tool, facilitating connections at the communicative level between actors that find much stronger difficulties in coordinating their concrete struggles.

The transnational map that was cited above is another relevant example, as are the other

posts shared by French activists mapping the number of protest events that took place in 2017 in different European countries, or asking riders' collective to show up and get in contact with them in order to appear on the "map of local teams of bikers" that is illustrated as "a first step of the census"

One may say that the same digital technologies that are used to exploit workers are then used to organise the struggle against exploitation, but it would be a sign of techno-optimistic naïveté. Nevertheless, it is true that the strategic construction of a feeling of shared belonging, of identifying as part of a growing movement, is a component of identity work for which social media has already proven more than effective in the case of the protests of 2011 (Gerbaudo, 2012; Olesen, 2013). Furthermore,

communication and narrative are definitely not of scarce interest for gig economy companies in general and for food delivery platforms in particular. The figure of the rider as a young adult on a bicycle that delivers a meal ordered online carries heavy connotations in terms of the reproduction of an idea of smartness, coolness and modernity, spiced with techno-enthusiasm and environmental sensitivity. This is very clear to rider themselves:

> They try to give the customer the young Italian good-looking boy […]. We have to "cuddle" customers in every possible way. […] Some platforms keep only the young, the students, because [food delivery] is a trendy concept: the bicycle in the case of Bologna is really the quickest mean of transportation, but they choose it to boast of using an environment-friendly tool, for a specific reason of aesthetics and visibility. We are like sandwichmen roaming the city with the menu of a restaurant, we carry around the company brand. […] When people see us around they cheer for us: "You're the one who brings me food every night, you're great!". Someone said that the heroes of the

millennium are the riders that in every weather condition bring you food at home. Everybody likes us, but nobody knows what's behind it. (I3)

Thus, this strong symbolic connotation of food delivery, that is a significant component of the business model of which companies profit, provides riders with a powerful weapon, and the visibility of the protests of the last few months is probably a consequence of this mechanism. As it has already been pointed out regarding the Foodora strike of 2016 in Turin, "the Italian media's unusually high coverage of the Foodora protests has been generally sympathetic toward the workers" and "the Foodora workers' campaign has successfully won over public opinion", turning "turned what could have remained a small-scale labour dispute into a public-relations disaster" (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2017a).

Conclusion: Evaluation and lessons

Both with regards to the struggles themselves and to their transnsationalisation, there are a few significant lessons that may be derived from the analysis of this case.

Organising the un-organised is possible, to a point.

The organisation of precarious workers poses challenges that traditional forms of labour action often fail to address. Nevertheless, it is not true that the disarticulation of employment relations, of physical proximity in the workplace and of access to a common welfare system makes labour activism impossible. Gig economy workers are likely to be among the most precarious category of employees, yet a significant part of them is organising and mobilising, and not without some limited success (Ciccarelli, 2017a, 2018b). We are obviously dealing with a small vanguard of the digitally exploited precariat: nevertheless, innovating in tactics and repertoires pays out, at least in some cases.

The movements of 2011 left significant legacies.

It is impossible not to recognise in many aspects of the mobilisations analysed in this work the legacies of the anti-austerity movement that have characterised several European countries in the first years of this decade. A certain grassroots culture, the rhetoric of anonymity and invisibility, a post-ideological and down-to-earth attitude, the diffidence towards established organisations, the pragmatic approach to institutions: these traits sound rather familiar to whomever has followed the trajectory of the Spanish 15-M or of similar movements in other European countries. Furthermore, many of the political networks and collectives that are proving instrumental in the development of mobilisation in the context of food delivery struggles are a direct legacy of the anti-austerity cycle, and so is the language and the habit of transnational solidarity that many activists share. The tendency to scale down to the local level after the end of a big wave of mobilisation, in order to bring into a certain territory what has been learnt during the mobilisation and to

put it to the test addressing concrete and specific struggles is well known (Jacobsson and Sörbom, 2015; Zamponi and Daphi, 2014) and this seems to be an interesting case from this point of view.

Mutualism is back, and it is fostering political action.

The last few years have seen a comeback of direct social action, i.e. actions that do not primarily focus upon claiming something or other from the state or other power holders but that instead focus upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society by means of the action itself (Bosi and Zamponi, 2015). This turn-to-practice of collective actors in times of crisis (Bosi and Zamponi, forthcoming), through the increasing popularity of non-protest based form of resistance to the economic crisis, has often been interpreted as an effect of de-politicisation (De Nardis and Antonazzo, 2017). In this case, the self-organised provision of services to each other among the riders seems to be not only a coping strategy in a context that is hostile to traditional forms of welfare (Ciccarelli, 2017b), but also a fundamental tool in the construction of solidarity among workers that are strongly conditioned by the context to be in constant competition with each other.

Riders' struggles have a strong symbolic relevance, that can be fruitfully exploited.

The struggle of food delivery riders has an undeniable symbolic strength. On the one hand, the gig economy represents the extreme case of quasi-ubiquitous tendencies in today's labour market, making visible and easy to grasp processes that are usually hidden and arduous to read. On the other hand, the aura of smartness, coolness and modernity that is instrumental in the business model of food delivery platforms can be aptly exploited by activists vis-à-vis companies that cannot easily suffer hits on their corporate image. This makes riders' struggles relevant to an extent that goes well beyond their concrete dimension, because they provide activists with a useful chance to tackle the broader issue of the nature of labour in contemporary capitalism and to address the public opinion in a rather effective fashion.

The Erasmus generation is getting angry.

The easy access to the social media, to foreign languages and to a wide set of online skills that characterise millennials has visible effects on the episodes of collective action addressed in this work. Furthermore, the migrant nature of a significant part of the workers involved in this sector has proven essential to the ongoing attempts to establish transnational connections between the different collectives. It seems very clear that a certain generation of Europeans and non-Europeans, trained to travel, move and adapt and equipped with a certain set of communicative skills, is trying to use those skills in the context of labour struggles.

Transnational discourse and local action

The contradiction between the narratives of transnational solidarity and the extremely localised nature of most riders' struggles may be only apparent. Transnational activism has taken on the form of big continent-wide or even world-wide events in the case of the so-called Global Justice Movement, while in the case of the most recent wave of anti-austerity mobilisation most actions have taken place at the national or local level, although transnational solidarity was a significant component of the movements' discourse. It may be the case that we are witnessing a reproduction of the latter model, in which transnational solidarities and shared belongings go hand in hand with localised organisations and struggles.

Final recommendations

The ongoing attempts of organisation and transnationalisation of gig workers' struggles are still too recent to be comprehensively analysed in their historical significance. Nevertheless, the lessons that we have been trying to grasp from their experience might be useful for their future development and might teach something also to actors engaged in other fields: innovating in the forms of action (reflecting as much as possible the concrete traits of the specific labour condition), building-up on the legacy of the recent past, strategically using mutualism and direct social action to foster solidarity, exploiting symbolic power against those who make a profit out of it, empowering migrant workers putting their condition in value, learning to think and organise on a multi-level basis, might be fruitful lessons for many struggles to come.

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Interviews

I1: Interview with Riders Union Bologna activist, phone call, 09/11/2017

I2: Interview with Deliverance Milano activist, Milan, 10/11/2017

I3: Interview with Riders Union Bologna activist, Bologna,   17/11/2017

I4: Interview to key informant Vincenzo Maccarrone, skype call, 18/11/2017

I5: Interview to key informant Marta Fana, skype call, 21/11/2017

I6: Interview with Berlin Migrant Strikers activist, skype call, 29/1/2018

I7: Interview with Riders Union Bologna activist, 12/3/2018

Case Study 2. Cities of Solidarity: Local cooperation and transnational networking

Prepared by Beppe Caccia

1. First definitions: Sanctuary, Shelter and Solidarity cities

This research encompasses the period from August 2015 to March 2018. It covers the geographical area of continental Europe and the Mediterranean basin. The work done on the field requires a preliminary definition of three concepts, around which the analysis of individual concrete experiences will be articulated: "sanctuary city", "shelter city", and "solidarity city". Analysing cultural and practical genealogies of the former two definitions has the aim of designing a more complex conceptualisation of the latter, in order to verify the possibility of moving a step forward, towards the design of a viable perspective of transnational solidarity, which can see cities as a crucial actor on the issues of asylum and migrations.

Through the single cases that have been investigated, we will also see how asylum seekers and migrants, on one hand, and the fabric of active citizenship in the different forms in which it is organized and acts, on the other, give an equally relevant contribution to issues of asylum, migration and solidarity more generally.

Both "sanctuary" and "shelter city" definitions share a long and stratified tradition that has its roots in religious and philosophical thought. "Asylum" was in ancient Hebrew at the same time "a place of refuge for slaves, debtors, political offenders, and criminals" and "a sacred spot, a sanctuary, altar, or grave, protected by the presence of a deity or other supernatural being, and sharing his inviolability." In many cases there was attached to the sacred place a larger or smaller area within which it was forbidden to shed the blood of man or beast, and where the fugitive might dwell in comfort (Jastrow et al., 1903). In many other ancient cultures, the inviolability of deities was considered to extend to their religious sanctuaries and to all who resided within them. In general, the area covered by these rights of sanctuary varied from a small area around the altar to a large area beyond the limits of the town containing the sanctuary. The concept developed and grew to encompass cities by the time of the writing of the Torah which speaks of six "cities of refuge", Levitical towns in the Kingdom of Israel and of Judah, which according to the Jewish law enjoyed the right of asylum and to which anyone who had unintentionally slain another might flee and be protected from the "avenger of blood" (Driscoll, 1911). In contemporary philosophy we can find a comprehensive vision of the "villes de refuge" in Jacques Derrida's thought (1997).

