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**From population movement to movement of the people :  
after forced displacement, the role of change markers in  
socio-political co-construction of communities : an  
examination of Kilkis, Thessaloniki (Greece), Sutera,  
Palermo (Italy), and Marinaleda (Spain)**

Hakan Suleyman Demir

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**FROM POPULATION MOVEMENT TO MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE**

**After Forced Displacement: the role of change makers in socio-political  
co-construction of communities –  
an examination of Kilkis, Thessaloniki – Greece, Sutura, Palermo – Italy,  
and Marinaleda - Spain**

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## Résumé :

Lorsque le processus de transformation sociale d'un mouvement démographique devient un mouvement politique, au sein des communautés un changement conceptuel fait émerger de nouveaux récits culturels qui fondent le changement social. À travers l'examen des concepts de déplacement, de déplacé, d'intégration et de gouvernance, cette thèse analyse le rôle des intellectuels organiques ainsi que les capacités et les conditions pour que les personnes déplacées s'engagent dans un processus de transformation socio-politique. En remettant en question de façon critique l'approche des États-nations en matière de déplacement et de gouvernance, des alternatives possibles sont explorées, avec des exemples concrets de mise en œuvre dans deux pays : l'Italie et la Grèce. En dernière analyse, la proximité d'une gouvernance locale, appliquée à travers le concept de municipalisme, se révèle plus pertinente face aux besoins humains fondamentaux et à la dignité des personnes que le contrôle centralisé par l'État-nation. Cette thèse conclut qu'un *Cadre de co-construction collectif (CCF)* déclenché par le déplacement, proposition résultante de cette recherche, pourrait consolider une meta-intégration et les principes du municipalisme comme possible chemin vers la création d'une communauté d'égaux.

**Mots clés :** Déplacement, déplacés, réfugiés, migrants, demandeurs d'asile, vulnérabilité, intégration, gouvernance, communauté d'égaux, méta-intégration, les communs, mutualisation, récits multiples, colonialité du pouvoir, esprits colonisés, hétéronomie, autonomie, centre / périphérie, transformation sociale, local, minorité, co-construction, démocratie directe, autogestion collective, cadre de co-construction communautaire collectif.

## **Abstract**

When the social transformation process of population movement becomes a political movement, new cultural narratives underpinning social change emerge through a conceptual shift within communities. Through examination of the concepts of displacement, the displaced, integration and governance, this thesis analyses the role of organic intellectuals as well as the agency and conditions for displaced people to engage in a socio-political transformation process. By critically questioning the nation-state approach to displacement and governance, possible alternatives are explored, with concrete examples of implementation in two countries; Italy and Greece. In the final analysis, the proximity of local governance, applied through the concept of municipalism, is found more relevant to basic human needs and dignity than the centralized control of the nation-state. This thesis concludes that a Displacement Triggered *Community Co-Construction Framework* (CCF), a process developed as an outcome of this research which consolidates meta-integration and municipalist principles, offers a possible path for creating a community of equals.

**Key words:** Displacement, the displaced, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, vulnerability, integration, governance, community of equals, meta-integration, the commons, commoning, multiple narratives, coloniality of power, colonized minds, heteronomy, autonomy, center / periphery, social transformation, local, minority, co-construction, direct democracy, collective self-management, community co-construction framework.

*To the people on the move who work for progressive social change wherever they land, even temporarily...*

*In particular to Jenna....*

*a poet on the move, whose temporariness has become a permanent phenomenon, moving across borders with a unique perspective, where she sees and interprets the world with passion and a struggle for equality....*

***back where I come from***

swaying hips  
twirling and bumping  
laughing at our mis-steps  
and admiring the confidence  
of those who truly salsa

burning coffee  
roasted in an ethiopian restaurant  
we sit on the floor and sip  
in a scene somehow reminiscent  
of the incense in a serbian church

shops overwhelming in color and texture  
meals that scorch my lips  
intellectuals and musicians of various origins  
filling my ears, filling my head

professors and doctors  
challenging and healing in chosen place  
a woman and her walker passing on the sidewalk  
smile as warm as her caramel skin  
which matches my daughter's at the summer's end

how could multiculturalism be seen  
as anything other than enriching  
a world of possibilities in one city  
exposure to the new  
humor, style, life outlook

imagine how bland it would be  
if you always knew what to expect  
if everyone had the same reaction

imagine the pressure to conform  
to pre-defined rules  
systems set up to reinforce  
benefit to the pre-chosen

my people are not those  
accepting the stale hard white bread  
of a single culture

my people are not those  
sedentary and dug in  
unwilling to consider  
different versions of reality

we are anarchic!  
hard to contain!  
with multiple cultural influences  
and unwilling to believe  
there is one right way to live  
or that any one human life  
is more precious than another.

we are roving!  
curious about others  
and exposed to the vulnerability  
of not knowing.

we are migrants!  
stumbling in new cultures  
learning new systems  
we are shunned by the sedentary  
and seeking each other.

my people are not those from my  
hometown,  
not necessarily.  
not from your hometown either.  
my people are the ones who travel between  
them  
and continue to seek  
satisfaction and stimulation  
from humanity as a whole.

*Jenna Shearer Demir  
19 July 2019  
Strasbourg France*



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PhD research and writing a thesis is a fascinating journey, regardless of one's previous experiences. The process of bringing theory and practice together to be expressed in a clear manner, in a new context and with new perspective, requires in-depth research, reflection and interpretation. However, one may easily get lost with the range of available information. The possibility to find time and space for such a study is a privilege, which requires being cognizant of the collective wealth of this knowledge and utilizing it for collective wellbeing. In this regard, I read, observed, discussed, listened and developed my version and perceptions of current events from a specific window, acknowledging that as much as I try to see a larger panoramic view, what I can see is a specific perspective of the entire picture. With the understanding of the limitations of this significant long journey, I would like to extend my gratitude to the 'people on the move' who dare to imagine alternatives for a dignified world for all. I would in particular like to thank those courageous autonomous initiatives I met in Greece, Italy, and Spain that inspired this research, who exhibit dignified alternatives for struggle on daily basis, challenging rooted hierarchy and patriarchy.

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### ***Seismography***

*The world stood on the horns of an ox, said the myth.*

*Every move of the ox caused an earthquake.*

*In fact, the world rests on the shoulders of the people.*

*See what happens when they move.*

*-Can Yücel*

*Poet*

*1926-1999*



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## Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CCF	Displacement-Triggered Community Co-constriction Framework
CoE	Council of Europe
ESTIA	Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation
EU	European Union
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICMPD	International Center for Migration Policy Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MSF	Medicines sans Frontiers
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SPRAR	Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (The Italian Asylum Seekers and Refugees Protection System)
TAZ	Temporary Autonomous Zone
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization



## Glossary

This glossary has been developed to provide the reader with a brief explanation of the main concepts discussed throughout the thesis, in order to better conceptualize the terms in the contexts in which they are used. More specific information regarding these concepts, their origins, citations and adaptation of key concepts by the author is provided in the body of the thesis.

The **Anatomy of displacement** draws attention to the conceptual similarities impacting individuals and groups at times of displacement, regardless of the causes of displacement. Acknowledgement of the specifics of displacement is necessary in order to carefully assess common ground to meet, develop empathy and foster mutual understanding as a basis for dialogue. Therefore, various phases of displacement have to be acknowledged; disorientation, vulnerability, recovery, resilience, resistance and action.

**Anthropocene** is in the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

**Asylum seekers** are persons who have applied for protection as refugees in a particular State and who are waiting for the determination of their status. States have put in place specific procedures for recognizing refugee status. In this context, national asylum systems are in place to determine who qualifies for refugee or subsidiary protection status.

**Autonomy** is the capacity of a society or of an individual to act deliberately and explicitly in order to modify laws and policies. Autonomy is a vivid ongoing process of education and political activity, requiring a constant critical questioning, as opposed to being goal focused. This makes autonomy simultaneously an individual and collective phenomenon.

The **Center** represents the dominant cultural narrative in societies shaped by neoliberal economic policies. It establishes the socio-political relationships and norms of how society operates. The relationships of power and privilege base their existence on a centralized, heteronomous structure, establishing the social, political, economic and cultural norms and rules of a society through its core dominant cultural narrative, and promotes its politics to maintain this status quo.

**Co-construction of communities** refers to the collective process of community building based on the concepts of community of equals.

**Collective self-management** is a dialectical act of radical change, a movement to surpass individualism. It is a radicalization of autonomous struggles, redefining and destroying the hierarchies, directed duality and division between manual and intellectual work. Self-management facilitates a transition period, moving from the realm of resilience, protest and resistance to social transformation for a self-managed society.

**Coloniality of migration** refers to the continuity of the logic of coloniality in current relations of power structures, control and hegemony in migratory movements. The contradictory divide among people establishes racial differences between the insider 'citizen' and the outsider, 'non-citizen'; aliens, immigrants or *extra-communitaire* (non-EU citizens). Such differentiation between these two groups determines access to the labor market, education, political participation, the health system, media and cultural representation, a system that was established in the colonies and continues to be implemented today. The center and its dominant norms continue with a similar process of coloniality of power through their existing policies of the nation-state, and their impositions of integrating all the peoples in this process.

**Coloniality of power** is the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present. Referring to the current relations of global trade, the modes of production and social reproduction of global capitalism, it is argued that the structures of power, control, and hegemony continue past the colonial era; therefore, maintain the concept as the coloniality of power.

A **Colonized mind** is the inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence inflicted on victims of colonialism, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter. In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. As a state of mind, colonialism is an indigenous process released by external forces. The first differentia of colonialism is the state of mind in the colonizers and the colonized, a colonial consciousness which includes the sometimes-unrealizable wish to make economic and political profits from the colonies. It sets out to use the emotions, the fear, the anguish of populations by instilling into their minds the concept of sin and damnation.

**Commoning** is the relationship between the commons and communities, beyond the single interest in extraction of resources, focusing on the social reproduction of relations toward autonomy as a necessity to be organized for alternatives.

**Commons and common spaces** refer to a physical, social, cultural, economic and intellectual place for the struggle for rights. They are often affiliated with urban space, knowledge, social entitlement, and cultural and intellectual wealth. They are closely linked to the dialectical presence of social relations, networks and practices, including struggles and collective action that also constitute the commons, highlighting commons as forms of non-commodified wealth used by all.

The Displacement Triggered **Community Co-Construction Framework (CCF)** is the consolidation of the newly introduced process of meta-integration and the theory of municipalism. The CCF is a tool that lays the ground for communities and organic intellectuals to address the relations of power and privilege in order to co-construct more autonomous democratic alternatives beyond the heteronomy of the center. The CCF

addresses communities of displaced newcomers and long-term residents that are interested in collective alternatives in targeting structural injustices and working toward a community of equals following forced displacement.

Developing a **Community of equals** is a process which begins with the acknowledgment of the 'other' as a key for starting off dialogue. While engaging in the political community, it emphasizes that equality is not a goal to be reached, but requires constant effort. Equality does not have a fixed arrival point where it becomes a substantial form as a social institution, but a collective action by all inhabitants to adjust themselves to dynamic elements and changes in communities. This process of political engagement encourages the mobilization of vulnerability, overpowers the glorification of resilience and liberates the imagination of communities.

**Defetishizing integration** refers to the ability to conceptualize possible alternatives of living together in displacement-affected communities, where the idea of 'fitting in' is no longer dominant, and inhabitants engage in a genuine dialogue for equality.

**Delinking** is a process which emphasizes the need for underdeveloped countries to adopt new market strategies and values different from northern developed countries. Delinking does not mean autarky but a refusal to bow to the dominant logic of the world capitalist system. Delinking implies a transfer of political hegemony to new 'centers'. Delinking is a form of cutting oneself off, "a kind of active anti-globalization which is in dialectical relationship with globalization itself".

The **Displaced** refers to immigrants, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced peoples, stateless people, homeless, nomads, money poor with restricted access to resources, local communities receiving migrants as well as those who voluntarily choose to move *inter alia* for personal, family, career or educational purposes. They are the people who take part in this process of transformation regardless of their territorial connection to a place, including those who have not physically moved from their place of origin. Thus, those who go through a change in position in all its aspects are considered displaced.

**Displacement:** The term displacement is employed as a generic term for commonly used terms for human movements in the field, including but not limited to mobility, population movement, migration, asylum, and refugee influx, regardless of their legal status or label, based on their specific condition. While the affiliation of the term mobility has positive connotations at times, this thesis focuses on the precarious conditions that lead to or are caused by forced displacement. Thus, displacement is defined as a change in position and imagined relationship to current conditions in a progressive socio-political transformation process, individually and collectively.

**Displacement-affected communities** and individuals are both the newcomers and long-term inhabitants who are affected by displacement, and benefit from working together for a shared solution.

**Double absence** is the observation of an absence in the country of emigration and the country of immigration. This involves uprooting, non-integration, and non-citizenship. The common thread of double absence defines economic migration with two worldviews, two value systems, that of the country of origin centered on the community, that of the host country centered on individuation and the binary individual-state relationship.

A **durable solution** is not about sustaining existing structures for a long period of time, but having the agency to adapt to changes and rebalance following disorientation caused by each major change and influx.

**Exilic spaces** can be defined as those areas of social and economic life in which people attempt to escape from capitalist relations and processes, either territorially or by attempting to build structures and practices that are autonomous of capitalist accumulation and social control.

**Geographic peripheries** refer to neighborhoods and settlements with their increasingly precarious living conditions, developed through a process of exclusion by mainstream society as well as the need for newcomers to create their own support systems. Although they may present a multicultural and diverse outlook in urban settings, their existence often remains out of the political realm, creating their own community norms in their respective peripheries.

**Governance**, in terms of decision making and management of public goods and affairs, is a system through which public institutions, civil society and private actors engage with each other. In the context of this thesis, alternative governance models refer to local democratic and autonomous processes that give all inhabitants the opportunity to be directly involved.

**Heteronomy**, as the opposite of autonomy, refers to hierarchy, conformity and an inherited way of thinking. Entailing fixed impositions and excluding alternatives, heteronomous structures tend to operate around a single narrative, into which all are expected to assimilate, regardless of their social and historical relevance and meaning to the society.

**Integration** relates both to the conditions for and actual participation of newcomers in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country, as well as to newcomers' own perceptions of acceptance by and membership in the host society. Despite the varied semantics used, such as inclusion, harmonization, adaptation, and assimilation, the term indicates invisibility, dissolving and newcomers conforming with the dominant cultural norms. A subtle conflict occurs, whereas the majority expect minorities to be invisible, and minorities expect the majority to accept their visibility. In either case, in successful integration, the minority ceases to exist with its distinct characteristics, absorbed by the norms of the dominant culture.

**Intellectual minorities** are those who have difficulty aligning themselves with mainstream thought processes, politics and lifestyles regardless of physical displacement. It is

dominated by a sense of isolation and alienation as well as a feeling of being a guest even in a culture that one is born into, educated and socialized.

An **internally displaced person** is someone who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave his/her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of armed conflict or in order to avoid its effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, without crossing an internationally recognized State border.

A **Local** is an inhabitant of a place without legal or social impositions, with interest in community wellbeing. The concept of local is expanded beyond a fixed category of individuals, born and raised in a specific geographic area. Thus, all the inhabitants who have a connection to and are part of the everyday life of a place, regardless of their legal status, are considered local.

**Long-term residents / inhabitants** are established residents with a generational connection to a place and people, as well as those who have spent time in a specific place as a part of a community life and its politics regardless of material possessions (property, etc.) or citizenship (a legal status).

**Meta-integration** is a process which supersedes integration, focusing not on assimilation but rather on the dialogue between long-term residents and newcomers leading to co-construction of communities. It is a process of dialogue on not-fitting-in; between distinct worlds, dysfunctions, disharmonies, disturbed situations and fears of the other. It is an attempt to get on a track of constructing new lives. Its point of departure is ambiguity, uncertainty and precarity as well as reclaiming dignity and struggle of displaced people in the peripheries. It is a process of transforming relations between peoples, places and their stories in relation to the environment. It refers to the stories of displacement and the displaced; the commons as essential meeting places and the process of commoning; and people of the peripheries, often the displaced who engage in struggle for a social transformation process. Thus, meta-integration is a dialogical action between these elements, and is an appropriation toward the co-construction of lives after displacement.

A **Migrant** is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of the person's legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, the cause of movement or the length of stay.

**Minority community** is a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the majority of the population. Minority communities often show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language. Although there is no concrete and unique definition of the term "minority" in international law, international instruments still



refer to this term. In the context of this thesis, the concepts of minority and minority communities are conceptualized with regard to power and domination.

**Mixed migration** is a growing phenomenon, one that gained enormous attention in 2015 with the arrivals of vast numbers of refugees and migrants in Europe. It refers to the cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and those seeking better lives and opportunities. They travel along similar routes, using similar means – often via irregular pathways and assisted by smugglers.

The **Money poor** qualifies individuals and communities beyond statistical and monetary terms, highlighting the presence and significance of their rich culture and heritage.

**Newcomers** refer to all individuals and groups including migrants, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, nomads, as well as others who arrive to a new place by choice or by force.