In more recent times, this tradition was politically translated and re-actualised in North America, taking shape of a network of Sanctuary Cities in the U.S., that use municipal models for ensuring civil and social rights through means other than national citizenship. The model of the Sanctuary was born in the late 1980s, when church networks and community organisations imagined and practically organised grassroots ways to welcome

those fleeing from central America: the access to housing rights, education and health as well as the possibility of working and of living in a community, despite the formal status of "illegal migrant", became the goal of large mobilisations that involved multiple cities all over the U.S. Since then the mechanisms of welcoming and guaranteeing rights began to be regulated in local and later federal legal mechanisms. Firstly, by providing access to rights, as with the municipal laws in San Francisco that guarantee the right to public services, labour rights or a just trial. Or with the New York ID card: a local document issued to any resident independently of their immigration or citizenship status, valid in the face of police checks and granting access to transport and other municipal services. Secondly, by struggling at the federal level to regulate the legitimacy of city council and local counties in providing these services (Bagelman, 2016; Delgado, 2018). The Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates restrictive immigration policies, estimates that around 300 U.S. jurisdictions, including cities and counties, have adopted sanctuary policies (Griffith and Vaughan, 2017).

These practices have also extended to Canada (2013) and to the UK. Sheffield, in the North of England, declared itself a "Sanctuary city" in 2000. The decision was motivated by a national policy adopted in 1999 to disperse asylum seekers to different towns and cities in the UK. In 2009, the city council of Sheffield drew up a manifesto outlining key areas of concern and 100 supporting organizations signed on. A city's status as a place of sanctuary is not necessarily a formal governmental designation: the British organization "City of Sanctuary" invites local groups throughout the UK and Ireland to build grassroots initiatives for a culture of hospitality towards asylum seekers (CofS, 2016-17). Glasgow is a well-known sanctuary city in Scotland. In 2000 the City council accepted their first asylum seekers relocated by the Home Office. As of 2010 Glasgow had accepted 22,000 asylum seekers from 75 different nations.

It is quite evident that an effective implementation of ideas such as of "Sanctuary city" often involves an explicit political and legal tension between local authorities, which take that decision, and the State authorities that operate in a different regulatory framework, considered as "superordinate" and therefore hierarchically superior. This tension can result in negotiations, compromises and agreements between different institutional levels, as well as in open acts of "institutional disobedience" by the City governments (Zechner and Rübner Hansen, 2016). We will see later how these conceptions can develop further, theoretically and practically, in that of "City of solidarity" (par. 3.5.).

2. From the "refugee crisis" up to today

Almost all countries involved in the TransSOL project have been affected by the so-called "refugee crisis" since Summer 2015. The dramatic developments in the Middle East, particularly the escalation of the civil war in Syria and the internationalisation of the conflict, combined with the permanent instability of Northern- and Central-African

countries and the ongoing effects of climate change and economic distress, is causing large scale migration towards the European Union (Bojadzijev and Mezzadra, 2015).

This is happening mainly along two routes, one through Turkey, Greece and the Balkans (less after the EU-Turkey deal signed in March 2016), the other one through the Mediterranean Sea, via Italian islands and the mainland, and also to a lesser extent through Ceuta, Melilla and the Iberian peninsula. Overall, the arrivals in European Union member countries from the Mediterranean Sea were: 1,015,078 in 2015; 362,753 in 2016 and 172,301 in 2017 according to UNHCR sources.

Since 2015 about 12,000 migrants and asylum-seekers have lost their life or were missing in the attempt to reach Europe (UNHCR, 2018), while hundreds of thousands are enduring inhuman conditions during their journey. They are often subject to a permanent state of uncertainty over their status and their prospects (as certified in all national reports AIDA, 2018).

The European Union institutions are facing increasing difficulties in managing the external and internal frontiers of the Union, which led to the attempt (in relationship with Turkey, Libya and other African countries) to implement a strategy of "externalization" of the borders, often criticized for the violations of fundamental human rights that it entails (see Prestianni, 2016 and Kasparek, 2016).

Even the European Relocation Mechanism decided by a majority vote by the European Council in September 2015 proved to be a failure: it foresaw the transnational transfer of 160,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy with small shares to be distributed in the 28 EU member States. In March 2018 only 20,661 people were relocated from Greece and 10,594 from Italy, i.e. less than 20 per cent of what expected in two and a half years. Countries like Denmark, Hungary, Poland and the UK have not accepted anyone (EC sources, 2018).

Meanwhile, countries of first arrival are seeing strong pressure on their own systems and reception facilities and on their urban and social fabric. Large cities are the preferred destination of newcomers and hence the pressure on facilities and services is mainly witnessed by cities and their administrations.

Faced with growing limitations by national governments in implementing effective migration and welcoming policies, the activation of citizens-led initiatives in the reception and integration of migrants have had some success. They have often been met with a willingness to cooperate on the part of numerous local authorities, triggering innovative cooperation between non-institutional and institutional actors both at city level and transnationally beyond national boundaries.

We try to define these exemplary cases as "cities of solidarity". From a multi-level perspective, we mean situations where networking has developed locally amongst self-organized migrants, informal groups, civil society organisations, structured NGOs, and city governments; and also at the transnational level, with relationships and connections built between single cities, with the aim to coordinate their practical efforts in solving daily and

long-term problems in the reception and social inclusion of migrants. The struggle against all forms of racism and discrimination and the aim to define and to foster shared proposals in order to change current asylum and migration policies are also an essential component of the "cities of solidarity" perspective.

3. Case studies

"News from the front": The Charter of Palermo (Italy).

Palermo is the regional capital of Sicily. Its municipality has 670,000 inhabitants, but it is the centre of a metropolitan area with a population of over 1,070,000. Considering migratory flows, the entire Sicilian region is crossed by one of the three main routes, that of the central Mediterranean. 65.9% of arrivals are concentrated in Sicily: they were 153,842 in 2015; 181,436 in 2016; 119,369 in 2017 (source: Italian Ministry of Interior, 2018). The smaller islands, in particular Lampedusa, and the ports in the southern coast (Augusta, Pozzallo, Messina, Trapani for instance) of the main island are the first landing points. But the ports of Catania (with the office of Frontex, European border and coast guard agency, opened in April 2016) and Palermo have constituted in the past three years real "hubs", where the people saved and rescued at sea have been addressed and then sorted. Sicily currently receives about 9% of the total number of migrants hosted in public reception facilities in Italy.

The City of Palermo tried to propose since March 2015 at the International conference on human mobility entitled "Io sono persona" (I am a person), a culturally and politically innovative approach. The Mayor Leoluca Orlando (re-elected in 2012 and in 2017 for a civic platform) explains the idea as follows:

> It is impossible to block the displacement of millions of human beings. The phenomenon is connected with globalization, long-term economics and political crises. For this reason it is necessary to avoid chronic emergencies. And the starting point for a new vision can only be the recognition of migrants as people. Even the badly-understood concept of "security" must be subordinated to this approach. We must radically change the lenses through which we look at migratory phenomena. I propose we abandon the two main current approaches that are mutually dependent: the humanitarian one linked to the idea of "suffering" and the security-focused one linked to the idea of "protection." Migration problems can and should find their solution within the affirmation of "freedom of movement" as the new inalienable right of humans. No human has chosen or chooses the place where they were born. Everyone should instead be recognized as having the right to choose where to live, the right to live better and not to die (interview Orlando, 2017).

Orlando proposes also to overcome the distinction between "asylum seekers" and "economic migrants" and to abandon the logic of the "residence permit":

> This piece of paper plunges thousands of people into the Mediterranean. "Residence permits" must be abolished. Beyond this, the distinction between the "asylum seeker" and the "economic migrant" based on the policies of European countries makes me shiver. What is the difference between those who are likely to be killed because their country is in war and those we are likely to starve? I want to delve into this criminal

logic for a moment: if I have a right to asylum, why can I not buy a plane ticket and get to Europe regularly, landing in Berlin or Rome or Madrid? The proposal to outsource the right of asylum, its management to African countries or to Turkey, and creating camps is unacceptable. Instead, it is necessary to create guaranteed arrival paths, as real humanitarian corridors (Orlando, 2017).

In this perspective the Charter of Palermo insists both on the role of the European Union (and national States constitutional and legal framework) and on that of city government and active citizenship: "The migrants' effective access to human fundamental rights, starting with the right to residence and movement, seems an unavoidable aim to be pursued with multilevel interventions, not only at European and national levels, but also with the contribution of local authorities and non-governmental organizations, thus ensuring a peaceful coexistence and the appreciation of cultural differences as a resource." This means that the European legislation should be substantially modified: "There is the need to change Frontex and the Dublin Regulation (...). There should be a mutual recognition of the decisions establishing the right to international protection by eliminating the procedural requirements in the country of first landing. The right to freedom of movement of refugees in Europe must be guaranteed through an acceleration and a simplification of the procedures" (Charter of Palermo, 2015).

Following these principles, the City of Palermo has produced over the past three years strong efforts in materially implementing migrants' and refugees' rights at the local level. More than 1,300 asylum seekers are hosted in SPRAR facilities in the metropolitan area. SPRAR is the "Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees" created by national law in 2002 and is made up of the network of local institutions that realise reception projects for forced migrants by accessing, within the available resources, the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, managed by the Ministry of the Interior and provided under the Government finance law. At local level, city governments, in cooperation with civil society organisations, undertake "integrated reception" interventions going beyond the simple distribution of food and housing, also providing complementary services such as legal and social guidance and support, and the development of individual programmes to promote socio-economic inclusion and integration.