**New minority** groups stem from migration – the ‘new minorities’. These are groups formed by individuals and families who have left their original homelands to emigrate to other countries. In most cases, their reasons are economic, although political reasons play an increasingly important role as well. New minorities thus consist of migrants, refugees who are living in a country other than that of their origin, on a basis that is more than merely transitional. Moreover, the term ‘new minorities’ is broader than the term ‘migrants’ as it encompasses not only the first generation of migrants but also their descendants, extending to include second and third generations of individuals with a background of migration, many of whom have been born in the country of immigration and who cannot objectively or subjectively be subsumed under the category of ‘migrants’.

The **Non-profit industrial complex** is a set of interdependent relationships that link political and financial technologies of State- and ‘owning class’- control, with surveillance over public political ideology, including especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements. Considering what is referred to as the NGO-ization of resistance, the non-profit industrial complex emphasizes depoliticizing resistance and threatening to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job.

**Old Minorities**, also referred to as historical, traditional, and autochthonous minorities. Old minorities are those who have a distinct language, culture, or religion compared to the rest of the population or who have become minorities through the redrawing of international borders, having seen the sovereignty of their territories shift from one country to another. These are ethnic groups that have not achieved statehood on their own for various reasons and that have now become part of a larger country (or several countries): they are the so-called ‘old minorities’ or ‘sub-state nations’. In many but not all cases, their co-ethnics may be numerically or politically dominant in another state, which they therefore regard as their ‘external national homeland’, or kin-state.

**Organic intellectuals** are those with fundamental and structural ties to particular classes. The emergence of organic intellectuals takes place with a class becoming a self-conscious entity, and through a transformation process of moving from being a *class-in-itself* to a *class-for-itself*. Organic intellectuals represent different interests than traditional intellectuals in these social layers, as members of civil society, including constructors, farmers, artists, artisans, community workers, teachers, mayors, shop owners, daily workers, housewives and husbands, not requiring formal training. Organic intellectuals, in this sense, depend on the very social layer that generates them, and form the politics that reflect the needs of everyday life of their communities. As 'everyone is an intellectual but not everyone in society has a function of intellectual', organic intellectuals bring a different dimension to power relations.

**Parochialism** is the state of mind whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. It consists of being narrow in scope. In that respect, it is a synonym of "provincialism". In the context of municipalism discussed in this thesis, parochialism is closely linked to the concept of the 'local trap' where there might be a false assumption that everything local is more democratic and rights based. Therefore, while the importance of the municipalist principles in governance is emphasized, it is also essential to pay attention to parochialism and consider local actions as part of global networks and social movements.

**Patriarchy** is a political-social system inherently dominated by males, construed to be superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.

**Peripheries of power** refers to people and communities who are socially, politically and economically marginalized due to systemic and structural injustices. A similar logic of wealth accumulation and political power at the center experienced as more resources, both financial and human, are directed toward central urban areas, while urban and rural peripheries are left with the majority of the population and limited resources. Faced by significant income inequalities, the people of the peripheries who lack time, energy, space and resources to organize, eventually become or remain vulnerable. Such a situation keeps people away from the democratic political processes, pushing them to the peripheries of power. Considering the organic linkage between the development processes (through colonial and post-colonial periods, which set the global development framework today) and population movements, the concepts of a center and periphery point out the structural injustices and inequality. Consequently, the term periphery as presently employed refers to both a geographical area as well as the relation to power, privilege and authority.

**Political landscape**, as noted in this thesis, does not refer to being in politics and seeking a power position but rather having power and exercising it as a community. Political is not based on institutions or on material interests, as are most political sociologies, but rather forms the basis for what we think is an interesting alternative to most current accounts.

**Precariat** is an emerging social class under precarious conditions of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. The precariat a diverse group of people including working money poor, atavists, immigrants and refugees, educated progressives, and the Roma.

Group **Privilege** is possessing something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they have done or failed to do. It refers to systematically having access or receiving something denied to others due to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, physical ability, or sexual orientation categories.

A **refugee** is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

**Self-institution** is a process by which one creates one's own laws – within a democratic society, with the perception of laws not given, but explicitly and reflectively created by its inhabitants.

A **Shift of position** refers to a change of perception and treatment of displacement and the displaced as well as their role in social change and governance. With the understanding of the mechanisms of displacement, both by force and by choice, the implications of the concept of integration as a systemic imposition, and the willingness and interest in imagining alternatives beyond the nation-state constitute the basis for a shift of position.

**Subaltern** social groups are those excluded and displaced from the socio-economic institutions of society in order to deny their political voices.

**The 'right to the city'** is a call to action to reclaim the city as a created space; a place for life detached from the growing effects that commodification and capitalism have had over social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in cities worldwide over the last two centuries. This space relates to the everyday experience of those who are entitled to the right to the city by virtue of inhabiting the city as opposed to one's nation-state citizenship. The right to the city goes beyond the limits of the liberal democratic nation-state and offers a critique of the norms of existing society, conceiving of urban areas as revolutionary spaces. As urban areas are in most cases are in the hands of a small political and economic elite who shape the city as per their interest, therefore, the making and remaking people and the cities is a human rights issue. It is a struggle to de-alienate urban space and inhabitants engaging in meaningful interaction with the city and reclaiming grassroots decision making processes from the managerial class and state officials.

## PREFACE

This study was carried out over a four-year period between 2016 and 2020, simultaneously with professional work. Drafting the thesis has taken two years, ending with a period of confinement due to the COVID -19 pandemic. While the pandemic has not been specifically discussed in this thesis, the references to displacement and many of the concepts discussed have become even more relevant in these times of global crisis. Therefore, the readers are encouraged to reflect on this period of confinement and the major changes in norms, as society has been displaced with significant shifts in social, economic, and political relations.

Those reading this work would benefit from becoming familiar with the terminology used in order to better conceptualize its context. The term *author* refers to the author of this thesis. In all cases, names of other authors are specifically noted within the text or in footnotes. As the thesis has been developed with an integrated approach to multiple disciplines, and has utilized a number of concepts, a *glossary* was included to assist the reader to become familiar with the terminology used. Annex V provides a visual guidance to accompany the structure of this thesis. The examples in the thesis are based on overall direct experiences in the field as well as discussions that have taken place with colleagues who have extensive field experience. In addition, there have been 56 interviews conducted within the context of studied areas. The *interviewees* were clearly informed about the purpose of the interviews. Pseudonyms were used for some interviewees in order to respect their privacy and potential discomfort due to their legal status. Interviewees' full names are referred to in *italicization* in the first instance, and thereafter only last names with a brief background in the footnote to put interviews into context. The reference to the studied areas is for the purpose of discussing the concepts in concrete terms in relation to the arguments made throughout the thesis. In this regard the author does not claim expertise on these specific areas as the data used is based on field observations, interviews and a literature review which inevitably represents a slice of time and space in a constantly changing environment.



## INTRODUCTION

*For me, the question 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?'. 'I will speak for myself as a Third World person' is an important position for political mobilization today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously; not with a kind of benevolent imperialism...*

- Gayatri Spivak<sup>1</sup>

The human condition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasingly shaped by displacement in all of its forms, particularly during the current pandemic where populations globally have been removed from or blocked into their habitual norms. The forced aspect of displacement, together with the vulnerability that it generates, is crucial for critically questioning rooted norms and imagining alternatives. What is originally conceived as a temporary state for the displaced has, in most cases, become a prolonged state of existence. In this temporariness, the struggle of displaced people for a dignified life faces a dilemma between the rooted belief in the system of nation-states versus the aspiration for autonomy, often driven by the idea of individual rights and freedoms. Despite the solutions imposed which limit the agency of displaced persons to work collectively, inspiring autonomous local initiatives have emerged that honor human rights and dignity, building on decades of social movements.

The market and finance driven logic of governance continues to reproduce historical power relations along with the corporate interests which diminishes people viewing them as a disposable, expellable and disconnected labor force. The current ways of organizing society based on nation-state structure behind the guise of representative democracy benefits the privileged few as per their control over resources, exercise of power and authority over masses. This becomes more apparent at times of crisis, where democratic rights are suspended and vulnerability becomes a normal state. In the context of displacement, which results in constant regeneration of communities, such historical

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<sup>1</sup> Gunew Sneja and Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Questions of Multi-Culturalism" *Hecate*, November 30, 1986

hegemonic relations need to be reorganized in order to address existing structural injustices. Alternatives to the current organization of society in a complex context of globalization requires imagining them beyond the idea of nation-states, which have proved unable to consistently guarantee the conditions that honor human rights and dignity.

Today, forced displacement is not only a ‘developing’ world crisis, as the World Bank (WB) claims, nor durable solutions under current integration policies have been found, such as those set out by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>2</sup>. However, the WB assessment of forced displacement as a development challenge, and the recognition of the need for humanitarian and development actors to work together are positive steps forward. Although the data<sup>3</sup> shows that the refugee/migrant influx primarily affects the developing world and that 94% of the forcibly displaced live outside of camps, the consideration of forced displacement as a ‘developing’ world issue perpetuates the idea of ‘otherness’ and ‘otherization’.

In analyzing the relationship of the dominant ruling classes and the elite to the precarious majority, ‘otherization’ has become an effective populist practice in recent years. The plutocracy enhanced the scope of the ‘other’, even targeting their own citizens (particularly organic intellectuals) who challenge neoliberal practices and structural injustices. Consequently, population movement, a natural human activity that has shaped the history of humanity is considered something to be regularized and legalized while those who are displaced are increasingly stigmatized, dehumanized and victimized.

The narrative of displacement today is written by the ‘developed’ world, emphasizing it as the crisis of the ‘developing world’ – the other – without referring to dialectical dimensions and historical battles of control over resources, with an arrogant position of fixing the problems of the other through its educated class. Such a position, with a blanket nation-

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<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, "Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts", Washington, DC., *The World Bank Group*, 2017, p. 15-33

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

state approach to statistical data (e.g. Gross Domestic Product), systemically denies the structural injustices that have been present in the 'developed world', where many working people have become money poor, resulting in an increasing gap between the rich and poor who are gradually pushed to the peripheries of power in their representational democracies. This dominant narrative of neoliberalism has been successfully adjusting to challenges, and enabling the hegemony of the neoliberal system to reproduce itself through the exploitation of public goods and resources for private interest. Janet Abu-Lughod argued<sup>4</sup> that the main narrative written by the dominant groups deforms the narrative of the others.

Focusing on the multiple alternative narratives of struggles and solidarity movements in the peripheries of power, this research attempts to go beyond the objectification of the 'other' and tries to establish common ground for rehumanization and moves towards a community of equals. Although these multiple narratives of solidarity have not been as prominent in the public sphere, the community-based autonomous initiatives at the source of these narratives have honored human rights and dignity, trying to overcome 'otherness' in their struggles. This thesis argues that the impact of autonomous, alternative initiatives and social movements are crucial; they have multiplying effects on social change and merit particular attention, despite the disregard paid to them by nation-states.

In light of the increased population movement in the Mediterranean region over the last decade, new narratives are being written by people on the move, challenging the dominant concepts and languages that have ruled relationships among communities in the region for decades. The languages and the stories of the peripheries are essential to construct a new narrative. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues<sup>5</sup> that 'everybody's language is the keeper of their memory', and that the original [African] languages and stories have been pushed to the periphery as a result of "a globalization of inequality of power between

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<sup>4</sup> Tuhiwai Smith Linda, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London and New York, Zed Books Ltd. 2005, p. 67

<sup>5</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Memories of Who We Are", interviewed by Kim Skotte in connection to the Louisiana Literature festival at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, August 2015



languages". Therefore, in working towards a community of equals, the presence of multiple cultures must be acknowledged and language should not be used as a tool in the struggle for power. Considering the daily use of Arabic, Dari, Pashtun, Aramaic, Kurdish, Assyrian and many more languages in Thessaloniki while Yoruba, Wolof, Bambara, Bengali, Urdu and many others in the streets of Palermo, the use of languages in forming multiple narratives is a tool that can empower groups to co-construct a community of equals.

In the age of capitalist globalization, restrictions on population movement rarely applies to the privileged and wealthy. Depending on the original cause of displacement, the categorization of people determines their status in their new location, and generates prejudice and inferiority attached to their status which is closely linked to race, class, gender and geographic area of origin. Achille Mbembe states that this type of categorization determines how people, specifically those from the global south, are perceived, received and treated; an extension of historical relationship of Europe shaped by slavery, colonization and apartheid<sup>6</sup>. Hence, when the 'other' arrives at the borders of the 'developed' world, the remnants of injustices born out of the colonial relations are reanimated. These relations, shaped by power, privilege and authority are embodied in the roles of 'host and guest', often with a charity approach for a projected temporary period, maintaining distance with the 'other'. Nation-states, in the name of protecting national interest, integrity and sovereignty, enjoy the politics of otherization, while skillfully adopting a paternalistic approach through national policies and the international humanitarian system.

Considering the relations of power and impact on relationships between newcomers and long-term residents, *Mamadou Koffi*<sup>7</sup>, a long-term resident in Palermo, referred to the influx of newcomers from Africa as 'cultural contamination' which takes on additional significance at a time of the Covid-19 pandemic. *Mr. Koffi* reiterated that the colonial

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<sup>6</sup> Mbembe Achille, Rendall Steven, "African Modes of Self Writing", *Project Muse*, v.4, n. 1, 2002, p. 242

<sup>7</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Koffi is a long-term resident (male - early 60s) in Palermo whose country of origin is the Ivory coast. He has been in Italy for 30 years and works with an agency that deals with asylum seekers.

history of Europe in Africa was a form of contamination for centuries, and that the population movement from Africa to Europe is not surprising. He added that borders and boundaries are illusionary protection, and this new 'cultural contamination' is needed to build immunity to structural racism and classism, and survive in a globalized world.

The acknowledgement of changing values, multiple identities and dignity of people in relation to power, privilege and authority is at the core of inter-cultural relations in displacement-affected communities. Societies that fail to redefine and adjust themselves to these changes face subtle divisions, as well as political and social problems that will affect the overall wellbeing of communities and prolong the state of vulnerability for all. A socio-political negotiation on equal terms is essential to facilitate the progressive transformation<sup>8</sup> of societies; a process that can be instigated and nurtured by organic intellectuals<sup>9</sup>. This progressive transformation must address structural injustices to reconcile and co-construct new communities. As many indigenous nations around the world have stressed for decades, there is no reconciliation without justice.

This thesis explores the possibilities that emerge through the conceptual shift among communities where the social transformational process of population movement becomes a political movement, with new cultural narratives underpinning socio-political change. Through examination of the concepts of displacement, the displaced, integration and governance, the author analyses the role of organic intellectuals as well as the agency and conditions for displaced people to engage in a socio-political transformation process. It is hoped that this work will contribute to discussions in the field of political science, and inspire people to claim a dignified life for all, conscious and proud of their otherness, while critically questioning traditional oppressive practices embodied in hierarchical and patriarchal structures.

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<sup>8</sup> The use of the concept of progressive transformation of society was inspired by Samir Amin who refers to the necessary elements for progressive transformation as well as Jurgen Habermas who offers a rich conceptualization of the social nature and foundations of public. This concept will further be discussed in the thesis, particularly in Part 1, Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> The term organic intellectuals was defined by Antonio Gramsci and will be further discussed in Part 1 Chapter 2.

By critically questioning the nation-state approach to displacement and governance, possible alternatives are explored, with concrete examples of implementation in two countries; Italy and Greece. This exploration of the various paths used for developing a community of equals has highlighted the conditions necessary for engaging in direct democracy. It is argued that forced displacement triggers critical questioning which can be channelled to a transformative process for the co-construction of communities outside the parameters set by the plutocracy. The analysis and approach might be seen as more necessary in crisis situations, where the proximity of local governance is more relevant to basic human needs than the centralized control of the nation-state. The Displacement Triggered *Community Co-Construction Framework* (CCF) offers a possible path for creating a community of equals.

# BACKGROUND

## A. The Research

This research was prompted by the 2015 refugee influx, refueling an ongoing interest in academic study, as well as providing an opportunity to consolidate over two decades of experience in the humanitarian and human rights fields, with a specific focus on displacement and governance.

The 2015 influx has shown that despite many decades of significant work, global inequality is on the increase within nations<sup>10</sup>, and institutional response to forced displacement has not produced creative alternatives, as top-down solutions continue to be imposed albeit with slight variations and reforms. While the causes of forced displacement multiply with environmental degradation, disasters, epidemics, scarce resources and violent conflicts, displaced persons face further restrictions and are subject to undignified treatment and conditions. A vicious cycle of the cause and effect of the humanitarian crisis and unchanged frameworks in addressing these challenges has led to the present research on post-displacement challenges and its potential for social justice.