Unfortunately, this system, which provides for a virtuous cooperation between the central state, local authorities and active citizenship, with widely recognized positive outcomes, has been put on the margins since 2011 with the first "Libyan crisis" and even more since 2015 by the creation of an "emergency" circuit, directly managed by the Prefectures, bypassing city governments and creating lower standards in living conditions and sometimes legal distortions and episodes of corruption (AIDA, 2018).

Palermo hosts 1,200 unaccompanied minors, many of whom have had dramatic life experiences "comparable to those of a forty-year-old." The symbolic dimension of welcoming is still important for Mayor Orlando:

> Every time a ship arrives in the port of Palermo with migrants stranded in the Mediterranean, I am present to welcome them. On such occasions the harbour becomes a model of civil organization, everything works to perfection, associations and institutions together.

The difficult phase starts afterwards: health and education, housing and jobs must be secured for everyone. Migrants and indigenous Palermitans often find themselves in the same condition of unemployment or precariousness. And together we try to face it. All this works only thanks to the close relationship we have with local networks of associations.

If the guiding principle for us is that of a new citizenship, the right to active political participation and 'cultural contamination' is paramount. In Palermo we have created a "Council of Cultures" a permanent representative body as a concrete application of a model in which citizenship rights are exclusively related to residence and not to nationality (Orlando, 2017).

The case of Palermo shows 1) the importance of a radically innovative political-cultural approach, capable of questioning - in the name of a more inclusive and extensive "urban citizenship" - some clichés that have characterized the European vision of migratory policies in the last decade; 2) the ability to link this new discursive framework with a practical and effective system of reception and inclusion that represents a model of balanced relationships between national and local government and civil society (i.e. SPRAR); at the same time, however, 3) despite the notoriety and international recognition of the Palermo experience, it seems to be lacking the construction of relationships capable of "transnationalising" this same experience; 4) and the SPRAR system itself appears to be insufficiently proposed and reproduced as a possible virtuous model on a wider European scale (see ANCI et al., 2017).

Municipal protagonism: the Barcelona plan and "las Ciudades refugio" in Spain.

Since the end of Francoist dictatorship and the transition to democracy, Barcelona (1,620,000 inhabitants, capital of the autonomous region of Catalunya in the Spanish state) maintains a forty-year tradition of cosmopolitan openness in the local society and in successive city governments with different political orientations. This attitude was strengthened by the "municipalist" Administration elected in May 2015, both in the adoption of public political positions, and in the practical organization of city services. The Mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau took a transnational initiative contacting the mayors of places most exposed to the impact of migrant arrivals, offering the cooperation of Barcelona and defining a clear common position. The first result was a shared "manifesto" (*We, the cities of Europe*) launched in September 2015. The mayors of Paris, Lesbos, Lampedusa, Coruña, Cadiz, Santiago de Compostela, and Zaragoza adhered to this call:

We, the cities of Europe, are ready to become places of refuge. We want to welcome these refugees. States grant asylum status but cities provide shelter. Border towns, such as Lampedusa, or the islands of Kos and Lesbos, are the first to receive the flow of people seeking asylum, and European municipalities will have to take these people in and ensure they can start a new life, safe from the dangers from which they have escaped. We have the space, services and, most importantly, the support of our citizens to do so. Our municipal services are already working on refugee reception plans

to ensure food, a roof, and dignity for everyone fleeing war and hunger. The only thing missing is state support (Colau, 2015).

The manifesto continues:

> For years European governments have spent most asylum and migration funds on reinforcing our borders and turning Europe into a fortress. This mistaken policy is the reason why the Mediterranean has become the graveyard for thousands of refugees attempting to come and share our freedom. It is time to change our priorities: to allocate funds to ensure refugees in transit are welcomed, to provide resources for cities that have offered themselves as places of refuge. This is not the time for hollow words or empty speeches, it's time for action (Colau, 2015).

Following these declarations, the City Council approved a "Plan of Barcelona Ciutat Refugi". The starting point is the SAIER (Care Service for Immigrants, Emigrants and Refugees) which already exists since 1999. It collaborates, through subsidies, with city NGOs working in asylum and in international development cooperation and education, even though they have been squeezed hard in recent years by Spanish and Catalan government budget cuts. The main goal of the plan is to receive and assist refugees, providing the necessary services and guaranteeing their rights, and to call on states to respect the most elementary standards of humanitarian law. It operates on four main lines that involve various city council departments and services:

> ***Reception strategy***: defines Barcelona's reception model and the implementation stages. The aim is to minimise impacts and to implement it in the most effective way possible, taking into account refugees' needs and rights, but also those of the city's population.
>
> ***Care for refugees already in Barcelona***: this means bolstering SAIER and designing a program that offers protection and assistance to asylum seekers already in Barcelona who are receiving no help from the state.
>
> ***Citizen participation and information***: the plan includes a civic space for coordinating the efforts of the city council and NGOs in all the voluntary work, awareness-raising and development education tasks. (…)
>
> ***Action abroad***: the city council is pushing for coordination and mutual support between European cities, both on a city-to-city basis as well as in the international networks they belong to. It has also increased the subsidies for NGOs working on the ground, at source and en route (City of Barcelona, 2015-2017).

The "Barcelona Refuge City" plan articulates a cross-cutting approach: **driving political initiatives,** calling on the Spanish government and European Union to relocate refugees and establish safe, legal passage, as well as international cooperation policies that tackle the root of the problem; **launching an effective reception strategy and its own comprehensive care model** for refugees in collaboration with organisations with expertise in this field, civil society and part of the city's voluntary organisation network; **bolstering the city's services, resources and networks** without creating parallel structures to the existing ones. An example of the latter is the design to expand Barcelona's social housing exchange, which will benefit the city as a whole.

Collaborating with civic organisations and associations is a crucial point in the implementation of the plan: all these tasks are being carried out with the involvement of active citizens, from designing the reception model and strategy to organising and managing the volunteers. The "Barcelona Refuge City" plan, in collaboration with the city's various organisations and associations, has built a "civic space" to channel this citizen solidarity and set up, in a coordinated fashion, structured ways for citizen participation to go along with its actions. For example, a database has been set up to collect all the offers of services, resources, materials and activities that have been received, so they can be adapted to the specific needs of the refugees when they arrive in the city. But they are offering many other ways of giving support to refugees, besides direct help in the city:

> Help is needed at source and en route; we need training and information; we need to know the context and what makes people migrate; and we need to challenge the stereotypes that abound about other people. We also need to put pressure on European institutions and the EU member states, to ensure they honour their international commitments, by accepting people who need to come here and offering them a safe, legal corridor to reach Europe. Until they get here, the best way we can help is to lay the ground for receiving them, organise information and awareness-raising activities, civic education, and take part in that. Even now, there are lots of refugees living in Barcelona who made their own way here, as well as other migrants in need of our solidarity and assistance to become independent and feel part of the city (City of Barcelona, 2015-2017).

The "civic space" encompasses citizen participation, awareness-raising and development-education initiatives, and serves to coordinate the actions of the city council with those of city organisations, associations and groups, both formal and informal. With this aim in mind, the plan has established collaboration mechanisms with the "Citizen Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona", a tool for cooperation between civil society and the city council that currently involves more than 600 bodies, associations and organisations in the city.

The current budget of the plan foresees an annual expenditure of 1,366,010 euros, with 697,354 for care and reception of refugees, 319,064 for "awareness rising and education for development" and 349,591 for international cooperation, including the support to search and rescue (SAR) operations of Proactiva Open Arms NGO in the Mediterranean sea. With these social and financial resources, since 2015, Barcelona has been able to welcome more than 1,400 asylum seekers and refugees, and its public and civil society structures would be able to host about 2,500 people.

As in all European countries in Spain asylum policy is the state's responsibility, so the time scale and the number of people coming to Barcelona, Madrid and other cities depends on the Spanish government's decisions and on its European commitments. But the central executive's paralysis and lack of coordination with regional and local authorities are "not only preventing us [Barcelona City] from gearing up for the arrival of refugees but also creating expectations that are not being met, similar to the situation that arose in the autumn of 2015, when Spain was preparing to receive a high number of refugees relocated from Italy and Greece who did not arrive" (City of Barcelona, 2017).

This situation has led to a popular mobilization campaign (for instance 160,000 people in the streets of Barcelona on 18 February 2016 with the slogan "My house, your home")

demanding welcoming refugees, and it is one of the main points in the platform of requests launched by the "Red de Ciudades Refugio" (Network of Shelter Cities) created at Spanish national level since 2015. In September 2017 a total of 25 municipalities throughout Spain, members of that network, met with parliamentary groups in Congress to denounce the "immobilization" of the Government in the area of resettlement and relocation and asked for a transfer of powers and competencies.

The Deputy mayor of the City of Madrid, Mauricio Valiente, argued that Madrid welcomes too many people in search of asylum to be considered simply a transit city. "We are dealing with people expelled from the asylum system and at the request of the Government itself," said Valiente, who indicated that the City Council is responsible for periods of up to two months for people who are waiting for the processing of their request of international protection. "We have put at the disposal of the state all our system of reception and it is being totally overwhelmed," he said. One of the last measures that the Madrid City council has carried out in 2016/17 has been to allocate around 4.5 million euros for aid programs for refugees. The projects have been carried out with entities such as UNHCR, Red Cross, CEAR (Spanish Council for Asylum and Refuge) or UNRWA. Valiente, explaining the network's inspiration, insists on

> The importance of overcoming any "ideological division" among cities, enhancing a "non-partisan" approach to the issue of welcoming and integration of refugees. All over Europe cities are assuming, from the financial point of view, the entire weight of welcoming on the ordinary local budget. That means handling the different profiles of migrants/refugees coming to cities; and, given the different profiles, the need to consider different approaches - and different legal frameworks - to their integration. Cities are confronted with difficulty of not being able to decide neither over whether or not to welcome refugees and migrants, nor which profiles. One of the main challenges is how to deal with failed asylum seekers. For these reasons, clarifying our role, we need deep changes in European legal framework (interview Valiente, 2017).

The case of Barcelona (and, more generally, the experience of the shelter cities network in Spain) highlights 1) a high degree of integration developed on city level between the local government's political commitment, the activation of civil society and the professionalism of the technical-administrative structure of dedicated public services and NGOs; 2) an effective willingness to transnationalise both approaches and planned interventions, starting from solidary cooperation with the other cities (particularly in the Mediterranean) invested by the phenomenon; this will, however, have to be measured with 3) the political choices of the Spanish national government that limited effective reception of asylum seekers and migrants within State borders; 4) the lack of an adequate response from the European institutions to the issues posed by the cities; 5) the absence of juridical and practical tools that allow to concretely implement city-to-city relationships on a transnational scale and the efficiency of wider networks.

"Alternative to the Jungle": Grande-Synthe (France) local reception.

Grande-Synthe, a commune of 21.160 inhabitants in the north of France, shares with the entire urban area of Dunkirk social and environmental problems caused by the processes of decommissioning of heavy industrial production, especially in the steel sectors. Therefore, on the one hand, it is forced to deal with serious problems of soil, air and water pollution; on the other, the ongoing closure of large factories in the area and the current state of economic depression leading to a 2% overall rate of unemployment, and among young people up to 40%. A third of households are living below the poverty line.

Elected for the first time in 2001 and then again in 2008 and 2014, the municipality led by Mayor Damien Carême addressed this problematic situation with a program of ambitious environmental and social policies. These include a popular university in the service of the town's residents, the first renewable energy stadium in France and the building an eco-neighbourhood accessible to low-income families. Combining solidarity to migrants with an innovative territorial planning, which endeavours to match ecology and the fight against social inequalities, the experience of Grande-Synthe has been able to point out how a strong system of community welfare - guaranteeing the social rights of all, local population and newcomers - prevents the emergence of hostility, racism and discrimination (Favier, 2017).

Just 35 km away, facing the arrival of asylum seekers waiting to ferry the English Channel to the United Kingdom, the joint response provided by the municipality and the population of Grande-Synthe showed a model totally different from that of Calais, where the city government has instead collaborated with the French and UK national police authorities to deny the migrants any hosting facility (up to the eviction and dismantling of the so-called "Jungle") and to repel them away from the border area. Rather, the town of Grande-Synthe has created the first French camp that complies with the norms of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"These last 10 years there were never more than 90 or 100 migrants passing through the Grande-Synthe territory, and we had to provide some wood cabin shelter for them, particularly during the winter" Carême says:

> but after the complete blockage of the border at Calais, in the summer of 2015, the situation became worrying. By the end of September we counted over 500 persons; that more than tripled by the end of November, then 2,800 by the end of December, of which 300 were children. Sanitary conditions at that point were even worse than in Calais; infections were spreading: measles, chickenpox, scabies and tuberculosis. The necessity of a camp seemed the only conceivable solution, especially as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) committed to be responsible for a very large share of the expenses to create one with 2.5 million euros. The town advanced the remaining 700,000 euros, counting on a reimbursement from the European Community, so as not to burden the local budget. The Prefect [French national government local official] did not oppose the plan, but issued an unfavourable opinion, professing security concerns. The camp was created in March 2016 at Linière, an area at some distance from the town between the warehouse and the highway (interview Carême, 2018).

In May 2016 the refugee population was 1,300 people, but the structures could accommodate up to 2,500 migrants. For the camp to operate, there needed to be at least 120 personnel at all times, of whom the overwhelming majority were unpaid volunteers,

from different civil society organisations, coordinated by a local association, AFEJI, which fights against social exclusion. After several months of public opinion mobilisation and pressure on the national government in order to obtain the recognition and financial support of the camp by the central state, AFEJI signed a tripartite agreement with the town of Grande-Synthe and the French government on May 30. The government was therefore responsible for "cleaning, sanitation, 24/7 guards, social mediation and security." Clothing and food continued to be assured by the volunteers.

In the camp a school was opened, managed by the *Edlumino Education aid association*, which brings together French and British teachers who assist children in refugee camps. Autonomous camp management was significant in order to struggle against the influence of people smugglers, who were often armed. Numerous criminal networks of them were dismantled (Favier, 2017).

On 10 April 2017 a fire completely destroyed the camp facilities and migrants were distributed in emergency shelters throughout the north of France. Around 250 of them have been hosted since then, thanks to the intervention of the town, in a school sport hall. For Mayor Carême "the absence of real alternatives has shown the inadequacy of the national reception system" and, more generally, the inhumanity and irrationality of current policies for asylum and migration. During its existence the camp project has rather shown that a respectful and dignified welcome of migrants is possible. And that "to give it up for fear of a "magnet effect" is not only disgraceful, but absolutely groundless" (Carême, 2018).

While Grande-Synthe continues to intervene directly to provide assistance on its territory, the city government organized in March 2018 a French "Convention nationale pour l'accueil et les migrations" with the aim of building a network of associations, movements and local institutions to strengthen reception and inclusion policies at urban level and to counter the project of law on immigration, currently under discussion in the French parliament, which foresees more restrictive measures for entry and movement of foreign citizens. Many of its participants have insisted on the need to extend networking on a transnational scale, at the European level.

In this sense the case of Grande-Synthe shows 1) the possibility of combining a new welfare for the whole local population with measures of reception for asylum seekers and migrants, able to ensure an higher standard of universal social rights, even in situations of objective social difficulty; 2) the effectiveness of this type of policies in building more advanced forms of coexistence, and in preventing therefore phenomena of xenophobia and discrimination; 3) the crucial role played, even in a small town, by cooperation between governments and local population with transnational movements, CSOs and NGOs; 4) the difficulty in obtaining the recognition and support of this work, that is local and transnational at the same time, by national political institutions; 5) the need to develop, in order to overcome these difficulties, wider network relations with other European cities.

Willkommen Initiativen and metropolitan government: Berlin (Germany).

Berlin, the capital of Germany and one of the liveliest metropolis of Central Europe (3,531,200 inhabitants) has inevitably become, during the so-called "refugee crisis", one of the poles of attraction of flows. At the same time, from the political-administrative point of view, Berlin is a "city-state" within the federal system, its municipality is the Senate, to which the powers of a Land are attributed, including different competences in the field of reception and integration of foreign citizens, even within the national legislative framework.

In Autumn 2015, several polemics accompanied the management of the reception by the LaGeSo public agency, accused of inefficiency and indecent treatment of asylum seekers. However, the city has a long tradition of asylum, consolidated in recent decades. In the last two years it has involved a re-activation of the existing associations and networks and the spontaneous proliferation of numerous "Willkommen Initiatives", even composed by non-activist people and organized in the various districts and neighbourhoods, which at the same time organized material support to asylum seekers (first orientation, food, accommodation, educational and cultural activities) and have presented precise demands to local and national institutions (Flüchtlingsrat Berlin, 2016). Following the latest local elections, since December 2016 the Berlin Senate is governed by a coalition involving the Social Democrats, the Left ("Die Linke") and the Greens. This new progressive majority, in the logic of an overall strengthening of welfare policies, has opened a channel of permanent dialogue with the grassroots "Wilkommen Initiativen" and it has retrained the policy for asylum (Breitenbach, 2017).

By the end of December 2017, 24,743 refugees were accommodated in structures run by the Senate and 4,160 in 2016 and 4,094 in 2017 moved from large first reception facilities to single apartments. Senator Elke Breitenbach is responsible for these matters and she is currently very worried about the programs of the incumbent national governing coalition:

> It is cruel that family reunification for subsidiary protected persons continues to be suspended. This is not only inhumane, but also contributes significantly to the fact that these people cannot integrate. I think that's completely wrong. I am against any form of upper limit ("Obergrenze" of refugees' arrivals), even if it is to be cleverly described. This contradicts quite decisively the stated intention that the fundamental right to asylum is not touched. At the moment, about 700 people a month arrive in Berlin, which is far from the specified upper limit. But every day many people still die in the Mediterranean, because there are no legal escape routes to apply for asylum here. Many people live in Greece or Turkey for months or years and do not get any further. That is a completely unsatisfactory situation (interview Breitenbach, 2018).

The Berlin Senate criticises also the creation of large so-called "Anchor centres" (*Ankerzentren*) by the Federal government:

> They obstruct any chance that people can integrate into society. They then sit there and are doomed to do nothing (waiting for the decisions on their status). There are no German courses, they are not allowed to take up work, that too is a deterioration compared to the previous specifications. In Germany, we organize the disintegration and the dequalification of people who come here. This is not only inhuman, but will also cost us dearly (Breitenbach, 2018).