Given the impressive body of knowledge produced by progressive scholars and practitioners in this field, the chance to link these theories to the author's professional experience and empirical data gathered over two decades concerning the issues of displacement provided the opportunity to further important discussions on integration, communities and governance. Acknowledging what is termed by Edward Said as 'the positional superiority'<sup>11</sup> of western knowledge in this field, specific efforts were made to consult the body of knowledge and alternative sources of scholars from Asia, Africa, the

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<sup>10</sup> According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Social Inclusion World Social Report 2020, Income inequality has increased in most developed countries and in some middle-income countries, including China and India, since 1990. Countries where inequality has grown are home to more than two thirds (71 per cent) of the world population. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2020-2.html>, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> In his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said notes that flexible positional superiority puts the Westerner in a privileged relationship with the Orient which positions the West as having a relative upper hand.

Americas and the Middle East as well as Europe in order to ensure a more balanced perspective.

## **A1. The scope of the research**

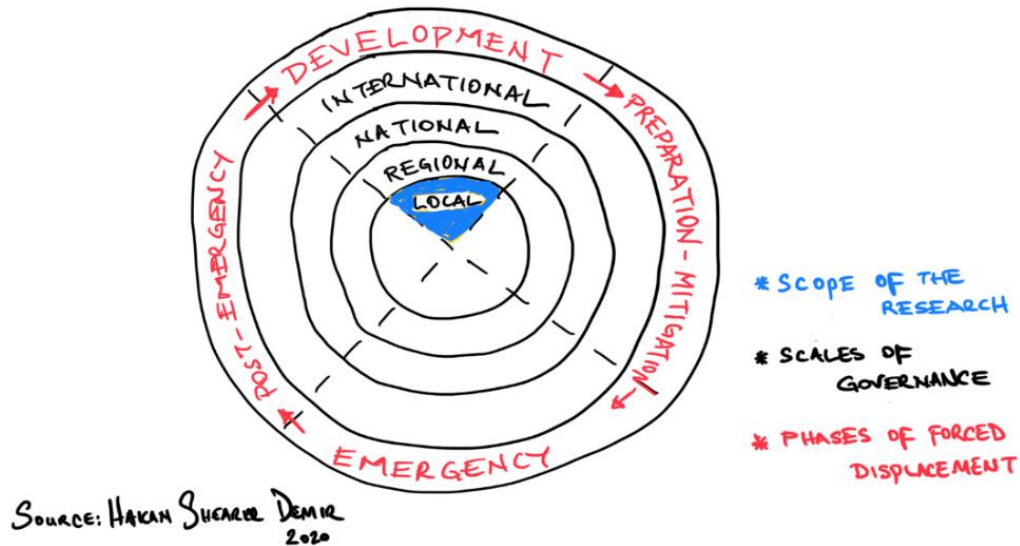
The governmental perception of and response to forced displacement varies widely depending on scales of governance, from local to regional, national and international. This research is specifically focused on local governance in the development phase after forced displacement<sup>12</sup>. The main argument, therefore, does not directly address the humanitarian missions and refugee camps, but examines the basic concepts that influence and form policies in the new location.

The thesis argues that the way the development phase is considered at local level has an impact on other phases and levels, and its scope is thus limited to local responses and governance after displacement in a development phase. The arguments put forward are primarily concerned with the nexus of governance and displacement, drawing on organic linkages that exist, as illustrated in diagram 1. While the observations were made in the northern Mediterranean region between 2015-2020, the geographic scope of the research focuses on Thessaloniki and Kilkis in Greece and Suteria and Palermo in Italy.

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<sup>12</sup> The phases of forced displacement include preparedness, mitigation, emergency, post-emergency and development. The preparedness and mitigation aim at minimizing damage and preparing states for the conditions to meet the needs of forcibly displaced people. The emergency phase refers to first response, providing basic assistance to people at times of crisis. In the post-emergency phase, the focus is on recovery and working toward a form of normality in community life. Finally, the development phase considers communities proceed with their social, political, economic and cultural activities.

DIAGRAM 1 - SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH



## A2. Rationale and the main research question

The concept of people in movement has been a driving force of this thesis. The author has worked for over two decades with situations of forced displacement which marked historical events in international humanitarian and human rights fields. Working with the preparation and mitigation, emergency, post-emergency and development phases in displacement has provided the opportunity to observe, work with and learn from experiences in diverse and complex environments.

The reoccurring concern of increasing inequalities and the perpetuation of structural problems across borders has prompted an analysis of how best to address the dominant role of hierarchy and patriarchy in the social organization of society. The increasing displacement as well social movements in the Mediterranean region within the last decade has provided further impetus. These social movements suggested possible scenarios of social change in relation to forced displacement which, despite the efforts of the international humanitarian system, is projected to increase in the coming decades as

a result of limited resources, increasing inequalities and unaccomplished durable solutions.

In spite of the significant financial and human resources allocated to address some of these concerns, the critical questions of how to organize a community and society in a more egalitarian manner, and how this could take place in a rapidly changing world where people are on the move has underlined the basis of this research. A number of questions are raised in light of this period where communities, cities and nations are experiencing demographic changes, and the conditions of people are becoming more precarious forcing them to be displaced, seeking durable solutions. How can a society be organized in an environment where there is constant movement and communities are regenerated based on the norms and rules of a group which does not represent their identity and heritage or interests of those who are viewed as the other? How can we conceptualize, define and design relations that lead to formation of communities whose norms are based on specific considerations of human rights, dignity and equality? How does society organize without reproducing oppressive practices, and how can people be made part of decision-making processes? Who are the people that can facilitate this transition?

This thesis examines local responses to displacement, looking at alternative approaches and the concept of integration, seeking more democratic ways of governance. In this regard, a shift in the perception of displacement is necessary, to recognize that it is increasingly indiscriminate (due to climate change, conflict, etc), and to consider that a crisis situation can be turned into an opportunity for political action for progressive transformation of societies based on fundamental human rights. This is also essential in order to be more adaptable to changing conditions and minimize conflictual situations; shifting from a 'possessive territorial' approach to a more 'relational' approach in the socio-political transformation processes. As the thesis aims to advance the discussions and actions for political action at various layers of the society, it stresses the importance of organic intellectuals in this transformation process.

The research ultimately poses the following main question;

*What is the potential of displaced people to be mobilized in a socio-political transformation process, and how can communities co-construct progressive dynamic governance?*

## **B. Literature review**

The review of literature has been a continuous process, with the utilization of books, academic articles, reports from competent organizations and institutions, media news, multimedia sources, including on-line lectures, local promotional publications (pamphlets, etc.) as well as street art and music (graffiti, protest banners, etc.). All the reviewed literature contributed to the improvement of understanding of the discussions in the field in various levels as well as assessing any gaps.

Throughout the research the literature review supported the empirical data and encouraged further discussions adding to the main concepts that constituted this thesis. Among many others, this thesis has been inspired by the works of Judith Butler, Cornelius Castoriadis, Samir Amin, Anibal Quajino, Antonio Gramsci and Murray Bookchin<sup>13</sup>.

The analysis of the concepts of *displacement and the displaced* in the context of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, stateless, etc. led to a critique of the categorization of people on the move in times of mixed migration. This was true in particular where prolonged conflicts and displacement of people (such as Afghans, Somali, etc.) continue despite these countries having been declared safe to return home. The idea of perceiving displacement as an opportunity for social change has been substantiated by the work of scholars including Alejandro Portes, Stephen Castles, Hein De Haas and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh who presented alternative views to those held by the majority of mainstream scholars and institutional approaches.

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<sup>13</sup> Key main concepts are found in the glossary, with detailed information on the authors and sources in the bibliography.



The concept of durable solutions, questioned based on the author's professional experience, took another direction with the work of Emanuel Ma Mung in his discussions of *temporal continuity*. Compared to Ma Mung, who discussed the concept in the context of the diaspora, this work adapted the concept to the nature of displacement where 'temporariness' becomes a new norm, and durable solutions necessitate different considerations under the current circumstances of forced displacement. The concept was also essential to describe the importance of autonomous initiatives which are often temporary but have impact on the continuity in social movements.

Relationships in the context of displacement, integration and governance were analyzed through the lenses of *power, privilege and authority*, inspired by the work of Allan Johnson. The validity of these relations in different geographical settings were discussed in the studies of INCITE, Women of Color Against Violence as well as Michael Truselleo and Ajamu Nangwaya, provoking the examination of power and privilege from different angles. The literature on post-colonial studies further led to further examination of the notion of *coloniality* in various forms. The work of Anibal Quajino on the coloniality of power, Encarnacion Guitérrez Rodriguez's work on coloniality of migration as well as the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ashish Nandy on the colonization of the mind have enriched the perspective that this thesis maintains.

The publication by Judith Butler and colleagues was essential to substantiate the anatomy of displacement where vulnerability was pointed out as the crucial element for change. The argument was furthered with *the mobilization of vulnerability* concept, drawing a link between resilience and resistance, leading to political action.

A critical interpretation on integration is rather rare in the literature, often analyzing the concept from a neo-liberal perspective and offering reformist views and terminology. Gary Younge's perspective is one of these rare points that addresses *integration as a fetishized concept*. This perspective was essential to initiate a discussion on integration from a different perspective and explore possibilities beyond conforming in the existing structure

of the nation-state. The work of Gerard Delanty complimented discussions on the temporary nature of displacement, communities and the concept of integration. Delanty's referral to 'relational', as opposed to 'territorial and possessive connections' to a place impacts its role in imagining community regeneration and possibilities beyond integration.

In the analysis of current integration policies and perspectives, the work of Cornelius Castoriadis on *heteronomy and autonomy* as well as Samir Amin's work on the *center and the periphery* were fundamental to this research with its influence on political science, however not necessarily in relation to displacement and integration. Henri Lefebvre's book on *metaphilosophy* inspired the concept of the *meta-integration process*. The concept was furthered with the *dialogical* work of Paulo Freire in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Indignation*. The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention) and its Action Plan has influenced the content of the meta-integration process.

The concept of *political* defined by Jacques Rancière and his extensive work on *politics of equals and community of equals* played a crucial role in the development of the Community Co-Construction Framework (CCF). Reluctance regarding political engagement among displaced-affected communities was analyzed with the view of Abdelmalek Sayad's concept of *dual absence*. The literature review on the concepts of *otherness and otherization* by Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci, particularly in the context of subaltern groups and minorities as newcomers in relation to long-term residents were influential in the conceptualization of the meta-integration process. The reviewed literature on marginalized communities by Guy Standing surfaced the argument on the *precariat*. The definitions of the common spaces and the commoning process by Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Bengi Akbulut led to the use of the concepts of *peripheries of power and geographic peripheries*.

Antonio Gramsci's notion of *organic intellectuals* has been analyzed by a number of scholars and adapted to the context of newcomers and long-term residents, which constituted the centerpiece of the CCF.

Seeking alternatives using a co-construction process following forced displacement, the literature on *collective self-management* by Moacir Gadotti and examples in the Mediterranean region by Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo generated further discussions on potential alternative models representing a departure from current governance styles.

Theories of *Municipalism* and *municipalization* by Murray Bookchin and Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo of the commons such as in the case of Marinaleda, Spain as well as views of *direct democracy* in governance also influenced this research. David Harvey's work on the Right to the City movement inspired further discussions on displacement, urban settings and reclaiming the commons. Harvey, in his more recent work on "The Right to the City" and *Rebel Cities*, furthers Lefebvre's conclusion of urban areas as revolutionary spaces. Harvey's points out that urban areas are in most cases are in the hands of a small political and economic elite who shape the city as per their interest, which makes the right to the city movement one of the platforms for human rights<sup>14</sup>. The analysis of municipalist principles has led to inclusion of these elements in the CCF.

An Organizational Discourse Analysis of the organizations working with displacement, human rights and in the humanitarian field was carried out, including the Council of Europe, the European Union, various United Nations agencies (e.g. UNHCR, IOM), the World Bank as well as OXFAM, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Médecins sans Frontières. In addition, publications from research centers including the Journal of Refugee Studies, Forced Migration Review, Refugee Hosts, Refugee Studies Centre, Migration Policy Institute, Refuge, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Transnational Institute and International Migration Institute provided extensive data on various aspects of population movements and current updates on migration related matters.

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<sup>14</sup> Harvey David, "The Right to the City", 2013, p. 13 <http://purochioe.rojasdatabank.info/harvey2008.pdf>

A vast amount of resources, research and literature was reviewed, particularly after 2011 and increasingly so from 2015. While these academic studies present comprehensive work on specific cases, literature focusing on displacement, integration and governance from the angle of this thesis was uncommon. Linking these three topics to non-institutional, alternative, local responses as the main departure point for a social transformation process, literature was gathered from various disciplines. In this regard, while the thesis provides an overview with the emphasis on a shift in position to perceive and address displacement, it offers a framework for possible further action, calling attention to a focus on structural injustices.

### **C. Theoretical Framework**

An extensive literature review has expanded the theoretical basis, leading to a critical examination of current integration practices. This research was greatly influenced by postcolonial studies, post-structuralist approaches, human rights perspectives and world system theory. However, the research, with its specific focus on collective self-management and local governance, has attempted to collect these theories under the framework of municipalism. The practices of forced displacement, integration policies and local governance were analyzed with relativist ontology.

The discussions on municipalist principles in the studied areas in Italy and Greece, add to the phenomenological dimension of the research where lived experiences in the studied areas in relation to displacement, integration and local governance were interpreted. In this regard, the post-colonial studies, with literature reviewed including that by Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ashish Nandy, Achille Mbembe, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Edward Said have provided an important basis to examine the implications of historic power relations between the Global North and the Global South as well as its continuing role in displacement today.

This perspective has helped to set the parameters of the thesis that led to meta-integration, using the concept of coloniality in its analysis of relations of power, privilege and authority. While this analysis was crucial, it alone did not carry the discussion to the realm of political science, where it could guide a search for transformative progress under current circumstances. The arguments made in the thesis also benefited from the academic literature influenced by post-structuralist thinkers including Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault where the rooted terms and power relations linked to these terms were deconstructed.

Accompanied by the literature on the analysis of political science and world system theory, including the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, the concepts of the center and peripheries and their relationship have shaped the development of this thesis where the deconstruction of the terms were interpreted in the context of displacement. Although the term of the center and peripheries were first used in regards to nomads and settled groups by Şerif Mardin in the 1950s in his analysis of the last decades of the Ottoman society, Wallerstein used a similar concept between nations in the 1970s pointing out the global inequalities between nations in the development of his theory.

The analysis of Samir Amin was applied to the accumulation of wealth and extraction of resources, which is further discussed in the body of the thesis. The concept was useful to look into the discrepancies and inequalities within and between nations linking it to institutional reports on global inequality of income and resources. Combined with the notion of heteronomy and autonomy, as discussed by Cornelius Castoriadis<sup>15</sup>, the concept of integration and inclusion was examined as none of the theories singlehandedly focused on the displacement issue.

In search for dignified alternatives, the human rights framework was also utilized. Institutional legal frameworks such as CoE and the UN that shape the research in the

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<sup>15</sup> Straume Ingrid S., "Cornelius Castoriadis on autonomy and heteronomy", *Springer Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, p.2

field were found to have gaps as regards the main focus of this thesis. While the basic human rights principles were consulted, the critique of their universality in the conceptualization process and conditionalities imposed by nation-states was also discussed. In order to define a process beyond integration further analysis was required. In a literature review of migration studies and displacement in general, social change and critical inquiry framework was also employed. Castles, Portes, de Haas, and Guitérrez Rodriguez's works among many offered extensive insight, while the feminist theory and the works of Butler and Sarah Bracke were crucial to link the displacement issues to social movements. As each framework has played a crucial role in structuring the thesis, none were fully adequate to analyze the displacement-governance nexus in a pragmatic manner in a local context, where the theory could be put into practice. Bookchin's concept of municipalism was identified as the suitable framework for the purpose of this research. Bookchin's conceptualization of communalism/libertarian municipalism began during the Depression-era New York City in deeply politicized immigrant neighborhoods of the Bronx. His affiliation with the leftist movements in the 1940s added a dimension on environmental problems in the 1950s, and continued as a revolutionary social ecology in the 1960s, where Bookchin drew linkages between the crisis of urban environment and the natural environment. Bookchin's articulation of 20th century anarchism in his book *Post Scarcity Anarchism* had a profound influence on the New Left in the 1970s. Having gone through a lifetime journey in a leftist political spectrum, Bookchin argued that anarchism and Marxism are no longer capable of addressing the complex problems posed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Advocating municipalism as an emancipatory alternative to the current system, Bookchin stressed that municipalism draws on the best of libertarian socialist traditions of Marxism and anarchism<sup>16</sup>.

Bookchin was one of the first radical voices to insist that the left should mobilize around climate change, elaborating on the historical, anthropological, and social roots of hierarchy and domination. In his theory of social ecology, Bookchin reflected on its

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<sup>16</sup> Bookchin Murray, *The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy*, London and Brooklyn, NY, Verso, 2015, p.15

implications on hierarchy and domination in relation to the natural world. His conclusion of the necessity to address the fundamental reorganization of society in order to address other problems constituted the basis for his arguments in municipalism.

Municipalism seeks to eliminate statist municipal structures, replacing them with popular democratic assemblies based on neighborhoods, towns and villages. In these assemblies, all inhabitants deal with community affairs on a face-to-face basis, making policy decisions through direct democracy. These assemblies operate with a bottom-up approach and exercise power at local levels to minimize the statist organs that control villages, towns and cities. As municipalism critiques hierarchical and patriarchal society and seeks to simultaneously alter political and economic life, municipal life becomes a school, where community is transformed in the process of practicing direct democracy.

The framework used for this research draws on the principles that emerge from municipalism and includes popular assemblies, social ecology, the feminization of politics, confederalism and dual power.

#### **D. Methodology**

This qualitative research is a composition of action-research with inductive reasoning which began with the author's observations and reflections based on fieldwork, followed by reflections on the 2015 refugee/migrant influx in the Mediterranean region. Over two decades of working with issues of displacement and local development in intercultural settings generated a series of questions on the future of displacement and possible approaches to be adopted, within a comprehensive framework, to overcome the vicious cycle of a systemic dependency and structural injustices.

With a tentative hypothesis on the possibilities of the co-construction of communities following forced displacement and the role of organic intellectuals in this process, field visits advanced in the initial phase of the research. The initial phase aimed at assessing

the patterns in the main topics identified; displacement, integration, and local governance. Building on the hypothesis through an extensive literature review, the case study approach was adopted in order to explore and verify the empirical data and theories posed in the initial research proposal. Case studies are used to examine the adaptability of local governance models (based on the concept of municipalism of Murray Bookchin) in co-constructing new communities following (forced) displacement, with specific focus on the role of organic intellectuals (as described by Antonio Gramsci) in a socio-political transformation process.

## **D1. Data collection method**

The author adopted an anthropological approach in data collection through observation of the participants and their environment, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis<sup>17</sup>. An extensive literature review of primary and secondary sources took place, including academic texts, media reviews, online lectures, multimedia sources, conferences, workshops, as well as published materials of individual authors and reports from the predominant organizations that operate in the field, as indicated in the bibliography.

### Field visits and observations

Between 2017 and 2019, a substantial number of field visits occurred, through workshops, conferences, consultations sessions and field observations, and a series of field notes collected.

In 2017, these efforts primarily explored the abandoned rural and semi-rural areas<sup>18</sup> in the Mediterranean region where local communities were struggling with the dilemma of depopulation versus welcoming migrants and refugees. These visits, accompanied by the

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<sup>17</sup> Goldman Roberta and Borkan Jeffrey, "Anthropological Approaches: Uncovering Unexpected Insights about the Implementation and Outcomes of Patient-Centered Medical Home Models", AHRQ Publication, n. 13, 2013, p.2

<sup>18</sup> Basque and la Rioja region, Spain; Forli, and Fontecchio, Italy.



literature review, consultation meetings and exchanges with colleagues, led to the development and use of the concepts of geographic peripheries and peripheries of power<sup>19</sup>. In the same year, the island of Lesbos and Kos in Greece, the towns of Ayvalık and Bodrum in Turkey and the surrounding region were visited to observe population movement through both regular and irregular channels.

In 2018, field visits<sup>20</sup> and events focused on local governance practices in Spain and local development efforts in Italy drawing the linkages between depopulation, increasing poverty and direct democracy practices, including a self-managed occupied ex-Olympic village in Turin, Italy. The time spent with the mayor and with community members in Marinaleda, Spain was crucial for discussing and understanding a concrete example of municipalism. A visit to Ankara, Turkey, generated fruitful discussions and exchange of views with the practitioners on the refugee caseload and management of the situation in Turkey. An international conference<sup>21</sup> in Lisbon, Portugal, stimulated the inclusion of the concept of community regeneration in the research.

In 2019, data was gathered for case studies during field visits to Thessaloniki and Kilkis in Greece, Palermo and Sutera in Italy. To expand the overview of the situation in each country, Athens, Greece and Agrigento, Italy, were also visited to conceptualize the situation in the studied areas better. Carrying out field visits and attending workshops in Marseille and St. Denis, France were essential, providing opportunities for direct contact with displacement-affected communities and long-term residents to observe and understand their views in the French context. In 2019, a number of visits and interviews also played a crucial role in structuring the thesis. In Burlington, Vermont, USA, authors and scholars who work with Bookchin's Institute of Social Ecology discussed the work and impact of Murray Bookchin. Further visits and semi-structured interviews in Pristina, Kosovo, and Ankara, Turkey, have contributed to various aspects of the research.

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<sup>19</sup> The concepts of geographic peripheries and peripheries of power are explained in the glossary and Part 1, Chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> Venice, Turin, Ravello, Italy; Huelva, Cordoba, Marinaleda, Spain; Ankara, Turkey; Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, "Faro Convention and Regeneration of Communities Conference", Lisbon, 24-25 May 2018

The field research process comprised observations, interviews, participation in group meetings and the collection of articles of local press and web pages.

### Case studies<sup>22</sup>

Following a significant number of field visits, conferences, workshops and outreach to diverse areas in 2017-18, case studies were identified. The selection criteria for the studied areas were influenced by the activism of local autonomous initiatives and spaces, which played a significant role in local responses in respective countries. Two local autonomous initiatives in Thessaloniki and Palermo are examples of local responses in urban settings where temporal continuity<sup>23</sup> in social movements are observed. Two smaller towns, Sutura and Kilkis, where the local response was led by the municipalities in close cooperation with the community and local organizations, are representative of community mobilization, particularly in areas where depopulation of long-term residents has been predominant.

In all cases selected, displacement has ignited continuous community regeneration with an ongoing influx of refugees and migrants as well as outward emigration due to socio-economic difficulties. Therefore, the studied areas are considered a prototype of communities in the peripheries of power of concern to this research. They are places of fluidity, precarity, and heterogeneity that have faced a major economic downturn in recent years, and primarily transitional areas with a long history of population movements. In addition, their relationship with the colonial history of Europe is different to other countries in the region, such as Spain and France, with a more critical view toward Europeanness and Eurocentrism, having been subject to both aspects of colonialism throughout their history as well as the austerity measures of the last decade. Finally, a long-standing political culture and grassroots solidarity has been a determining criterion for the selection.

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<sup>22</sup> Detailed information on the studied areas is provided in Part 2, Chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup> The term is coined by Emanuel Ma Mung and further explained in the glossary and Part 1, Chapter 1.

The analysis compares the observations, literature and collected data through interviews against the elements of the framework.

## Interviews

The interviewees included long-term residents, newly arrived refugees and migrants, referred henceforth as *newcomers*, municipal authorities, staff of local organizations and community-based initiatives, academics, activists as well as international organizations, with particular attention to gender, ability, age, class and race. In all cases, the interviewees were selected, based on their availability to meet and/or their attendance at workshops and conferences. The date and location of the participant's involvement in the study were carefully noted and reflected on the field observations and notes.

For subsequent analysis, the interviewees were divided in three groups according to the interview style used. Group one comprises a series of informal consultations with colleagues and practitioners in the field (25 persons)<sup>24</sup>, discussing general aspects of the thesis. As this approach formed an external circle of professionals from various disciplines, it provided a diversity of perspectives and helped to shape a comprehensive structure and the direction of the thesis. The second group included semi-structured interviews (56 persons)<sup>25</sup> with persons from the studied areas where specific field questions<sup>26</sup> were posed. The third group is constituted by expert testimonies, gathered at international conferences<sup>27</sup> which the author attended or organized. The triangulation of these observations, consultations, and interviews were analyzed and integrated in the thesis as appropriate. While group two provided specific information about the studied areas and communities, groups one and three have played a role in collecting data regarding displacement-affected communities in urban, rural and camp-like settings.

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<sup>24</sup> Annex I – The list of colleagues consulted.

<sup>25</sup> Annex II – The list of interviewees in the field.

<sup>26</sup> Annex III- Semi-structured interview questions.

<sup>27</sup> Annex IV– List of events organized or attended.

The author was driven by ethical principles of minimizing the risk of harm or increased interviewee vulnerability. Accordingly, the interviewees were systematically informed, in written or oral form, of the purpose of the interviews prior to meetings. In addition, a concept note of the research was provided to key contacts for the research who acted to facilitate meetings or provide contacts for interviewees. At the time of the interviews, the author further explained the purpose of the interview to each interviewee, as well as his affiliation with the University of Strasbourg in conducting this research. If requested by the interviewee, anonymity and confidentiality was assured. Detailed notes of each interview were recorded immediately following each meeting.

In some cases in group two, despite having agreed to meet, a reluctance among some interviewees was observed. This was partially due to the nature of the interviews and sensitivity of the status of specific interviewees as well as lack of trust to share personal information. Accordingly, some of the interviewees did not want to share their last name. Thus, some of the interviewees were given a pseudonym to respect the choice of not sharing their full name. While a full list of the interviewees is provided in the Annex II, those who are given culturally appropriate pseudonyms were indicated with an asterisk. All the interviewees were indicated throughout the thesis with an *italicized* name with the date and location of the interview as well as relevant brief detail in the footnote in order to place interviews in context.

Given the complexities of the research topic, this thesis makes no attempt to generalize the situations assessed in the studied areas either in Greece or Italy in their entirety or the Mediterranean region. On the contrary, points of intersection have been identified between the main topics of displacement, integration and governance, and autonomous initiatives that work with displacement affected communities.

It should not be assumed that the conclusions of this research and the framework can be applied uncritically to local governance across the board. However, it provides a

comprehensive outlook between three main topics of displacement, integration and local governance to be reflected in various geographic and cultural settings.

### On-line interviews and follow-up

Follow-up online meetings were carried out in late 2019 and early 2020 after field visits to update the changing situation. In addition, online meetings with humanitarian professionals in UNICEF in Athens Greece, UNHCR in Gaziantep, Care International in Hatay, and Goal in Ankara Turkey took place several times.

## **D2. Data analysis**

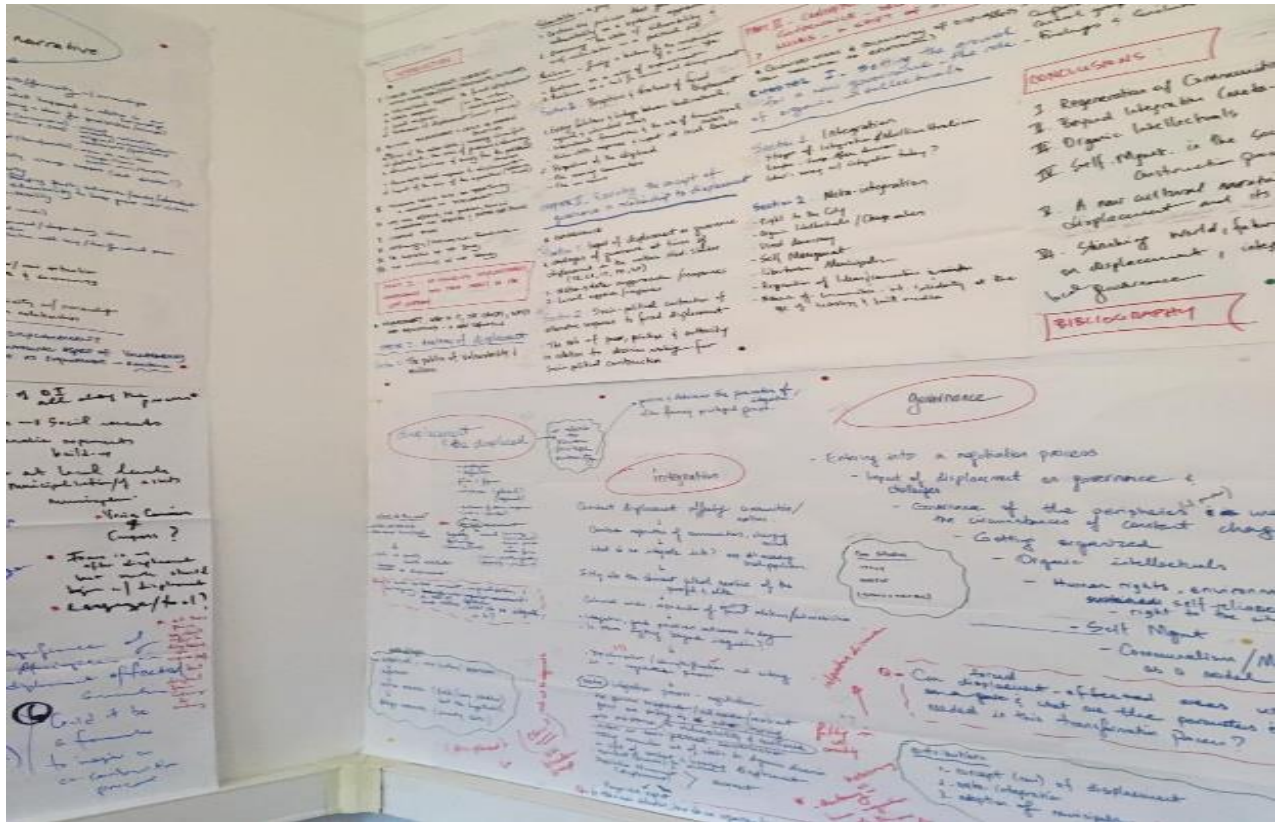
An anthropological approach to data analysis allowed the author to consider data within the context of the entire thesis. In this sense, field notes (including jottings, descriptive and analytical notes)<sup>28</sup> and topical coding<sup>29</sup> emerging out of the main research topics (displacement, integration and governance) was the most suitable method for the author as he extensively applies the 'design thinking' method in his professional work. Bernard emphasizes that topical coding in data management is a useful style gain an overall picture while focusing on the segments of the research. While it might be thought as a lengthy process, it helps to locate data on specific topics through the ocular scan method<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard H. Russel, *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 5th ed. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press; 2011, p. 389

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 401

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 406



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In development of qualitative research, this thesis utilized extensive interview and field notes, which included semi structured interviews based on a standard set of questions provided to key interviewees. Interviews were reflected in relevant sections through direct quotations. Putting the community at the center of social action, the influences and impact on displacement-affected communities were analyzed. Out of 56 persons interviewed, 57% were male and 43% were female, with age groups ranging as follows; 20-29 years old 16%; 30-39 years old 34%; 40-49 years old 29%; 50-59 years old 7%; and 60-69 years old 14%. Accordingly, 79% of the people interviewed actively working in the field were under 50 years old. Among the remaining 21% who are over 50 years old, most of the persons were engaged in academic work or private business and not directly engaged with the persons of concerns to this research. The analysis of each section was included in the conclusions of each chapter, in order to consolidate the information. The applicability of the *Displacement Triggered Community Co-construction Framework*

<sup>31</sup> Photo of 'design thinking' method in drafting process, Jenna Shearer Demir, 2019

(CCF) that was developed through the research was analyzed in Chapter 2 of Part 2. The applicability of the CCF in relation to the organic intellectuals' role and agency is further discussed as per the existing dynamics of hierarchical and patriarchal relations. An overall analysis in the general conclusions offer a comprehensive outlook of the topic and concepts discussed in the thesis, summarizing a clear interpretation of the research data.



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## E. The composition of the thesis

The thesis was constructed in two main parts, each containing two main chapters with two sections respectively. Throughout the thesis, the theoretical arguments were linked to the examples from the Mediterranean region, with specific focus on the studied areas in Italy and Greece.

The *Introduction* and *Background* of the thesis lay out the main concepts discussed, and describe the rationale and scope of the research. They further explain the literature review that led to the selected framework, detailing out the methodology used. Building on the empirical data gathered during the author's professional work, data contributed by other professionals in the field as well as field observations and interviews carried out, the thesis seeks to provide a balanced approach between the secondary sources provided by the

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<sup>32</sup> Photo, Jenna Shearer Demir, 2019

literature, and primary sources through practical lived experience as well as desk-based research and reports from the field.

**Part - I** examines well-established and commonly agreed upon concepts and definitions, as well as prompting readers to reconsider their positions in relation to power, privilege and authority.

Accordingly, *Part I - Chapter 1* explores the anatomy of displacement and seeks to draw commonalities between long-term residents and newcomers by introducing an enhanced definition of displacement and the displaced persons. *Section 1*, with a specific focus on forcibly displaced persons, points out vulnerability as a crucial element in the process of displacement. It argues that vulnerability is generated through systematic policies of victimization while facing considerable resistance. With the analysis of causes and influences, *Section 2* discusses institutional and non-institutional perspectives and responses to forced displacement, highlighting the essential role of local communities and civil society in addressing complexities in displacement-affected communities.

*Part I - Chapter 2* questions the notion of integration from an angle that requires major rethinking. Bringing together the concepts of heteronomy and autonomy, as discussed by Cornelius Castoriadis, and the concepts of the center and the peripheries as per the arguments made by Samir Amin, a new equation is introduced. Integration and inclusion as dominant concepts, as well as current practices are examined through the lens of heteronomy, critically questioning the idea of conforming to the norms and structures of the plutocratic center. With the emphasis on the precarious conditions of the majority of the population, this chapter discusses autonomy and imagining possibilities beyond integration in the geographic peripheries and peripheries of power where the precariat meets. *Section 2* introduces the meta-integration process as a step toward co-construction after displacement. Stressing the importance of the commons and commoning, it sets out the roles of organic intellectuals who emerge from the everyday life conditions of each group. While the importance of organic intellectuals is emphasized



throughout the thesis, this section specifically refers to the narrow room for movement in seeking alternatives under current conditions, which has to operate between (top-down) coloniality of power and (bottom-up) colonized minds. It challenges the rooted belief in possessive and territorial connections to a place and people, making long-term residents feel entitled to make protectionist arguments in the name of national interest, integrity and sovereignty. It argues that the connections to places and people today are more relational in nature, particularly in the peripheries of power, therefore requiring a dialogical process to redefine relations.