Approximately 45,000 people have arrived in Berlin since the summer of 2015 and, to date, around two thirds of them have obtained the legal status of permanent "refugee".

Nevertheless, many still live in shared accommodation. At present, more than 2,000 people live in shelters and these accommodations have very different qualities. There were the precarious accommodations such as the hangar at Tempelhof Airport, the ICC and the department store in Neukölln, which the Senate meanwhile cleared. Improving the accommodation is the first goal that the local government is achieving. Breitenbach says:

> Those are accommodations in which there is no room structure and therefore no privacy. In addition, there are emergency shelters in which people cannot cook themselves, because installing kitchens is difficult there. The independent preparation of the food is very important to the refugees and would at least allow humans a little more self-determination. We want people to get out of shelters as quickly as possible and move to better shelters where they can at least cook for themselves. The goal remains to house them in flats as quickly as possible (Breitenbach, 2018).

In Berlin there are still "containers camps" (the so-called "Tempohomes"), that the previous Senate has appointed. No more new facilities of this kind are built and the existing containers will also be dismantled in three years (by 2020). Many are on lands for which there are already other plans, for example social housing. Combining solutions addressed both to migrants and refugees, and to sectors of the local population in difficult conditions because of the urban real estate market, is one of the administration's priorities. Breitenbach explains:

> We have decided to build only modular accommodation in the future. These are solid, fast-to-build houses in apartment and apartment structure, the so-called MUFs, which could be an affordable housing for other people. Of course we would like to break down the fences everywhere. Basically, we want to get away from fences and very quickly create integrative forms of housing. The aim is to open the newly built modular accommodation for other people, students for example. But there must be a good mix, so that no new social hot spots arise. I believe that if refugees live in flats and are just neighbours, there would be much more acceptance (Breitenbach, 2018).

The case of Berlin presents 1) the positive capacity of a metropolitan government to cope with massive arrivals of refugees and migrants, even in emergency conditions ; 2) this has been made possible by a widespread presence of grassroots welcoming initiatives, by historically entrenched and still active foreign communities and by broad social and political networks of movements and groups, and by the willingness of the local government to dialogue with them and to accept their demands; but it also highlights that 3) this is made possible by the broad financial autonomy and political-administrative competencies guaranteed by the federal system to the Berlin Senate; 4) the transnational dimension of solidarity activities appears thus immediately present in the metropolitan context, but the interest of different local actors (institutional and non-institutional) for the development of transnational networks is less than in other experiences.

How to involve EU Institutions? A first attempt from EuroCities.

The concept of "solidarity city" was made explicit for the first time in Europe by groups of activists who, inspired by North American experiences, organized themselves in different cities of central Europe (in Germany, Switzerland and Austria), around the proposal of a new "urban citizenship" (Krenn and Morawek, 2017). They define their idea in the follow way:

> A city no one is deported from, in which everyone can move freely and without fear. A city where no one is asked for papers or status, a city where no one is illegal. These are the demands and visions of a Solidarity City. In such a city, everyone shall have the right live and work. Everyone shall have access to education and health care. Everyone shall be able to participate actively in the cultural and political city life – no matter what "legal" and financial status they have, no matter what race, gender, sexuality, religion. In many cities and towns all over the world, the process of becoming such a city already started (Solidarity Cities network, 2017).

Even with a radical social movements' approach, these groups do not exclude alliances with, and an active involvement of, local institutions:

> The communal action level is appropriate for this because all institutions can agree on a solidarity practice. What is new about this? Activist groups, institutions and even municipal administration are pulling in the same direction, whether it is health care, job hunting, finding a place to live, or any other issue of day-to-day life. We want to create a city that is worthwhile living in for all habitants. A social community works best if everybody can actually build their lives in it autonomously. What is the idea behind it all? Everyone must be enabled to live, work and connect with others as they want. We do not accept that only people who carry a German passport and have enough capital will succeed achieving this. We demand a city for all! (Solidarity Cities network, 2017).

Eurocities, an organization founded in 1986 by the mayors of six major European cities (Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan, Rotterdam) and which now includes 140 cities in more than thirty European countries, acts on a different terrain. The mission of Eurocities is to bring to the attention of institutions of the European Union the needs of cities in the economic, political, social and cultural fields. In October 2016 they launched their "Solidarity cities" initiative in a meeting in Greece, coordinated by the Mayor of Athens Giorgios Kaminis. The aim is to provide a common platform to promote city-to-city mutual assistance, knowledge exchange, capacity-building and advocacy for a fair sharing of responsibilities across the EU (Penny, 2016). Thomas Jezequel was, until November 2017, policy advisor in charge for this project:

> The plight of refugees poses a serious challenge not only for those fleeing conflict but also to European society as a whole. Europe's inability to agree on a joint solution in order to provide a humane response to those seeking asylum puts the continent in peril of growing disintegration and social and political turmoil. (…) The role of cities as first points of arrival, transit hubs and ultimate destinations of refugees is well-established and widely-acknowledged by institutions and stakeholders at national and European level. Eurocities members across Europe are now home to tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers. Against the backdrop of a debate over quotas and borders, cities have to manage the urgent challenges presented by the daily arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. And on the other hand, they need to establish the necessary infrastructure to prepare for the considerable long-term challenge of integrating newcomers into our societies and ensuring social cohesion over the years to come. Cities are taking the lead in openly welcoming refugees and demonstrating that pragmatic solutions can be taken to effectively tackle this humanitarian crisis. Cities

want to be allies of the European Commission and Member States in managing the refugee situation. They also want to live by the principles of responsibility and solidarity (Jezequel, 2016).

After one year of activities, the feedback from Eurocities is partial but positive in evaluating the first results: "we have secured different streams of funding to support cities in their work to improve reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees", in particular with the "Cities Grow" project, supported by the European Commission's DG Home and launched in February 2017, 16 cities members of Solidarity Cities network are working on the integration of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants in economic life.

In parallel Eurocities has organised ad-hoc mentoring visits on education for refugee children in cities. Milan and Thessaloniki received mentoring visits from Leeds, Stockholm and Amsterdam in June and July 2017. This mentoring model will be replicated on other thematic areas of the reception and integration of refugees to improve peer-to-peer exchanges.

At technical and political level the network is pursuing its lobbying efforts to guarantee a better EU funding of integration in cities: "Eurocities is coordinating, within the urban partnership on the inclusion of migrants, the action on EU funding which will recommend new ways to finance migrant integration post 2020" (Eurocities, 2017).

And finally, City governments like Athens, Ghent, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Barcelona and Lisbon are actively working with their governments on 'refugee pledges' to try to make city-to-city relocation of asylum seekers with the EU relocation programme a reality. On the latter topic, however, there has been no specific response up to now by any single national government, nor by European institutions.

Obtaining political and financial recognition of transnational solidarity practices seems to be the most difficult target, especially when the "monopoly" of nation-states on border control and on citizenship status is challenged by the autonomous initiative of cities. Far beyond the "good practices" developed at the institutional level, the need for a more incisive political action, capable of exerting adequate pressure on EU institutions, appears here evident.

The initiative of "Relaunching Europe Bottom-up" manifesto, proposed by Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform, is moving in this direction too. June 2017 it gathered in Gdansk (Poland) numerous mayors of Eastern Europe, in particular from those countries of Višegrad group, whose national governments are primarily responsible for border closure policies and for the failure of the European relocation mechanism. More specifically, the manifesto sets itself the practical goal of:

> Starting with the next European Union Financial Framework in 2021, which is now in preparation, the European Union should create a publicly financed fund for which municipalities can apply and receive direct and holistic financing for the refugee integration and – additionally to be more inclusive – the communities' general social integration and economic development. (…) Thus, avoiding destructive competition between foreign and domestic poor this strategy would encourage a broad social support within the cities to undertake the long-lasting process of integration (Humboldt-Viadrina, 2017).

The more political strategic goal, to be achieved by the promotion and support of a "bottom-up strategy by municipalities and cities that have an interest to voluntarily integrate refugees for humanitarian purposes and for own prospects", is a "decentralized deepening of the European Union through citizen's participation on the municipality level, thus avoiding centralization as well as renationalization" (Humboldt-Viadrina, 2017).

Conclusion: evaluation and lessons

The situation in different European countries after the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015 has produced a wide range of solidarity activities, from informal initiatives to more structured institutional projects. Most of these practices, in our case studies, can be identified, developed and tested as models of transnational solidarity practices. They proved to be effective in their premises and results; sustainable from an environmental, social and financial point of view; appealing in terms of creation of positive social values, culture and imagination; and even adaptable in different contexts and potentially reproducible on larger scale. As argued above, each of them presented different level of transnational engagement, involving different actors and showing limits and contradictions in their respective "transnationalisation" processes, sometimes without a conscious degree of planning.