**Part - II** puts forward direct democracy as common ground for displacement-affected communities to work toward a community of equals and engage in a politics of proximity.

*Chapter 1 of Part II* discusses the shortfalls of representational democracy and the erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms across the board. As the discussions on localization and local governance have gained momentum in recent decades, *Section 1* provides examples of reformist efforts for local governance from the Mediterranean region both at institutional and non-institutional levels. Acknowledging significant constructive efforts in institutional settings, it raises questions on the viability of these reforms with their top down approach. *Section 2* explores alternatives in local governance, with specific focus on collective self-management. Providing examples of recent social movements from the Mediterranean region, it sets out the importance of autonomous spaces and establishes the main element of the meta-integration process.

*Chapter 2* introduces municipalism and direct democracy as a possible way to create common ground for displacement-affected communities that need to be considered in a co-construction process. Thus, *Section 1* is dedicated to the concept of municipalism and municipalist principles as described by Murray Bookchin and his colleagues. This section provides examples of the implementation of municipalism, while it also refers to a unique Andalusian example of Marinaleda, where a concrete example of direct democracy in action is examined. *Section 2* offers a framework as a tool for organic intellectuals in

displacement affected-communities. Here the author argues that bringing together the meta-integration process which was developed during this research with the municipalist principles of Bookchin, a *Consolidated Framework for Displacement-Triggered Community Co-construction* (or Community Co-Construction Framework / CCF) encourages an integrated and intersectoral approach to displacement and development. The CCF could be useful tool for communities that are interested in collective alternatives in targeting structural injustices and working toward a community of equals. As this framework was developed throughout this research, its potential and applicability are discussed in relation to the perceptions of displacement, integration and governance in the studied areas.

The general conclusions draw from each chapter, pulling together diverse concepts discussed throughout the thesis in six main points. The author refers to the changing nature of political engagement as well as the role of regeneration of communities in times of displacement. Taking the meta-integration process as a path forward, the author draws conclusions on the essential role of the organic intellectuals. Exploring autonomy and collective self-management as an alternative in a co-construction process, the author suggests a new cultural narrative on displacement and governance that might contribute to the discussions in shaping socio-political frameworks in making predictions for future perspectives for the community of equals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **F. The limitations of the study**

### Political aspect:

While political and economic instability was one of the reasons behind the choice of case studies, changes in the national and local political actors has had an impact on the research. For example, the choice of the town of Riace, which is viewed as a focal point in Italy, had to be changed as the mayor was arrested in the middle of the research and all contacts became unavailable. A shift to Sutera (considered ‘the Riace of Sicily’) was

made, where the response to cooperate was not so robust. In addition, during the course of the research both Italy and Greece underwent local and general elections, with resulting drastic changes in their policies toward migrants and refugees. Indeed, these changes gave additional value to the perspective of this research, with more emphasis on local governance and municipalism in times of constant change and instability.

#### Economic aspect:

In engaging in a process of collective self-management, the economic aspect is essential in order to ensure the involvement of all. An economy of resistance, social and solidarity economy (SSE) and sustainability requires extended time and presence at the community level to obtain more concise insight and data. Although this was not a focus of this research it is considered to be crucial if a transformative process is to move forward.

#### Gender aspect:

While the research did not have a specific gender focus, it was a vital cross-cutting issue throughout this thesis, particularly with its overarching theme on the hierarchical and patriarchal relations of power and privilege. It was noted that most of the theories used in the thesis dating back to 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were primarily the work of male scholars and authors, while there has been significant acknowledgment of female scholars, authors, and practitioners since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even if this research does not explore the gender dimension in depth, it raises questions about gender equality in academia and executive management positions in the field of humanitarian and human rights work. However, the presence and a distinctive approach of women in Non-Governmental Organizations, local organizations and initiatives, social movements as well as the transformation in displacement as organic intellectuals has been observed extensively.

### Language:

The language of the thesis is English; however, the research has been directly conducted in several other languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, and Turkish. Whilst this allowed access to a richer academic source, the author's varying language ability may also have led to some limitations. This was particularly true in Greece; when the sources were not available in English, the understanding of a particular data set will have been less nuanced. The role of languages in the interviews played an important role as well, especially with those who were newcomers where the interviews had to be conducted through an interpreter (e.g. Arabic, Greek) or using a language with which the interviewee had difficulties in expressing himself/herself. In some cases, lacking a common language represented an obstacle for conducting direct interviews.

### Sources:

While there are substantial separate primary and secondary sources on migrants and refugees, integration and local governance, academic literature combining these three wide-ranging topics was rare. As this presents an assessed gap in the literature, the lack of academic study with this specific focus presented limitations when attempting to conduct a comparative analysis. In particular, the lack of availability of the sources on anarchist and autonomous initiatives was quite restrictive in relation to displacement. However, the author's professional background was to prove a strength, allowing diverse disciplines to be considered, and filling a crucial role in connecting the elements presented in this thesis. In addition, it indicates that the choice of the topic and the articulations made in this thesis are rare and present a certain degree of originality.

### Organizational power versus individual researcher:

The initial field visits, workshops and conferences were conducted as a representative of the Council of Europe, with its organizational power, leading to a more engaged and

interested response. During case study visits, this affiliation was not available, which had a different impact in terms of response by the interviewees. It was also observed that the affiliation with the CoE had certain weight in accessing the mayors and officials while as an independent researcher there was more open communication with non-institutional actors.

## **G. Self-critique**

Following forced displacement, there is the chance to reset the organization of society. The continuation of representational democracy and conformity to the existing relations seems to be more commonly accepted than a desire to become active agents of change for more egalitarian relations. The rooted values of the neoliberal system and individualism often focus on personal advancement, driven by colonized minds and shaped by the colonality of power. As most people are consumed by the concerns of everyday life, including insecurities and the need to survive, the expectation that people in the peripheries will engage in political action might be seen as a hypocritical wish of privileged intellectuals. This remains an ongoing critical question.

On the other hand, there is also an increasing demand for social change emerging across the Mediterranean region, claiming equal rights for all in the new place and creating social movements, particularly among those in the peripheries of power. This research, while highlighting the importance of acknowledging the presence of the organic intellectuals at all levels did not examine how the organic intellectuals view each other in a larger geographic scope, which could potentially strengthen the arguments made.

On a personal side, the author could have made more effort to be engaged in activities on campus and participate in lectures, and to have developed support systems among doctorate candidates. As mentioned above, during the early research phase of this doctoral program, professional and personal commitments left little room for such involvement. As time passed, it became more difficult to establish these relations. In the

last year and half of the study, which was primarily dedicated to writing-up, efforts were increased to attend conferences on campus, yet it was too late to develop a strong support group, the existence of which would have enriched this experience.



## **PART - I**

# **Rethinking displacement, integration and their impact in the 21st century**





# CHAPTER 1 – Rethinking Displacement

*Traveler, there are no paths. Paths are made by walking.*

*Australian Aboriginal saying*

Displacement<sup>33</sup> is a natural but an increasingly complex process, gradually generating a basis for social transformation under precarious conditions forced upon communities. Therefore, its analysis should exceed the classic understanding of ‘physical removal’ and crossing the borders of nation-states, with a genuine focus on equality and human rights. While it is categorized and treated differently in practice, at the abstract level, the *anatomy of displacement*<sup>34</sup> has similar elements in regards to human experience, whether it takes place either by choice or by force. In either case, certain stages of disorientation, vulnerability, recovery and resilience/resistance are present. These stages are experienced at significantly different levels and intensity based on the nature of displacement, as well as its causes and influences. Therefore, it is essential to reflect upon these stages to develop familiarity with the mechanics of displacement and to draw attention to commonalities among people.

Displacement, in its broader sense, encompasses physical, social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual, emotional and psychological dimensions as they all influence each other in a dynamic interaction. The term is used in various disciplines from physics to physiology, psychology, math, sociology, political science and economics; however, it has a basic common definition of ‘the difference between initial position of something or someone and any later position’; or simply defined as a ‘change in position’<sup>35</sup>. With the

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<sup>33</sup> The term displacement is employed as a generic term for commonly used terms for human movements in the field, including but not limited to mobility, population movement, migration, asylum, and refugee influx, regardless of their legal status or label, based on their specific condition. While the affiliation of the term mobility has positive connotations at times, this thesis focuses on the precarious conditions that lead to or are caused by forced displacement. Thus, displacement is defined as a change in position and imagined relationship to current conditions in a progressive socio-political transformation process, individually and collectively.

<sup>34</sup> The Anatomy of displacement draws attention to the conceptual similarities impacting individuals and groups at times of displacement, regardless of the causes of displacement. Acknowledgement of the specifics of displacement is necessary in order to carefully assess common ground to meet, develop empathy and foster mutual understanding as a basis for dialogue. Therefore, various phases of displacement have to be acknowledged; disorientation, vulnerability, recovery, resilience, resistance and action.

<sup>35</sup> Khan Academy Library, “Displacement”, 2018

consideration of all these disciplines and their organic linkage, this basic definition will be used as a departure point for the arguments made in this section. This chapter further attempts to take the concept out of its narrow definition of physical displacement and explores wider perspectives at an abstract level in order to demonstrate its implications on individuals and groups who are displaced either by choice or by force. Understanding the essence of displacement as a concept, and recognizing that forced displacement could happen to anyone, anywhere and anytime, this section hopes to set the ground for further discussion on empathy and consciousness through critical questioning. Edward Newman<sup>36</sup> argues the need to step outside or challenge the existing ‘rules of the game’, calling for a positive reassessment of the terminology. Therefore, the terms of displacement and the displaced discussed in this specific section particularly constitute one of the basic parameters examined in this thesis.

#### - **An expanded definition of displacement and the displaced**

Departing from the basic definition of a ‘change in position’ and considering the current mainstream understanding of the physical aspect of the concept, displacement technically ends when a person finds “a place to live with security of tenure, access to basic services and livelihood on a par with others who were not displaced”<sup>37</sup>, according to Elizabeth Rushing. The same concept also applies to both forced and chosen displacement; in refugee cases, when short-term assistance programs for the initial period or help from a colleague/friend is provided, the displacement is considered resolved as a safe space is identified and initial basic needs are met. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) opinion paper<sup>38</sup> lays out that this premature declaration of resolution is not surprising as physical displacement is more observable and the impact is easily measured while the other aspects have long-lasting implications.

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<sup>36</sup> Newman Edward, “Refugees, international security, and human vulnerability: Introduction and survey” in Edward Newman and Joanne van Selm (ed.), *Refugees and forced displacement: International security, human vulnerability, and the state*, Hong Kong, United Nation University Press, 2003, p. 14-41

<sup>37</sup> Rushing Elizabeth, “Today’s Returning Refugees, Tomorrow’s IDPs”, *Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) Newsletter Expert Opinion*, June 2017

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/todays-returning-refugees-tomorrows-idps>

In a given case of physical displacement, there are two main actors; those who are considered the hosts (long-term residents), and the displaced (newcomers). These two groups are often portrayed as separate groups with dominant identities, senses of belonging, and ownership of the place, which sidelines the presence of multiple identities and belongings of these individuals and communities. The history of migration has shown that positive reception of the newcomers is a pull factor, which often presents a continuity through group affiliations among established communities in other social contexts. Emmanuel Ma Mung's reference to the concept of 'temporal and a self-made genealogical continuity'<sup>39</sup> is worth noting, which will further be explored in Part 2, Chapter 1.

Whilst this approach disregards the essence of diversity in both groups, it also reinforces the power relationships, marginalizing the newcomers to a position of underprivilege. This generalization and construct weaken any chances of engaging in genuine dialogue for a shared future, whereas building on the diverse nature of each community can recognize the potential of identifying (on equal terms) commonalities and creating a platform for mutual exchange and understanding, leading to a socio-political transformation.

Rethinking displacement within an expanded spectrum, Stephen Castles'<sup>40</sup> definition: "a dynamic social process linked to broader patterns of social transformation and is a central aspect of social transformation in the contemporary world" introduces displacement as a process as opposed to a one-time journey, taking it out of the context of a mere physical change in position, which has been a mainstream understanding of the concept to date. He highlights the need to consider its interconnectedness with all other elements as an integral part of a transformation process. Castles explains that a change in position takes place at various levels, at times simultaneously, and may have long lasting effects in the long run. Such a definition allows historically marginalized groups to become actors in the

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<sup>39</sup> Ma Mung Emanuel, "Continuité temporelle, contiguïté spatiale et création d'un monde-propre", *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 4 n. 41, 2012, p. 352-368

<sup>40</sup> Castles Stephen, "Towards Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation", *Sociology*, Vol. 77, no. 1, 2003, p. 13-34

socio-political life of their new location, giving them the opportunity to take part actively in a transformation process, as opposed to being observers or passive recipients of aid. At the same time, it would not be realistic to think that all people subject to displacement share the same thinking and interest in engaging in political action. While no specific data about the number of persons engaging in political action after displacement was noted during this research, the engagement among newcomers was found to be rather low. As part of a displacement process, with disorientation and vulnerability, newcomers primarily focus on survival concerns, meeting basic needs for themselves and immediate family members. This basic concern applies to both displacement scenarios: by choice or by force.

Institutionalized definitions such as refugee, immigrant, asylum seeker, stateless, etc., and the distinctions made between host and displaced community members, establish inevitable power relationships. The division between the long-term residents (hosts) and newcomers (displaced/guest) creates frictions, and in some cases, may even favor newcomers and generate a reaction by the long-term residents who experience social and financial difficulties. Indeed, there is a clear linkage between recent populist movements and their supporters with anti-migrant/refugee rhetoric, sidelining the structural problems experienced in the countries and putting the blame on migrants and refugees for absorbing scarce resources. Systemic reproduction of precarious conditions of people, whether they are categorized as host or displaced in this context, often keeps them away from social and political engagement in daily life, perpetuating the negative reputation of the displaced as victims or survivors, often placing them in a permanent vulnerable category with paternalistic tendencies.

De Haas suggests that we see migration as “a process which is an integrated part of a broader transformation process embodied in the term ‘development’ with its internal self-sustaining as well as self-undermining dynamics”.<sup>41</sup> An organic and lengthy process of

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<sup>41</sup> De Haas Hein, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective”, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 44, n. 1, 2010, p. 227-264

development that is supposed to mobilize a society would inevitably experience migration (as over the course of development some will be leaving and some will join), while finding its path and balance with its surroundings. This process cannot be reduced to project-based and time-bound initiatives, but requires a holistic view of displacement with a gradual impact on transformation and progressive social change.

De Haas' suggestion is essential for the paradigm shift mentioned earlier, as displacement is not an isolated case, particularly when causes and influences as well as its governance are examined. It is very much linked to the development processes in any given place, encouraging people to leave for a new destination, either for a better quality of life or to safety. When such change occurs, power relations are often reproduced, and oppressive traditional practices continued unless that displacement is seen as part of a broader transformative process. The underlying conditions that lead to displacement and the reconstruction of lives following displacement are linked to broader processes; the political position of the persons and the community either have the chance to make a significant change or reproduce similar structures and practices, adjusted to a new place in order to exist in a new environment. For example, in Italy and Greece, migration from the Indian subcontinent as well as China presents a different path in integration than other groups, as most of these communities tend to be well-linked to their diaspora, often considered closed, and reproduce the traditional hierarchical relationships of their place of origin.

The process of displacement, in both forms, by force or by choice, with its causes and subsequent phases, is intricately connected to power, privilege and authority. While there might be opposition to newcomers at the political level, the use of vulnerable groups as cheap labor has always been one of the driving forces of receiving economies, often utilized by the elite to guarantee their profit, reproduce power relations and maintain their privilege. Despite occasional individual success stories of newcomers, it takes generations for a group to advance on the ladder of privilege, often in an antagonistic relationship with other groups facing similar challenges. Paul Ricœur refers to these

relationships of power perpetuating dependence and authority<sup>42</sup>, emphasizing the systemic influences on people to channel them into the state apparatus in order to maintain the status quo. Allan Johnson quotes Peggy McIntosh's<sup>43</sup> description of privilege as "one group having something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they have done or failed to do". Therefore, the existence of privilege is about having access to or getting something that other people are denied due to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, physical ability, or sexual orientation. These differences are instrumentalized to generate patterns of inequality, perpetuating a class system that produces oppressive consequences. The figures from the 2020 OXFAM report indicate a large gap between rich and poor, as the world's richest 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people. Based on the World Bank estimates, the same report points out that "almost half of the world's population lives on less than \$5.50 a day, and the rate of poverty reduction has halved since 2013"<sup>44</sup>. This is a clear indicator of the current state of relations. For those at the bottom of the pyramid, the costs are tremendous, with precarious living conditions and quality of life, gradually being pushed to urban peripheries, systematically generating dependency, distanced from access to resources and decision-making power.

Power, privilege and authority have distinctive roles in the process of displacement and they exhibit variations depending on whether displacement is chosen or forced. Displacement by choice could take the form of a young adult leaving for university; marriage, divorce, moving to a new city or country, changing jobs, birth and death in family, or a combination of many events. Among other causes, displacement by force could be the result of identity oppressions, homelessness, economic migration, gentrification, seeking refuge for political or environmental reasons, or fleeing from prosecution. Displacement can occur either at an individual or group level. Regardless of the particular form of displacement, this dislodging moves a person from his or her comfort

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<sup>42</sup> Garduño Comparán Carlos Alfonso, "Arendt and Ricœur on Ideology and Authority", *Études Ricœuriennes/Ricœur Studies*, vol 5, n 2, 2014, p. 64-80

<sup>43</sup> Johnson Allan G, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, New York, Mc Graw Hill, 2001, p.15-41

<sup>44</sup> OXFAM, "Time to Care - Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis", January 2020, p. 9  
<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care>

zone or fixed position. It challenges habits and connections in an ambiguous period, until the displaced person finds balance and readjusts to their new surroundings and develops a new set of norms. Irrespective of how long it lasts, this period of vulnerability prompts a reaction which could either take a constructive or counterproductive route, sometimes with long lasting consequences.

When displacement is by choice (mostly individual, with occasional exceptions such as Israeli resettlements or immigrant communities moving individually and reconvening in the place of destination), those who are displaced often have the possibility to move with their privileges at least at the point of departure, although this may eventually shift as they have the choice and means as a privilege and class-based act, and maintain their power to be able to make a decision and financially afford the move. This group may have an easier time to align with authority, and show willingness to accommodate to the rules and regulations of the receiving culture. To a degree, this is pre-conditioned acceptance, with integration taking place more easily. Their relationship with the socio-political framework and authority is more compliant and interested in negotiating (fitting in), and therefore, it could be considered more heteronomous. Informal interviews carried out within the context of this research provides a good example, namely the Albanian migration into Greece in the 1990s, which is seen as a good example of integration. Most interviewees indicated that the willingness of Albanians to 'integrate' and accommodate to the rules has been well received by Greeks today, even if Albanians faced a certain amount of discrimination.

When displacement is forced on individuals or groups, among long-lasting emotional, psychological, economic wounds, there are social and political implications where both individuals and groups become disoriented and vulnerable without warning, a period which sometimes lasts years. This has been seen in the ever-growing refugee influx of recent times, for example Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya or Zataari camp in Jordan as well as widespread urban refugees in Turkey.



Forced displacement caused by environmental factors or natural disasters, despite becoming progressively one of the major causes, is not covered by the 1951 Geneva Convention as the definition of refugee does not include people displaced as a consequence of natural disasters, environmental factors, or famine, regardless of the fact that these people may need protection and assistance. The efforts led by the Norwegian and Swiss governments, known as the Nansen Initiative, were an attempt to build consensus for a protection agenda for displaced persons across borders affected by disasters and climate change<sup>45</sup>. In the European context, despite the existence of a significant number of conventions, there is no specific treaty on refugees, which could also take a lead role in addressing environment and climate-change-induced displacement. Considering increasing concerns about environmental disasters and changing interactions among peoples as well as methods of oppression, the scale of human rights abuses is highly complex. Widely known and agreed upon perspectives and instruments do not seem to address these complexities on a large scale, causing significant problems and leaving groups of people in an ambiguous situation.

In addition to the commonly known sudden-onset climate related hazards, which are on the increase, millions of people move from their places of origin due to “altered frequency, intensity, duration, timing and location of slow climate related hazards” according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>46</sup>. It is essential to note that such hazards and environmental causes constituted two-thirds of the 65.6 million forcibly displaced persons in 2016, by far outnumbering those fleeing from conflict<sup>47</sup>.

Those who are forcibly displaced leave behind possessions, connections, affiliations, social capital, memories and lives. Although disaster- and conflict-driven forced displacement affect communities at large, people in low and lower-middle income feel the

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<sup>45</sup> The Nansen Initiative, launched in 2012, was transformed to New Platform for Disaster Displacement in 2015 following the endorsement of the Protection Agenda by 109 governmental delegations in Geneva.

<sup>46</sup> Opitz Stapleton Sarah, Nadin Rebecca, Watson Charlene, Kellett Jan, Report on “Climate Change, Migration and Displacement; The need for a risk-informed and coherent approach”, *Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*, November 2017, p. 9-11

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9

consequences more than those in privileged and power positions, as their already existing vulnerability is prolonged or increased. OXFAM, comparing the people from lower income countries to rich countries, suggests that those who are from lower income countries are five times more likely to be forced from their homes in times of sudden disasters<sup>48</sup>. The forcibly displaced lose socio-political power and have to negotiate their position to re-establish power balances as a group, reconstruct their social and political lives and relationships with surrounding communities.

In this context, their privileges are left behind, they often have very limited or no power to make decisions concerning their lives, and enter into an antagonistic relationship with the authority as their legal status determines their political and social status, and possibly labels them for a long period. The treatment they receive may become degrading and undermine their dignity, causing animosity between long-term residents and newcomers from the outset (one example is middle-class Syrian refugees in Europe) as they are more exposed than those who are displaced by choice. Understandably, receiving communities can find large groups of forced displaced coming from the same place of origin more threatening than individuals or small groups that arrive on their own.

In either way, how displacement and the displaced are perceived determines the next steps in the process of social transformation. As Gramsci notes “every social group coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields”<sup>49</sup>. For such a process to be sustained and maintain its transformative aspect, the internal potential of communities needs to be acknowledged and mobilized. It is also crucial that creative ways are developed to ensure a dynamic interaction for all, valuing their respective connection to both place and community. Times of displacement, which shift the foundations of socio-

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<sup>48</sup> OXFAM International, “The Power of People against Poverty” *OXFAM Press Release*, November 2017

<sup>49</sup> Cammett John M., *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1967 p. 202

political relations, allow certain capacities to surface and individuals to emerge out of necessity. While evident physical displacement occurs, a virtual displacement of organic intellectuals also takes place where the new conditions put them forward as change makers who take an active role in leading the groups into a new way of seeing things and redefining values. In order to identify and work with organic intellectuals, it is essential to consider the power and privilege relations in the process of displacement as well as addressing the dilemma of who are displaced in this new equation.

The World Bank<sup>50</sup> defines the ‘restricting of access’ to people (e.g. indigenous groups, local communities) to certain territories (due to development, protected areas, etc.) as involuntary displacement even when physical displacement does not take place. “Restricted access is a form of displacement<sup>51</sup>; impacting livelihood through imposed economic displacement. There is ample evidence that their socio-economic effects have similar effects to physical displacement. The World Bank has adjusted its policies to cover the “loss of income sources or means of livelihood, whether or not the affected persons must move to another location”. In its Restriction of Access document, the Bank explains that physical displacement is not a needed precursor to be considered involuntarily displaced, stating, ‘imposed deprivation of assets may take place in situ, without physical removal of inhabitants.’<sup>52</sup> The Bank further notes that, “social scientists have demonstrated that displacement and loss of access to common natural resources are closely associated with social disarticulation, landlessness, loss of identity, increased morbidity and mortality and marginalization”<sup>53</sup>, which they note raises concerns as regards social justice. This definition of involuntary displacement received a positive response from the international development community, including the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank.

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<sup>50</sup> Cernea Michael M., “Restriction of access’ is displacement: a broader concept and policy”, *Forced Migration Review*, vol. 23, 2005, p. 48-49

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*

Based on the points postulated here that physical removal is not the only criteria to define displacement, and displacement is a part of a larger social transformation process, it is argued that the experience of displacement is shared by the classically defined 'host' (receiving) communities and 'guests' (newcomers) as well as those who never leave their place of origin, but live an isolated and alienated state of existence as an intellectual minority. Therefore, all are the main subjects of the displacement process, among other local and international actors. It is not uncommon that the individual migrants may find their own way to fit into society and develop a different relationship with authority, power and privilege. However, in case of forced displacement in considerable numbers, the 'host' community members may find themselves in a situation where existing norms and conditions do not meet the current needs and require change. As much as such a shift might be challenging for some communities, the need to search for commonly acceptable new norms and conditions becomes a necessity as the socio-political and economic relationships begin to shift. Changing dynamics between host and displaced communities were clearly noted by UNHCR as Volker Türk<sup>54</sup> discusses the impact of forced displacement as a shock to the economy; there is a need to consider the new community together and invest in the system in general to best cope with the situation.

In spite of all its complexities, as emphasized by Alejandro Portes "we should not expect a grand theory of displacement that can explain every aspect of it in every place"<sup>55</sup>, instead we should shift our position and the way we look into the concept of displacement and the displaced, setting the ground for effective networks in solidarity and progressive steps for a socio-political transformation process.

Consequently, the terms displacement and the displaced are used in this thesis beyond their legalistic meanings, as a trigger and a potential step in the right direction for egalitarian, community-led local governance. In this regard, displacement is indeed a 'change in position', with all its integral aspects, in a progressive socio-political

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<sup>54</sup> The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, in his introduction to the Global Compact on Refugees in December 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Castles Stephen, *art. cit.*, (Toward Sociology of Forced...), p. 27

transformation process, individually and collectively. Therefore, despite all the challenges it presents, it is an opportunity for individuals and groups to reflect upon and make conscious decisions for positive change, including disregarding traditional oppressive practices.

The displaced, on the other hand, are persons who take part in this process of transformation regardless of their territorial connection to a place, including those who have not physically moved from their place of origin. Thus, those who all go through a change in position in all its aspects are considered the displaced. Christina Bennett<sup>56</sup> carefully uses the term displacement-affected communities and individuals, underlining that both the newcomers and long-term inhabitants are affected by the process and need to work together for a shared solution.

In this section, displacement is employed as a generic term for all sorts of population movements, regardless of legal status or specific condition-based label. Consequently, the term displaced refers to immigrants, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced peoples, stateless people, homeless, nomads, money poor with restricted access to resources, local communities as well as those who voluntarily choose to move for personal, family, career, educational, etc., purposes.

With 258 million people on the move according to 2016 figures<sup>57</sup>, migrants make up 3.3% of the world population, a ratio which has remained the same over the last hundred years. Therefore, the topic should not be treated in the context of a crisis situation, but as a phenomenon that will increasingly be of concern to the majority of the world's population. The likelihood that individuals will be forcibly displaced in their lifetime is increasing, and this will have multiple implications that will shape communities and relations of power across the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>56</sup> Bennet, Christina, "Constructive deconstruction: imagining alternative humanitarian action", *Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper*, May 2018, p. 9

<sup>57</sup> Connor Philip, "International migration: Key findings from the U.S., Europe and the world", Factank by Pew Research Center, December 2016

## - **Forced displacement**

The ability to make a choice is an important distinction in forced displacement. External and unexpected impositions, whether natural or human, lead to the preconditions of forced displacement, often for an extended period. Having choices is closely linked to the privilege and power of individuals and groups in relation to the structure and agency that allows for the decision to migrate. Although displacement is a multi-layered phenomenon, there are obvious causes of forced displacement whose legitimacy (violent conflicts, wars, etc.) cannot be questioned by the entities that grant protection and aid. Such sudden changes in conditions that force people to flee are visible and well reported with often detrimental consequences. At times, there are subtleties that may not be obvious initially, but may gradually lead to conditions where people are forcibly displaced in order to survive (development, climate change induced, scarce resources, access to resources, or combined causes).

The factors leading to such forced displacement are not necessarily assessed or reported by the same institutions that work with the forcibly displaced (either international or governmental), leading to restrictions in the freedom of movement across borders through regular channels, leaving little choice for the forcibly displaced other than attempting irregular channels of mobility. A famous piece from the poem entitled *Home*<sup>58</sup>: “no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land” written by a Somali-British writer and poet, Warsan Shire, points to the human suffering and reasons for leaving home in a very powerful way.

In a world where the distribution of wealth is unfair, with increasing structural inequalities and discriminatory practices, the language of macroeconomics, with its calculations on country Gross Domestic Product (GDPs), income levels, etc., dominates discussions and sidelines the problems around income inequality and wealth distribution. Therefore, it is essential to look at the lived experiences of communities and marginalized peoples,

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<sup>58</sup> Wilson Michael, "No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land", Global Citizen, 7 September 2015

focusing on the quality of lives and basic living conditions with dignity as well as access to resources in any given situation. For example, a 2018 Council of Europe Development Bank study<sup>59</sup> shows that “the continent has been seeing multiple inequality measures on the rise for the last decade and a half. Europeans in the top 20% of the income distribution have five times more of national income than those in the bottom 20%, with Southern and Central-Eastern Europe being the most unequal regions”. The study findings further indicate that “those in the bottom 40% are less likely to move out of their socio-economic group than they were in 2008 with less access to quality education, making it harder to perform in a competitive education-based labor market, and are often more likely to be overburdened with housing costs”.

Causes of forced displacement differ between obvious humanitarian crises and environmental disasters, as well as socio-economic and political factors related to systemic inequalities. Accordingly, preventative and protective measures are treated under different categories by international organizations (such as UNHCR, World Bank) and governments. The categorizations used, such as refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, seem to be important for the functioning of technocratic and bureaucratic state apparatus to control and monitor population movements and demographics. Categorization is not only used in responding to crisis situations and providing much needed protection for displaced persons, it also set the framework and trajectory for possible durable solutions at a later stage. Even if one of the three solutions of the Geneva Convention is pursued (repatriation, local integration, resettlement), once the decision-making bodies close their cases, displaced people find themselves in as precarious a situation as the locals. The current mainstream governance model of displacement often alienates and isolates those who are displaced and confines them to the concerns of daily survival, away from any kind of political engagement. Under such conditions, the displaced have to take their position in the peripheries of power<sup>60</sup>, and increasingly in the

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<sup>59</sup> The Council of Europe Development Bank, “An introduction to inequality in Europe - Tackling inequalities in Europe: the role of social investment”, 2017, p. 1-13

<sup>60</sup> Peripheries of power refers to people and communities who are socially, politically and economically marginalized due to systemic and structural injustices. A similar logic of wealth accumulation and political power at the center experienced as more resources, both financial and human, are directed toward central urban areas, while urban and rural peripheries are left with the majority of

peripheries of urban settings, at times ghettoized, destined to be subject to systemic vulnerability. The frustration of people living under precarious conditions with this prolonged vulnerability may easily be channeled to conflictual situations between locals and displaced people through the use of identity politics and discriminatory acts, as they are left with limited resources as well as lack of public and political power to take control over their lives. The Roma communities in Europe are one such example.

Alan Dowty states that in such circumstances, the distinction between 'economic' and 'political' refugees becomes meaningless. "From a sociological point of view this is true. However, it does not prevent governments from making a de jure distinction between 'Convention' refugees and others, refusing asylum to those who do not meet the strict criteria of the UN Convention"<sup>61</sup>. The recent reactions of European states have shown that the criteria of the UN Conventions as well as the EU policies are interpreted in various ways by some of the European governments, becoming protectionist of their nation-state borders and reluctant to cooperate with other governments.

It is necessary to underline the direct and indirect causes of displacement that are forced upon individuals and groups in order to address their specific needs. It is equally important to understand the phases described in the *anatomy of displacement*, in order to develop people centered solutions. These groups who were originally categorized and labeled as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, as well as economically disadvantaged working poor, increasingly find themselves in urban peripheries or rural areas with lesser social and economic means. While the linkage between these geographic peripheries and the peripheries of power will further be explored, the possibility of such a vulnerability turning

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the population and limited resources. Faced by significant income inequalities, the people of the peripheries who lack time, energy, space and resources to organize, eventually become or remain vulnerable. Such a situation keeps people away from the democratic political processes, pushing them to the peripheries of power. Considering the organic linkage between the development processes (through colonial and post-colonial periods, which set the global development framework today) and population movements, the concepts of a center and periphery point out the structural injustices and inequality. Consequently, the term periphery as presently employed refers to both a geographical area as well as the relation to power, privilege and authority.

<sup>61</sup> Dowty Alan quoted in Richmond Anthony H., "Sociological Theories of International Migration: The Case of Refugees", *York Space*, Vol. 36, n. 2, 1988, p. 7-25



into an opportunity in the peripheries will be examined to understand the regeneration of communities.

In as much as violent conflict and disasters lead to forced displacement, sudden- and slow-onset occurrences caused by climate change industrial accidents, restricted access to local resources including agricultural land, pandemics and unstable local economic activities due to structural adjustments, etc., also create the conditions for forced displacement albeit at a different intensity, first internally and eventually across borders as well as in the form of confinement. Paradoxically, development projects (river basins in the Sahel, e.g. The Manantali Dam; and gentrification in urban centers), despite their good intentions, have been known to create displacement as well.