The five cases above show how the networking between citizens and civil society practices in "Cities of solidarity" can contribute to define single solutions and strategic proposals for alternative policies on asylum, migration and mobility across national borders, developing innovative social solidarity practices at European Union level. In order to accomplish these goals, the following crucial points and the resulting guidelines should be examined and applied with further attention:

Cities are often proving to be more dynamic and effective than single national governments in the management of migratory phenomena and particularly in reception and social inclusion of new arrivals of both asylum seekers and more generally migrants (as stated by Unesco, 2016; GPM, 2017; Urbact, 2017). From this point of view the experiences we have investigated show some common characteristics, as follows:

The new *subjective quality* of the migratory flows, as they showed themselves starting from Summer 2015: in most cases, asylum seekers and migrants proved to be active subjects, social actors capable of a high degree of self-organization, awareness of the real conditions in which they found themselves, knowledge of their rights and duties, "non-passive objects" of the attention of legal and police devices or simply "users" of charitable or social interventions that concern them (Tazzioli, 2015; Kasparek, 2016);

the *activation of large sectors of local civil society*, both in spontaneous initiatives by citizens, and in networks of civil society organizations. In the last three years social movements, civic groups and associations have played a leading role in welcoming. This attitude has important political consequences (160,000 protesters in Barcelona on 18

February 2017 to ask the Spanish government to open the borders to asylum seekers; 100,000 in Milan on 20 May 2017 to ask for "bridges, not walls, solidarity and hospitality"), but also a widespread practical articulation in thousands of voluntary initiatives and/or cooperative mutualism, aimed at ensuring accommodation, food, legal support, health assistance, education, cultural activities, orientation to the placement on the labour market;

the commitment of local institutions, starting from the city governments that put themselves in constructive and horizontal relationship with the social composition of refugees and migrants, and with the initiatives of civil society and active citizenship. Precisely the interweaving, the open, permanent interrelationship and the cooperation between these three distinct poles defines the possibility that an urban and metropolitan space presents itself as a "city of solidarity".

But the active involvement of these three actors is not enough;

there must also be a *structural reform of the European and national regulatory framework*, that foresees a modification of the current international Conventions on the right of asylum and a more supportive migration policy, sharing responsibilities and burdens on a transnational level;

the European Commission and European Council should give *political and financial recognition of the role of cities*, and local authorities should have of the broadest *political and financial autonomy* in migration matters granted single national governments;

the construction of *stable and developed transnational networks between cities* is necessary, which provide for the strengthening of exchanges of "good practices" and models of reception and social inclusion; the possibility of negotiating "with one voice" in front of the European institutions and national governments; finally, the possibility of developing autonomous city-to-city policies, bypassing the direct control of the nation-state;

development, at the local level, of the most *advanced participation tools* in order to actively involve, in the definition of urban reception and social inclusion policies, both migrants, their movements and their community, and representative organizations, and the groups and associations of local civil society;

the design and implementation of *highly integrated local welfare systems* that include wide-ranging policies aimed at the full implementation of social rights for the entire population, without discrimination of any kind, including labour market regulation, redistribution of wealth available, health, education, culture.

In order to move a step forward, it is clear the need to acquire a new, conceptual and practical sense of the relationship to be established between the *transnational dimension*, as engaged by a multiplicity of local, social and institutional actors, and the *supranational dimension*, for example that of the European institutions, whose task will increasingly be to create the indispensable framework conditions (legal and political, financial and infrastructural) necessary for the further development of transnational solidarity practices.

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Case-Study 3. The transnational evolution of Krytyka Polityczna

By Jamie Mackay

Background

The Polish civil society organization Krytyka Polityczna was founded in 2002 as a meeting point for writers, thinkers and activists to revive the regional tradition of an 'engaged intelligencia.' Initially a small group, they have grown to encompass a magazine, publishing house, educational facilities and a network of cultural centres, and are now one of the principle institutions in Central and Eastern Europe working to overcome authoritarian governance and social exclusion. The organization is focused around three key themes which structure their ongoing work: social science, culture and politics. In each of these fields they work to build bridges across social divisions within Poland but also internationally, and, most importantly for our purposes here, to further a radical reimagining of the European public sphere.

Realising such an ambitious democratic project has been a significant challenge in a national context that has, with some justification, become thought of as among most oppressive within the EU in recent years. Since 2015 the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) has successfully taken control of state media, attempted to undermine independence of the judiciary, and, this year, passed a bill that denies Polish complicity in the Holocaust. Through measures like these the Polish state has explicitly defined itself in direct opposition to such an internationally minded project of pan-European society and governance as that proposed by Krytyka Polityczna. At a grassroots level, meanwhile, the nation has been plagued by a resurgence of far-right populism, epitomised by the terrifying spectacle of over 60,000 people, many with links to fascist organisations, marching in Warsaw on Polish Independence Day to slogans such as 'White Ethno State!' and 'Man and woman. The only normal family', to name just two.

Phenomena such as these only confirm the urgent need for a democratic alternative. And this is why international cooperation – from other European countries towards Poland but also vice versa - is so vital. Because xenophobic narratives and undemocratic practices are, in reality, visible in varying degrees not only in the East, from Poland to Hungary, but all across the continent. It is increasingly clear that an entirely new kind of political praxis based on transnational solidarity is needed across Europe, and it is here that Krytyka Polityczna can serve as an example. Indeed, the very fact that such an initiative continues to persevere in a political environment like that in Poland today, and is able to communicate its message through relationships beyond the country's borders, render it a unique example of such a philosophy in action. On the one hand the bonds developed over the past decade and a half have helped sustain the organisation through a challenging political battle. Yet to take a more outward facing view, the model developed by Krytyka Polityczna itself is already intrinsically international, a potential blueprint for organisations elsewhere working towards similar goals. The implication of a shared transnational democratic space, in other

words, makes Krytyka Polityczna an ideal case study to show how alliances across borders can effectively maintain democracy and offer a groundwork for change even in a political climate seemingly opposed to such initiatives.

With such vital context in mind, this TransSol handbook seeks to analyse how Krytyka Polityczna's evolution from a Polish and Central European initiative to an organisation with transnational ambitions developed through a prolonged conversation with a plethora of other civil society organisations from across the EU. This is, for the above reasons, a democratic argument, born with the urgent task of counteracting parochial nationalism's such as those spreading across Poland. It seeks to show that on the very frontline of oppression and illiberalism, an alternative democratic culture is thriving against all odds, thanks to a grassroots group of international minded citizens.

Goals, cases and methods

In order to construct a diverse and detailed picture of the internal motivations of Krytyka Polityczna, European Alternatives spoke with some of the key participants in the development of the organisation: Sławek Blich; Dawid Krawczyk; Igor Stokfiszewski; Joanna Tokarz and Agnieszka Wiśniewska. Each interviewee explained how and why the organization has conceived of itself in transnational terms, and what 'solidarity' across borders can look like both in theory and in concrete terms, based on their own experiences. The report looks in particular at five constituent moments in the organization's development: an initial declaration of transnationalism in 2003; the international activities of the publishing house; the AGORA meetings that built solidarity in the Visegrad region; social media and activist meetings with representatives from #15M and other social movements from across Europe that radically expanded this base; and finally, the opening of a Ukrainian publication.

Following this chronological account of a slowly evolving transnational practice, the report seeks to distill some fundamental principles that have underpinned this successful case study, both at a theoretical and practical level. The analysis concludes with five succinct 'take-aways', presented in the form of a blueprint for other NGOs, civil society movements in Europe seeking to develop their own practices of transnational cooperation. The hope is that these findings will help build links between organizations in their ongoing activities and deepen knowledge of collaborative methods.

Imagining Poland beyond the nation-state

In 2003, shortly after the founding of Krytyka Polityczna, the writer Sławomir Sierakowski and sociologist Kinga Dunin wrote 'An Open Letter to the European Public' expressing

support for the project of a European Constitution and calling for a more federal understanding of European sovereignty. The letter, which was signed by 250 Polish intellectuals, helped connect the organisation immediately with conversations about the nature of a European public, and the implicit notion of transnational solidarity. Here was their key declaration:

> We want a Europe which upholds common values - such as liberty, equality and solidarity - but feels no need to name their sources, because it does not wish to alienate or exclude anyone. We want a Europe which is politically strong, efficiently managed, and decisive in its strife for unity - because this is the only way we can counter one-sided economic globalization.

Their provocative text appeared in Le Monde, El Pais, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung as well as Gazeta Wyborcza and Rzeczpospolita. Through this wide dissemination it helped reframe the nation's position as a protagonist in calls for European integration at a time when it was seen as a marginal voice in such discussions. In this very early intervention, solidarity emerges, vitally, as something that counter-acts globalization in its neoliberal form; not simple a by-product of it, as is sometimes imagined by critics. Within Poland the letter was a key differentiating point from other political spaces – including those of many on the post-communist left such as the SLD - and a powerful declaration of internationalism ahead of EU accession in 2004. "It was a very important lesson for us" summarized Sierakowski in an interview with Huffington Post some years later, "[we learnt] you can enter big politics with just a good idea, a pencil and sheet of paper." This is a philosophy that, as we shall see, would fuel a process of growing ambition for interventions at multiple levels of political participation, from grassroots mobilisations to the ongoing attempt to build effective and democratically accountable institutions at a transnational level.

Initially, though, this early gesture of collaboration across borders was confined to the intellectual sphere. In the months following its formation, Krytyka Polityczna would expand its project through specific ventures in publishing that attempted to embed the country's academic and journalistic debates in a broader context. The strongest manifestation of this, by extension, was the activity of a formalised publishing house which from 2007 onwards has been printing works by academics and writers from around the world including Jacques Rancière, Bruno Latour, Judith Butler, Gilles Kepel, Alain Badiou, Manuel Castells, Harald Welzer, Gayatri Spivak, Chantal Mouffe, Gianni Vattimo, Boris Buden, Timothy Snyder, Yaroslav Hrytsak, Terry Eagleton and Zygmunt Bauman. In reality, this venture had a dual function: firstly to make 'far-off debates' accessible in the Polish language and so to intellectuals in the country. Just as importantly, though, it enabled the work of Polish writers to become more deeply embedded in a diverse global environment of debate. In the subsequent period, works published under the Krytyka Polityczna imprint served as a bridge against the isolationist policies of Poland's mainstream media and political context. And so aside from becoming one of the country's most recognisable and respected publishers of non-fiction, it also, quite consciously, established itself as a vehicle for furthering pluralism and democracy beyond the nation-state.

Joanna Tokarz, one of the key members of the editorial team, explained how this expansion marked a coherent development of the larger philosophy presented in the Open Letter: "we

find it important to face the antidemocratic and populist tendencies in Europe not only on state level with a use of available sources and tools but reach out farther and see the wider patterns and possible solutions Europe wide." One recent example of this commitment, and of their philosophy in practice, was the publication in Polish of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century,* a book which was, of course, debated widely at a global level but which without the initiative of Krytyka Polityczna would not have been available for monolingual Polish readers. Just as importantly, however, Krytyka Polityczna's version was accompanied by several critical commentaries, essays that in their own right stimulated intense debate around specific points pertaining to Poland (in particular regarding the author's controversial arguments about the economic colonization of Eastern Europe by Western nations). In tandem to this level of established academic debate, the publishing house also evolved with a commitment to providing a platform for emerging authors, and began to publish debut works and anthologies of younger writers too in a series of ebooks on topics like artivism, labour and education. This initiative, conceived with the digital space in mind, gave a new generation the opportunity to respond immediately, journalistically, to the ideas of global intellectuals, and present their arguments back to the world in both Polish and English.

Beyond publishing, the early stages of transnational evolution were focused in particular on building real world links with other organizations in the Visegrád region through initiatives like an annual international summer school called AGORA held in the small-town of Cieszyn. The venue itself is of symbolic importance, with half of the town, since WWII, belonging to Poland and the other to Czech Republic. In this regional context, solidarity has a specific meaning, as Sławek Blich, one of the organisers, confirmed: "it was initially one of the most fruitful spaces of collaboration across borders" he said, "The V4 is defined by a joint history, of pre-1989 authoritarian regimes, but also, more importantly, of rather imprudently implemented neoliberal reform. It is here that we found our early transnational dialogue to be most productive, as we see that the negative social practices and political failures of the present, as well as the region's current position in Europe, relating back to this historical moment."

In the coming years, the summer school became a real-world meeting point in which the ideas being presented in the publishing house's books could be debated with participants from across the regions. At the same time it was a place in which similar trends, and apparent anomalies, could be recognised between Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. There were direct and tangible outcomes, related in particular to the organisation's growing digital presence: links were made with magazines and publishing houses such as A2larm in Czech Republic, Kettős Mérce in Hungary and Pole in Slovakia to name just a few. By connecting more closely with these various spaces of debate, comparing for example, arguments against Poland's Law and Justice Party to those against the Hungarian Fidesz for example, Krytyka Polityczna began to play a leading role in building a new alternative and progressive vision for the Visegrad region as a whole.

Despite this sophisticated and reflexive transnational practice, the scope of the ambitions were, at this stage, still confined to a relatively small network, with a limited group of participants defined largely by their respective national backgrounds. The publishing house

may have been building broad links with Anglophone writers, and markets, but Krytyka Polityczna was, for all its early successes in the words of Dawid Krawczyk, one of the young writers who came to the organization via its ebook initiatives, "all too aware of its own limitations and the need for outside help." An important turning point for the organisation's development came in 2013, with the birth of the Democracy 4.0 initiative, a series of activities conceived as a hybrid of the activities of the publishing house and the AGORA meetings. In particular it sought to build a new interface between online and offline debate, and, most importantly, expand the organisation's activities to a wider public, in Poland, and beyond.

Southern Europe in particular, became an important point of regional comparison. Spain and Italy, for example, were identified as two fruitful points of national correspondence, the first because at that time the #15M / indignados were demonstrating how powerful their capacity to mobilise was among a broad constituency. In Italy, meanwhile, the network of social centres had for many years been pioneering local forms of alternative media, education and grassroots activism and cultural production across the country. Activists from both were invited to share their experiences in Poland, which had no equivalent of either. As a result, fifty workshops were organized in a period of two years, focused mainly on using new technology to mobilize protest, a skill that was perceived to be in many ways more advanced in the South than East. "For the first time", Dawid put it "we saw clearly how certain social issues (housing policies, the growth of nationalism, and precarity of the labour market) that we thought were specific for Poland, or the post-Soviet region, were also present in a very similar form beyond the countries that transitioned from communism to capitalism at the beginning of the 1990s."

Beyond empowering civil society movements and journalism, something which happened in the form of links between the organisation's embryonic network of national social centres and an overarching central structure, it also fundamentally changed the sense *within* the organisation of belonging to a pan-European wave of protests with shared demands. As a result the organisation at this time forged relationships with Podemos in Spain, and Dinamo Press in Italy, to take two examples. These are two different organisations, certainly, yet both played a vital role in communicating more accurate and detailed information about the struggle for democracy in Poland to their local audiences, challenging an enduring cultural barrier in the process.

Testimony to the organization's growing maturity, this practice subsequently fed back into the organizational protocol of the AGORA meetings, which were from this point onwards, expanded to include not only Visegrad activists and intellectuals but civic actors of all kinds from across the continent. By 2014 the gathering was looking less like just another training camp – albeit a particularly vibrant one with clear reference points in the publishing house – and more like the kind of grassroots that if mobilized might legitimately push for the kind of Europe described in Krytyka Polityczna's founding open letter. Sławek Blich described the evolution: "we realised at that point that the meeting's unique strength lay not only in internationalism, but in connecting activists from different types of organizations who are passionate about various issues: from independent media, to urban movements, cultural initiatives, LGBTQI organizations, and more."

This emerging sense of an international constituent power helped re-energise local political participation. The mechanism by which Democracy 4.0 helped redefine AGORA lead to a kind of political empowerment with a corresponding imperative to transform institutions. This is an on-going development and there have been several manifestation, from the participation of some Krytyka Politycnza activists in Razem, a left-wing grassroots movement inspired in particular by Podemos, which seeks to challenge the PiS at the ballot box, to DiEM25, the pan-European movement founded by Yanis Varoufakis which also counts on the participation of many members of the organisation. Both initiatives are entirely separate from Kryrtka Polityczna's executive structure, yet the participants frequently overlap. Meanwhile, as an independent but committed political force, the Polish publishing house has ensured it is the central interface between these levels: a critical mediator between the national and international spheres.

There is one final and highly specific model of transnational solidarity, however, that developed over the same period as this East-South union, and which proved particularly fruitful. This was the formation of a Ukrainian wing of the organization. The relationship with Ukraine was one of the early international links made by the publishing house, with the latter initially helping to distribute cultural materials from the Visual Culture Research Center in Kyiv to a wider audience. After years of this successful partnership, the artist Vasyl Czerepanyn and filmmaker Oleksyj Radynski, in association with Igor Stokfiszewski in Warsaw, set up a Ukranian version of the journal, called Політична критика covering continental questions of democratic struggle but also pioneering unique journalistic coverage, for example, telling the stories of Ukranian migrant workers in Poland. This was an important and quite particular development as unlike the loose networks of AGORA or Democracy 4.0 it entailed a close political *consensus* – and trust – in the project defined in Krytyka Polityczna's open letter. In this sense, 2010 marked not only a second publishing house for Krytyka Polityczna but evidence that a coherent political project was starting to grow beyond national borders.

This would prove, perhaps unexpectedly, a point of particular importance in the context of the Ukrainian conflict from 2013 onwards. The period lasting from Maidan to the Crimea annexation and beyond has been characterised by considerable misinformation and confused narratives. Krytyka Polityczna has been one of the few Polish outlets with deep, long-term links in the country. Utilising its editorial resources it has published extensively to challenge the phenomenon of so-called fake news, most comprehensively in 'Political Critique's Guide to the Ukraine', a rigorously fact-checked book-length interview with professor Yaroslav Hrytsak about the history and present of recent political tensions.

For those activists and writers struggling in Ukraine, meanwhile, like the journalist Tasha Lomonosova, who expanded the digital output over these years, Krytyka Polityczna became an important mouthpiece through which to give regular updates to the international community. Through a regularly updated online magazine they were able to directly communicate in Ukranian, Polish and English within a political space that had already been defined in terms of European solidarity. One author's reportage, Pawel Pieniazek's, was released initially by the Polish publishing house and reviewed in the New York Review of Books while still un-translated. As a result of this international exposure, however,

facilitated by Krytyka Polityczna, Pieniazek's work attracted the attention of the University of Pittsburgh Press and was released in English in 2017 with the title, *Greetings from Novorossiya: Eyewitness to the War in Ukraine*.

The practical nature of this collaboration is among the most significant in the history of Krytyka Polityczna's transnational collaborations, but just as important is its philosophical significance. The early decision to reach out in dialogue to the East, and Ukraine itself, as a kind of European context, is a vital frame through which to evaluate the broader significance of the organisation's cross border activities. Firstly, of course, many pan-European initiatives have a tendency to exclude Ukraine, and so Krytyka Polityczna has shown a particular solidarity that goes against the usual geographies implied by the term. Secondly, however, from a specific Polish perspective, it reinforced the idea that being 'European' means something more than simply reaching out to the West. While partnership with Spanish and Italian activists has, as we've seen, been vitally important, these relationships were not forged in isolation or as part of a straightforward unilateral process of Westernisation. Krytyka Polityczna may be one of the few 'liberal' organisations able to operate in Poland today, but it is, vitally, and in addition, committed to challenging the easy stereotypes of a 'good' west and 'evil' east. Their battleground, and space for change, is defiantly European, and testament to the importance of collaboration among the ex-Soviet countries as a prerequisite of challenging the old dividing lines at a wider continental level.