For many, deteriorating living conditions and the inability to meet basic needs gradually push people to search for alternative solutions, as people face major difficulties in securing the minimum conditions for survival, whereupon they are forced to move. For example, in the Sub-Saharan African region, young people and families move to neighboring regions, or if they have the means, head to Europe. In Europe, rural areas are abandoned with limited resources available to the younger generations, and while urban centers are gentrified due to tourism or development projects, residents with limited economic means are pushed to the peripheries. The author has visited rural areas in Spain, Italy and Greece where small villages struggle with basic human resources. For example, in a small town in Abruzzo, Italy, despite the obvious need to repopulate the town, there has been a dilemma concerning whether to open up to people coming from the Global South. An unrealistic expectation of people from Northern Europe or the US buying houses and starting small business remains common, specifically among the older generation.

Within the countries of the northern Mediterranean, internal migration to urban areas, gentrification, abandonment of rural areas, natural disasters, unemployment, structural adjustments, housing schemes, taxes etc., leave the working people in a precarious

situation, creating the condition for forced social, economic, intellectual and political displacement, if not physical displacement, leading to the regeneration of communities according to a new set of norms.

One example is seen at the abandoned and occupied Olympic village in the periphery of Turin, Italy<sup>62</sup>. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and working-class Italian citizens of Italian origin amongst others resided side by side, due to the low rents and availability of unoccupied properties. Approximately 1,200 young African men from over 20 countries, originally migrant workers in Libya, sought asylum in Italy (often paying smugglers) following the fall of Qaddafi and the ensuing violence in 2011. Today, most hold residence and work permits in Italy, and their cases as displaced persons have been closed. Although they are legal residents in Italy, they cannot afford housing or find regular work, and are forced to live in occupied buildings in this peripheral neighborhood with other citizens, sharing a similar environment and concerns for survival. While they have maintained a respectful relationship with their neighbors over the years, the current government has been trying to dismantle their accommodation and push them into an even more precarious condition, as they often experience discrimination by mainstream society.

While there are many ways, some very creative, used by those who are physically displaced for multiple border crossings, there are three main well-known Mediterranean routes into Europe. The eastern route from Turkey was the primary focus of the 2015 influx through the Greek islands. The central route through Libya to Italy is currently the more preferred route following the EU-Turkey deal in 2016. The western route through Morocco to Spain gained momentum in recent years due to obstacles on the other routes and its vicinity to mainland Europe. In 2018, according to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, the reported cases document 150,114 persons arriving illegally to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea (with 2,262 sea deaths according to UNHCR),

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<sup>62</sup> Visited in November 2018 as part of this research. The complex was evacuated in the summer of 2019 by a government decision.

while 190,930 were refused entry, including through direct intervention on the Mediterranean Sea. Over 360,000 persons were known to be illegal in Europe in 2018<sup>63</sup>.

It should be noted that according to official documents, the numbers of migrants entering EU countries within the last five years have decreased from previous years, as there have been significant anti-migrant / refugee official policies and public discourses in a number of European countries, including Hungary, Poland, Italy, Spain and Greece. Asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, trafficked persons, and the stateless are all embarking on dangerous routes, whether or not their rationale is justified by the institutional framework, and continue their journeys with great uncertainty, trying to carve out a space for themselves in Europe. In spite of the various measures taken by the EU and state governments, a clear long-term vision and plan with basic human rights and dignity as a priority is yet to be put forward, and a repeat of this influx could be experienced at any time.

The 2015 influx to Europe highlighted once again the dilemma of mixed migration; the distinct categorization of forcibly displaced persons has led to significant challenges. This influx included a mix of refugees, migrants, and trafficked people, all using similar routes and means, mostly facilitated by smugglers. Only a small percentage of the displaced go through legal and proper channels; many find their own ways to continue their journeys.

The majority of international entities follow the definitions of forced displacement made in the relevant international conventions. However, recent discussions on migration and development, as well as refugee self-reliance, call for more attention to be paid to the role of local communities. The European Union, in line with the definitions of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and asylum seekers, recognizes that forced displacement is no longer a temporary phenomenon as it lasts an average of twenty years for refugees and more than ten years for 90% of IDPs. The World Bank's recent understanding of displacement does not require physical removal and restrictions to local

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<sup>63</sup> Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2019*, Warsaw, Frontex, 2019, p. 9

resources, which brings the discussion closer to development-related issues and the displacement of local communities.

The 2014 figures of UNHCR indicated that only 126,800 refugees out of 14.4 million<sup>64</sup> under the UNHCR mandate were able to return to their home countries within a year, alerting to the continuous trend of people on the move. The same year data showed that estimated 6.4 million refugees were in protracted situation. As the situation worsened over the last six years, the status of forcibly displaced persons has become blurred. Roger Zetter and Katy Long in their article “Unlocking protracted displacement”<sup>65</sup>, based on a 2010 study of the Refugee Studies Centre, emphasize the urgent need for a number of changes in dealing with forced displacement, given the current failed solutions. They add that these changes would constitute “a radical liberalization of the orthodox policy paradigm and the suggested strategy would build upon what displaced populations are demonstrably already doing and would thus be based upon their own interests, capacities and aspirations”.

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<sup>64</sup> UNHCR, “World at War”, *Global Trends; Forced Displacement in 2014*, 2015, p. 2-12

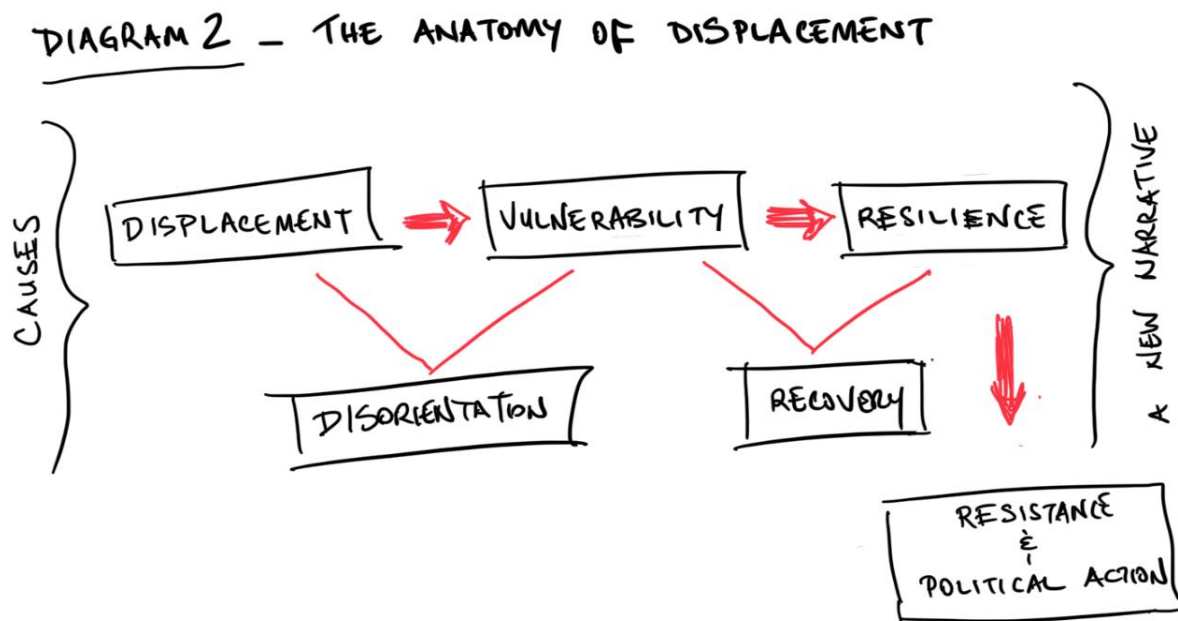
<sup>65</sup> Zetter Roger and Long Katy, “Unlocking Protracted Displacement” *Forced Migration Review*, vol. 40, 2012, p. 34-37



## SECTION 1- The Anatomy of Displacement and Vulnerability as a crucial point for change in the process of displacement

### 1.1. The anatomy of displacement

The concepts of displacement and the displaced discussed in this section, draw attention to the conceptual similarities impacting individuals at key moments during displacement, regardless of its causes. Therefore, it is essential to understand the specifics of displacement in order to carefully assess common ground to meet and develop a mutual understanding as a basis for the co-construction of new communities following displacement. By analyzing the anatomy of displacement, that is, acknowledging the various phases of displacement, it is hoped that individuals and groups can relate these specific phases to their own life experiences, develop empathy and are encouraged to engage in meaningful political action in a process of social transformation.



SOURCE: HAKAN SHEARER DEMIR  
2019

## - **Disorientation**

Immediately following displacement, a phase of disorientation is experienced. Whether it is planned or is a sudden, unprepared displacement, this phase often alters the mental state of a displaced person; the new environment is unfamiliar and a way forward may not be clear. It is a temporary disconcerting phase, full of ambiguity. In the case of chosen displacement, for example; moving to another city for employment in the same country; housing, shopping, social life, hospitals, the work environment, friendships, spouse and school for the children (if with the family), transportation, etc.: all require specific attention and time before things become familiar. If this move is to another country (or sometimes a different region within the same country) language, cultural norms, food, religion, bureaucracy, etc., become a source of disorientation and stress, even in the case of displacement with all necessary paper work in place.

In the case of economic migrants (at times with irregular movements without proper documents) trying to reach a destination, even if the move is voluntary, disorientation and ambiguity about what might happen next when/if one arrives at the destination remains. The survivors of the Mediterranean crossings post-2015 (whether displacement was a choice or forced is arguable) are good examples of this phase in the hands of smugglers, security forces, authorities or even humanitarian organizations or groups.

When displacement is forced, running away from conflict, persecution, disasters, etc., disorientation begins at the time of departure, as the journey has not been planned. It is often difficult for the displaced to predict the duration, destination and possible conditions of their stay. The conflict in former Yugoslavia, most recently the 1999 Kosovo conflict, forced thousands of people from their homes with 10-15 minutes notice to leave their properties. After walking for hours and, on some occasions, days, they managed to cross the border to Albania, Montenegro or North Macedonia to seek safety. In the case of North Macedonia, the displaced people were again sent to other safe countries through humanitarian flights, at times intentionally and at others, unintentionally, splitting families.

Disorientation of an asylum seeker or a refugee is experienced more intensely as they often do not have the chance to plan. Depending on their socio-economic status, some may not even have the means to leave and become trapped in life threatening conditions. For instance, during his work with Iraqi refugees in Syria in 2007, the author of this thesis observed the drastic discrepancy between Iraqi refugees, with over one million located in the peripheries of Damascus. Among those, small groups who had connections in the diaspora were in transit to join them, using all their financial means to arrive in a safe country. The majority of the groups who did not have connections and help from the diaspora sought safety in the peripheries of Damascus, mostly living on the resources they had brought with them, gradually facing deteriorating socio-economic conditions as their funds disappeared. The disturbing part of this situation is the stories of families that exhausted their resources, comparing themselves to those who could not leave as they lacked the means to travel and live elsewhere, and were willing to do anything to survive. Such desperation, marginalization and insult to human dignity further created the conditions for radicalization whether in refugee camps, urban settings or camp-like situations. In all these examples, disorientation brings a reflexive reaction of the individual and the community, trying to understand what has happened and initializing the next phase, vulnerability.

#### - **Vulnerability**

Disorientation, often the weakest point in a displacement process, is an entry point to being 'labeled', as the relationship to possessions (e.g. territory) and belongings becomes a predominant distinction. The mainstream understanding of the displaced as people coming from somewhere else (physically, intellectually, socio-political and economic status, etc.) brings a number of layers into the relationship with the new place and the people, regardless of how welcoming they are. Either as an individual or a group, labels (such as migrant, immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker) alongside their unfamiliarity with the surroundings, position the newcomer in the category of the vulnerable. The displaced, at least initially, feel marginalized and confused, lacking clarity when



confronted with new complex social and political norms. Gussai Sheikheldin in his chapter in the book *Why Don't the Poor Rise Up? Organizing the 21st century resistance* underlines that “sentimental notions such as patriotism, religious group loyalty, ethnic cohesion etc., play a part - unintentionally or intentionally - in making it more difficult for the marginalized to see where the lines are drawn. Privileged and marginalized groups in the same society share many of these kinships, relations of production, traditions and ethos. Therefore, it's not easy to dissect where the privileged are the adversary and where they are simply on the same team”.<sup>66</sup> In times of displacement, such distinctions are difficult to make and people tend to regroup around the lines as indicated by Sheikheldin, possibly reproducing hierarchical power relationships within the same group. While this come across as an act of support among the group members, it may also perpetuate oppressive traditional roles and practices, including gender roles, class and race relations.

Displacement creates vulnerabilities for many who experience it, particularly for those who are newcomers. Vulnerability is also prone to displacement. Being labeled as vulnerable is a critical point in the process, setting the scene for the following phases. This is when power and privilege are more visible and indicative. The way a person arrived to their new place, whether they already own assets, had access to work, education, health services, shelter, the perception of the local community about the geographic, ethnic, racial and gender of the newcomer, as well as class background, determine the parameters of the systemic categorization of vulnerability. As most forced displacement occurs due to previous vulnerability, displacement also exacerbates vulnerability, having multiple impact for those who have already been subject to precarious conditions. While power and privilege may vary for the displaced by choice, their experience of vulnerability could be masked by class privileges or group affiliations that encouraged them to make the decision to move in the first place. In the case of forced displacement, the vulnerability is more pronounced. Most forcibly displaced people lack

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<sup>66</sup> Sheikheldin, Gussai H., “Critical Section as an Act of Culture” in Truscello Michael and Nangwaya Ajamu (ed.) *Why Don't the Poor Rise Up? Organizing the 21st century resistance*, Chico, CA, AK Press, 2017, p. 234

socio-economic means, power and privilege so they might be subject to manipulations due to their prolonged vulnerability.

Vulnerability in many cases, particularly for those who are privileged and have power, gains visibility in the face of emergency. Belonging to a privileged group may engender a feeling of, 'it cannot happen to us'. Meanwhile, a large percentage of the world population lives with a prolonged sense of vulnerability, living under precarious conditions, in particular women, children, people of color, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender intersex persons (LGBTi), immigrants; refugees and the money poor. If people come from an already vulnerable place in their lives, their experience of displacement might add to their vulnerability, exposing them to situations that extend the period of disorientation and prolong their state of vulnerability. While privileges may help to cover such vulnerability as a group, they may feel it more intensely at an individual level, which effects the power relationship with their surroundings and the authority, and therefore, the level of their marginalization.

Vulnerability is a part of a social and political construct in the displacement process. It may be present as a prior condition and lead to displacement. Indeed, most forced displacement is triggered by vulnerable conditions that force people to leave their places of origin, particularly disaster-driven displacement. For example, drought in the Sahel, in combination with socio-economic and political factors, disrupts livelihoods and increased the risk of conflict between groups, including pastoralists and farmers<sup>67</sup>.

While the dictionary definition of vulnerability is “able to be easily physically, emotionally, or mentally hurt, influenced, or attacked”<sup>68</sup>, in the case of displacement, vulnerability also refers to lacking protection, security and being easily exposed to internal and external pressures<sup>69</sup>. Sources refer to vulnerability as “the perception of a precarious existence

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<sup>67</sup> United Nations Environment Program, *Annual Report 2011, 2012*, p. 42-43

<sup>68</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, “Vulnerable”, 2018

<sup>69</sup> Mari, S., Volpato, C., Papastamou, S., Chrysochoou, X., Prodromitis, G., & Pavlopoulos, V., “How Political Orientation and Vulnerability Shape Representations of the Economic Crisis in Greece and Italy”. *International Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 30(1), 2017, p. 52–67

which may undermine people's possibility to make plans and to envision the future". Such conditions are often observed among the new immigrant, refugee, asylum seekers as well as the money poor in many countries. Robert Castel<sup>70</sup> in his book *L'insécurité sociale: Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé* argues that social vulnerability, based on material precariousness, makes some people more suspicious and less tolerant, thus weakening social ties, which would otherwise ensure the continuity and stability of daily life. Simin Fadaee and Seth Schindler, in their article on Globalizations<sup>71</sup> refer to vulnerability as "an inability to adapt to shocks and stresses, [which] inhibits social reproduction and prohibits social mobility, analyzing the recent resistance movements". They further argue that current political system safeguards elites at the expense of increasing the vulnerability of everyone else.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies defines vulnerability as "the diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard, adding that it can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenseless in the face of risk, shock or stress"<sup>72</sup>. Working with major hazards, which is increasingly the biggest reason for forced displacement, Ben Wisner et al define vulnerability as "the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard"<sup>73</sup>.

While vulnerability is a fundamental human condition, it is often associated with poverty. In its dynamic and relative conceptualization, it is neither experienced nor recognized in the same way among individuals and groups. Neuwirth in *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, A New Urban World* states that definitions of poverty and vulnerability serve hegemonic imperatives as "using an economic metric in describing poverty reduces the

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<sup>70</sup> Castel Robert, Extract from "*L'insécurité sociale: Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé*" by le Centre de Ressources Politique de la Ville en Essonne, 2003, p. 3-7

<sup>71</sup> Fadaee Simin and Schindler Seth, "The Occupy Movement and the Politics of Vulnerability", *Globalizations*, vol 11, n. 6, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, "What is vulnerability?"