Practical evaluation

Krytyka Polityczna's efficacy as a model is best demonstrated by its capacity to maintain cross border initiatives like these over a long period, to develop intellectual ideas not only in short individual projects, but over several years in a space that is on the one global but, just as importantly, well-defined politically within Europe. One condition for this is the continual cooperation between different organs of the organisation itself: the interplay between the publishing house, Agora meetings and Democracy 4.0 being a particularly good example. The need for real life activist meetings came *as a result* of the limitations of intellectual publishing. But it was the experiment and lessons learnt *in dialogue* with the Italian and Spanish groups in Democracy 4.0 that helped *refine and expand* that process that was already underway. And this in turn had a knock-on effect for the kinds of debates picked up by the publishing house.

For Krytyka Polityczna, in other words, transnational solidarity is the result of effective internal management processes, in which connections made by one initiative are able to inform the future activities of another. Far from a thrashing hydra, then, bestial and unfocused, the organisation seems able to constantly reflect and consolidate on its stated mission, to participate in building a Europe of liberty, equality and solidarity. In practical terms, this kind of online/offline hybrid organization, is made possible by the effective use of European infrastructure like cheap flights, the pre-existing connections of local activist networks, and effective use of digital technology. Yet these are all synchronized by the core

institution of Krytyka Polityczna to facilitate a continual flow of knowledge between the Polish speaking 'national' communities and various international collaborators. For this reason the publishing house is the most important organ of all, emphasizing and ultimately canonizing these new forms of collaboration for a long duration. It is here, in particular, that the organisation has proved itself capable of re-building itself around shared goals, amplifying the different collaborations depending on the nature of political discussion in a particular moment or context.

Towards a transnational philosophy

Many analyses of transnational cooperation begin with a theory of transnational solidarity, followed by a list of concrete examples of such a theory in practice. In the case of an organization like Krytyka Polityczna, where the activities are so heterogeneous, the philosophy and by extension deeper nature of what solidarity really means, on the contrary, only become visible through practice itself. They are inseparable, in other words, and while the guiding principles from 2003 remain virtual identical more than a decade on, the specific manifestations are in constant and creative play. For this reason the eventual conclusions of this handbook are not based on a mere summarising of the aforementioned activities, but on an evaluation of how they have shaped the understanding of solidarity for the actual organisers and participants within the organization. While the responses were diverse, what is most revealing is the common ground in their vision of the necessity of a shared European space.

Reflecting on her role as a coordinator at the publishing house, Joanna Tokarz defined the role of transnational collaboration as a pragmatic political necessity resulting from the simple fact that "many challenges cannot be solved on the level of a nation state, like environmental threats, the refugee crisis and economic crisis." Just as important though, is the fact that these problems are not spread evenly. Poland, to take one such example, did not face the same nature of economic crisis following 2008 as, say, Greece. Likewise the refugee crisis is a reality that has shaped political discourse on a daily basis in Italy and Spain, but in Poland, which hosts almost no refugees, it remains an abstract reality. That Tokarz nonetheless cited these as the 'key issues' for Europe is testament to the ongoing process of transnational learning and exchange and its power to take participants beyond their national contexts.

It is perhaps significant that both Igor Stokfiszewski and Dawid Krawczyk, who were jointly responsible for the 'turning point moment' of Democracy 4.0 emphasized most firmly the inseparability of theory and practice. "Every time I open a Word file with a piece to edit for our magazine I work to think about the content in a transnational way" responded Dawid. Given the conventional structures of nation-oriented media - those same frames that Joanna demonstrated the limitations of - it is difficult to imagine such a statement and sentiment having developed without the face-to-face experience of speaking with other European journalists. Igor, expanding along similar lines, defined transnational solidarity as,

"acting together (doing journalism, knowledge production, culture, workshops, social and political campaigns, actions, protests, demonstrations) in a long term manner developing and widening step by step the coherent network of organisations." His emphasis by implication, was about not only gathering in groups, but *continuing* to do so and to reflect slowly and carefully on the processes. This is something visible both in the close and regular contact between Krytyka Polityczna's Polish and Ukranian branches, but also, as we've seen, in the evolution of AGORA from a Visegrad only event to a pan-European one.

For Sławek Blich, by contrast, the nature of Kryrtka Polityczna's transnationalism was tied to the fate of other external political projects. Reflecting on the AGORA organisation, there is, he argued, in the very notion of transnational solidarity, a transcendental value, which is to say a utopian project that should be aimed at being realized. This is a distinguishing point from Dawid and Igor's response, and perhaps an expansion of Joanna's pragmatic identification of problems that cannot be solved at the level of the nation-state. "Our political project" he responded, "is for the European Union to become an extraordinary melting-pot. We refuse to interpret undemocratic tendencies as the result of a shared cultural or national identity." The sharing of good practices of progressive political forces in the EU and beyond is therefore, as he put it, something targeted, a necessary means of showing that it is "low wages, cheap labour, and dismantled social security systems that fuel anger and frustration in Europe" and not identitarian grievances. Overcoming these will require a political project of some kind, he seems to suggest, in the form of arguments made by movements and parties like Razem and DiEM25.

It is Agnieszka Wiśniewska's final remarks, however, that seemed to consolidate Krytyka Polityczna's deepest philosophical ambitions. "Transnational solidarity" she put it, "is the a moment when you not only think about others (other nations, countries, cities) but you think you are one of others. When it is not 'we' versus 'them.' There is only 'we'." This is a current visible in all of the responses to varying degrees. Yet if Joanna and Sławek defined solidarity primarily as a necessary tool for fixing a problem, and Dawid and Igor as a way of doing things, Agnieszka's remarks are in fact a a pre-condition for both, an *a priori* assumption that, as we have seen in the organization's recent history, can be nurtured, developed and expressed in a variety of forms. Europe, Agnieszka seems to imply, is not another closed off identity, as is the dominant tendency in nation states, but a political field in which such notions might ultimately be surpassed.

Conclusion: evaluation and lessons

Krytyka Polityczna is a Warsaw-based civil society organisation engaged in transdisciplinary activity spanning Central and Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

Many of the lessons gleamed from analysing Krytyka Polityczna's activities can be readily transferred to other organisational contexts, from social movements and art collectives to

media groups, NGOs and other civil society movements. Based on evaluation of a decade and a half of activity, five aspects in particular seem to stand out, as guiding principles for future development and those interested to take themselves an active role in fostering transnational solidarity.

1. Translation is a vital political tool

As Krytyka Polityczna demonstrates, polyglot communication is something that can facilitate much more than just the sharing of neutral information in new contexts. If framed effectively translated materials actively build cultural spaces, and forms of cultural cooperation. The resulting communities are in this sense increasingly joined together as a political constituency and not simply a loose alliance based on 'solidarity' as empty signifier. Translation, we might say, is absolutely key as a process to filling in this term with meaning. Krytyka Polityczna stands out in particular for not only relying on English as an international language, but using their network to organise subsequent translations, back into a number of native languages.

2. Digital and real life meetings must be held together and sustained

The use of digital and social media as well as other pan-European infrastructures can enable communities to develop both in concentrated moments (such as real life events) and prolonged communication (online groups). The two, however, need to be held together. Democracy 4.0 is a good example, in which several real life meetings were organised to reflect upon the digital tools themselves. The lessons learnt resulted in precisely those tools being used to create further actions in streets, squares and other public spaces as well as for reinventing AGORA. Digital technologies, we might conclude, only bring solidarity when they facilitate new political meeting points.

3. Regional specificity can act as a spring-board for larger scale solidarities

One of the reasons that Krytyka Polityczna's pan-European initiatives have been so successful is that they were conceived in gradual terms. They began with an emphasis on the Visegrad region and developed into something larger in scale. Even in processes of transnational communication, then, national and local experiences continue to be grounding forces. History, in other words, remains a constitutive part of political activity despite sometimes dazzling new forms of technologically determined collaboration. Realising this can prevent oversimplification and reduce inevitable miscommunications and non-communications that occur between different cultural spaces even when translation is working at its smoothest.

4. Specific long-term partnerships yield the most fruitful results

The case of the Ukrainian partnership demonstrates how years of prolonged communication and community building are essential to building effective transnational structures. When the dual national institution was founded in 2010 the participants were not aware of the

various turning points that would come in the following years and how mutually beneficial the structure would prove to be. With this community already in place when shots started, however, they were ready to respond to unexpected challenges of the conflict with a sustainable institution that was resilient to the unfolding events. The long-term dialogue also provided the team at Krytyka Polityczna with the prerequisite knowledge and expertise to effectively appraise the unfolding conflict and present this information to an international audience in a responsible and professional manner.

5. Solidarity is already being facilitated by the EU itself

Leaving aside criticisms of specific institutions, Krytyka Polityczna's activities are a good example of how the EU remains a space with certain novel privileges for organisations working to build forms of solidarity beyond national and class based communities. That such an innovative form of cultural activism has taken root in Poland, against precisely such nationalist and oligarchic forms of opposition, is testament the democratic value of this already existing transnational political space. Freedom of movement and speech are today under assault from all sides, but the forms of solidarity pioneered by civil society actors across the EU demonstrate how much groundwork has already been made in defending and redefining these terms for the future.