<sup>73</sup> Wisner Ben, Blaikie Piers, Cannon Terry, Davis, Ian, *At Risk, Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters*, London and New York, 2004, p.11

people and communities to a certain category, below and above poverty line in comparison to rich world"<sup>74</sup>. Recalling the statistics of global inequality, with 50% of the world's population earning less than the richest 1% over the last 25 years, the former carry the additional burden of being money poor, reducing poverty to income undermines the vast diversity of culture, heritage, knowledge and intellect humanity possesses across the globe, and skillfully hides the structural violence of capitalism.

This is again where power and privilege come into the picture, as one's political orientation plays a determining role in the case of vulnerability. One of the critical arguments of this thesis is to highlight this crucial point of decision-making in displacement, whether vulnerability is accepted and internalized or refused and resisted.

#### - **Recovery**

Concerning the *anatomy of displacement*, recovery follows the phase of vulnerability. Commonly defined<sup>75</sup> as "a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength" and "the action or process of regaining possession or control of something stolen or lost", this is the phase when the individual or the group comes to term with the new situation and self-orientates towards the future.

Gradually settling into the new place, one finds alliances and affiliations (even if they might be temporary and undesired) with a community. It could take place in the form of getting used to the new neighborhood and city in a chosen displacement location, or possibly understanding the dynamics of a refugee camp following forced displacement. In either case, one develops new norms, becomes familiar with surroundings and orientates toward a relatively more stable position, however long it may last. The example of refugees from Kosovo in the Kirklareli refugee camp<sup>76</sup> in 1999 showed the power and

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<sup>74</sup> Neuwirth Robert, quoted in Truscello Michael and Nangwaya Ajamu (ed.) *Why Don't the Poor Rise Up? Organizing the 21st century resistance*, Chico, CA, AK Press, 2017 p. 11-12

<sup>75</sup> Oxford Living Dictionaries, "Recovery", 2018

<sup>76</sup> The author worked at the Kirklareli refugee camp in Turkey as UNHCR staff.

positive influence of artists in mobilizing the camp population and providing psychosocial support as they came to terms with the new situation in the camp, and entered into the recovery phase.

During displacement, phasing out from the vulnerable stage, recovery can be viewed as the completion of a change in position. The experience of displacement allows the displaced to reconsider the set norms, prepare for necessary/desired changes and take action in order to make these changes. This is the time when relationships are redefined and potentially a new position is taken according to the lessons learned from the displacement experience. In some cases, the recovery period may require assistance to promote self-reliance and can be prolonged, leading to specific socio-political effects which will be further explored in this section. Leaving the state of vulnerability behind, recovery is perceived as an empowering act, one that creates a sense of collective wellbeing; it is a transformational process rather than a set of individualistic solutions.

## - Resilience

Once that a sense of balance has been achieved and people leave the period of ambiguity (of vulnerability and recovery) behind, efforts are made to regain a sense of security and control under the new conditions. At this stage, one tries to minimize ambiguities, solidify the new position and become resilient to minimize risks. In terms of resilience, it is essential to note that there is a significant difference between those recovering and becoming resilient following displacement, and people/communities that permanently live under destitute conditions with minimal likelihood of evading the situation. The organic linkage between power, privilege and authority becomes apparent in the discourse on resilience, emphasizing the essence of coping with the variety of social, political, economic, cultural and environmental challenges people face. Sarah Bracke, in her chapter in “Vulnerability in Resistance”<sup>77</sup> calls attention to “the systemic perception of

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<sup>77</sup> Bracke Sarah, “Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience” in Butler Judith, Gambetti Zeynep and Sabsay Leticia (ed.) in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 60

subaltern resilience and price paid by the global South, having survived colonization, exploitation, wars and being subjected to austerity programs”. She warns against labelling as resilience the ability to survive conditions of destitution, which can often lead to further challenges including forced displacement. Resilience is a term which should be treated with caution.

Today, with current social, economic, environmental and political problems, the concept of resilience has been analyzed by diverse disciplines that have an organic linkage to displaced people and the processes of social transformation.

Bracke<sup>78</sup> looks at the concept of resilience from a gender perspective, emphasizing how resilience’s “core concept of elasticity, in association with notions such as flexibility or pliability, is commonly connoted as feminine”. She further quotes Mary Evans indicating that this “particular casting of femininity has played a significant role in a neoliberal political economy, with neo-liberalism co-opting cultural notions of femininity as well as the language of feminism”. Indeed, current institutional responses, both state-driven and those led by international organizations, exhibit an implicit paternalistic approach in the way they interact with people. In spite of concerted efforts of inclusivity and participative planning with the displaced, the last word always remains with the entities that follow institutional frameworks. In their relative power position, these entities are quick to walk away from the problem, hiding behind regulations and financial difficulties while asking those who are subject to their work to be resilient.

Fran H Norris *et. al.* defines resilience<sup>79</sup> as “a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory and adaptation after a disturbance”. In most of the disciplines mentioned, the capacity to respond, maintain the norm or return to the norm comes forward as a main issue. While these definitions offer specific observations on their respective disciplines, the challenge would be to define the norm in a constantly changing

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p.65-66

<sup>79</sup> Norris Fran H., Stevens Susan P., Pfeffer Baum Betty, Wyche Karen F., Pfefferbaum Rose L., "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness" *Am J Community Psychol*, v. 41, 2008, p. 130

environment, particularly how communities are affected by an increasing flow of people. Norris et al's point of adaptation becomes crucial at this stage, particularly focusing on community resilience, which emerges from four primary sets of adaptive capacities as he describes them; Economic Development, Social Capital, Information and Communication, Community Competence. It is essential that there are considerable time and resources dedicated to build on these capacities for self-reliance at the earliest possible stage of displacement. It is this autonomy that allows people to have relative control over their lives and maintain their dignity. Georg Frerks, Jeroen Warner and Bart Weijs refer to resilience as "the shared social capacity to anticipate, resist, absorb, and recover from an adverse or disturbing event or process through adaptive and innovative processes of change, entrepreneurship, learning and increased competence"<sup>80</sup>. The point of shared capacity is important to underline as it represents a collective approach to resilience as opposed to an individual one, which presents possibilities for constructive political action.

In the case of state-building, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) document "From Fragility to Resilience" defines it as "the ability to cope with changes in capacity, effectiveness or legitimacy"<sup>81</sup>. Here resilience becomes a symptom of the loss of the capacity to imagine alternatives.

Mark Neocleous, in his article, "Resisting Resilience", makes the critique of such definitions and concludes that "resilience is a fundamental mechanism for policing the imagination, and nothing less than the attempted colonization of the political imagination by the state"<sup>82</sup>.

In displacement, resilience is often affiliated with the ability to cope with the change in position and build capacity to adapt to new norms in any given context. With this phase

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<sup>80</sup> Frerks Georg, Jeroen Warner, Weijs Bart, "The politics of vulnerability and resilience", *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 2011, vol. 14 n. 2

<sup>81</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations; From Fragility to Resilience" *Journal on Development*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2008, p. 12

<sup>82</sup> Neocleous Mark, "Resisting Resilience", *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 178, 2013, p. 3-4

in the *anatomy of displacement*, conclusions can be drawn that one goes through similar phases in displacement, either by choice or force. Resilience could be an act of empowerment with a transformative path following displacement. In this scenario, collective action is crucial for raising awareness, finding common ground in solidarity where mobilizing vulnerability turns into a meaningful political action. In some cases, resilience could also be a rationale and a policy matter for the authorities to keep certain groups in specific place in the system. As nation-states exercise their power, they often claim that it is for the good of the people, at times generating fear and ensuring minimal critical questioning of their actions. Any assumed threat to their authority, even if it exhibits solid resilience of the displaced people becomes the center of a power battle and is disregarded by the same authorities that ask society to be resilient in front of social and economic challenges. This was seen in Calais, France where a sense of solidarity was developed among peoples coming from different parts of the world. This civil society action, which became a political project of solidarity, is further discussed in Part 1, Chapter 2.

### - **Reactions to Vulnerability**

The phase of vulnerability is a very crucial moment in the displacement process, where a shift of position begins. Becoming vulnerable and realizing the new situation, various reactions take place, depending on a number of conditions. Contrasting reactions exhibit the possibilities observed and the path this thesis follows in its analysis as indicated through a series of diagrams used in the following pages.

The analysis of the reactions to vulnerability made in this section was developed by the author based on the empirical data and observations made through the course of over twenty years of field work as well as discussions and literature review conducted within the context of this research. While the following diagrams illustrate a generalized look into the reactions, specific cases in this research exemplify the paths followed by the interviewees as well as case study visits.



Displacement initially generates competing reactions; in some cases this may mean withdrawal and becoming more inverted (nativist), while in others it may lead to a more transformative approach, opening the subject up to new possibilities and prompting them to actively trying to make changes in their lives. This is the time when affiliations and alliances begin to shape for people in in their new location. It is a period when one genuinely seeks help, questioning what has happened, how it happened and deciding on quick solutions to exit this phase. Daniel Sarewitz, Roger Pielke and Mojdeh Keykhah argue that at the heart of the problem of vulnerability lies the tension between individual action and collective consequence. Through displacement, “by moving, one is adding to one’s vulnerability. Given the increased opportunity for economic gain it would be irrational not to move. But the collective impact of millions of such moves is the substantial augmentation of collective vulnerability”<sup>83</sup>. While this quote refers to economic migration cases, any given move has to provide some gains; economic, safety, better living conditions, etc. Even if a decision to move is made individually and one may choose to distance himself/herself from affiliations to the place of origin, these personal decisions of large numbers have collective consequences, resulting in categorization of an entire group in a given society as refugees, immigrants as well as belonging to specific minority communities.

DIAGRAM 3a -



<sup>83</sup> Sarewitz Daniel, Pielke Roger, Jr and Keykhah Mojdeh, “Vulnerability and Risk: Some thoughts from a Political and Policy Perspective Society for Risk Analysis”, *Risk Analysis*, Vol 23, No 4, 2003, p. 805-810

**Withdrawal** is a rather typical reaction to vulnerability, as individuals feel intimidated by the new environment, rules, languages (if it is cross border displacement), loss of autonomy and self-reliance. Considering that high numbers of refugees are women and children, withdrawal becomes a survival technique as they find themselves in vulnerable situations. *Nafisa Radi*<sup>84</sup> who currently lives in Thessaloniki with three children, waiting for family reunification, indicates that she left Iraq with her husband and children through Turkey with the plan to arrive to Germany within a week's time. As a common practice *Ms Radi's* husband followed the route to Greece guided by smugglers and continued to Germany. *Ms Radi*, having been reassured by her husband, followed the same route with their children, arriving at the island of Lesbos. After spending a few months in Lesbos, she and her children were transferred to the mainland where she tried to continue her trip, but got stuck at the camps in Idomeni where the borders were closed. Following a few months of camp life in Idomeni, they were sent to another camp in Thessaloniki. By the time the author met her and her children in March 2019, *Ms Radi* and her children had been in Greece for three years, waiting for family reunification in order to rejoin the father in Germany. As the family was identified as a vulnerable case, separate accommodation was provided under the accommodation scheme through local organizations, funded by the EU/UNHCR and Greek authorities. *Ms Radi*, having experienced difficulties with her children and attempting to continue her route many times, showed a concrete example of withdrawal, primarily self-imposed but also as a result of the reaction she received as a covered refugee woman from Iraq. At the time of the meeting, she seemed very reserved, and did not see the necessity to learn the local language or engage in any long-term commitments.

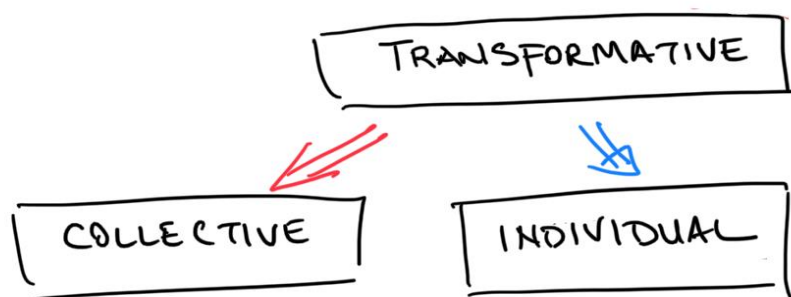
The staff of the organization that provided housing and social services underlined that it took them over two years to work with the family, to begin to open and interact now and encourage them to participate in some activities. This change might be a shift in her self-perception or loss of hope that she will leave soon, but *Ms Radi* emphasized that she will

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<sup>84</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. *Ms Radi* is a newcomer from Iraq (female, mid 30s), single woman with children who has been in Greece since 2016, and waiting for family reunification.

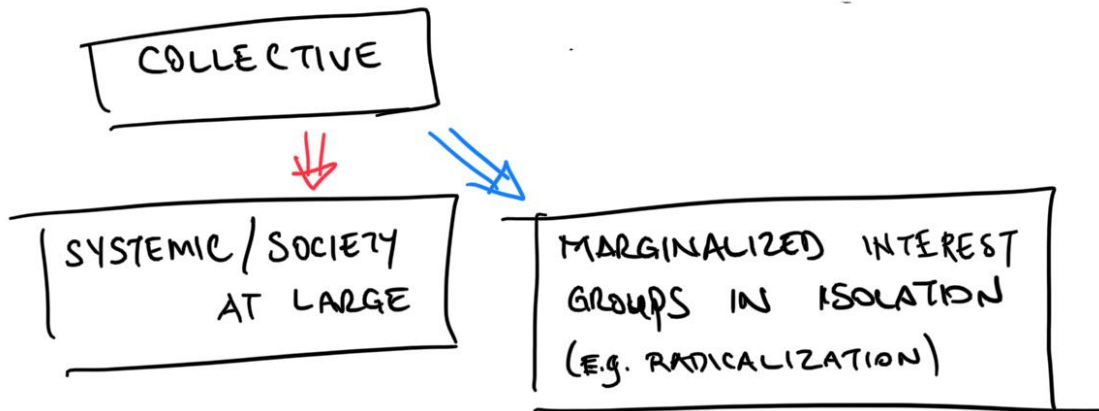
always be a refugee wherever her destination is in Europe. Withdrawal, in the case of *Ms Radi* and for many in similar situations, could result in assimilation with minimum engagement with society or when possible, finding comfort in regrouping and reproducing the relations and traditions of the place of origin.

DIAGRAM 3b -



A **transformative** reaction to vulnerability is closely linked with the questioning of norms, traditional practices and realization of diverse ways of existence. Such a reaction may lead to an **individual** path adopted by a person who has chosen to separate themselves from the group and seek solutions, thus distancing themselves from the group identity. An image negotiation plays an interesting role in this case as competing ideas of self-perception of the person, perception of the group they belong to and the treatment of the affiliated groups by the society at large which may create a dilemma between assimilation and integration. Rejecting unwanted or oppressive traditional practices may motivate displaced persons to stay away from making certain affiliations in those instances when regrouping after displacement potentially reproduces pre-existing hierarchical relations in the new place. The transformative approach discussed in this thesis focuses on a **collective** aspect; people seek alliances in order to feel more secure in a collective group setting, seen as better than individual escapes and solutions. In this case, alliances go beyond religious, linguistic, ethnic and national affinity but present a genuine interest in social transformation.

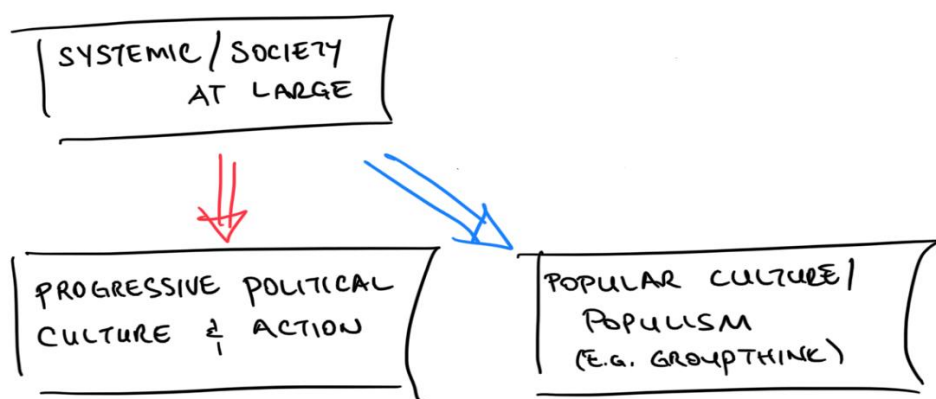
## DIAGRAM 3.C -



A transformative reaction for progressive change finds its ground in a collective form where **society at large** is engaged in a dialogical process, recognizing all its inhabitants and creates a platform to express their viewpoints without fear of intimidation or automatic exclusion. The possibility of freedom of expression and association with the consideration of multiple narratives and willingness to negotiate lays the path for a progressive political culture. **Collective** reactions do not always have positive outcomes. Nativist groups may find comfort and see the benefits of gathering to create communities that are self-absorbed. Reacting to the perceived threat of the dominant culture, such groups may be socially excluded and pushed into ghetto-like situations, or may choose to self-exclude to protect their language, religion, culture and traditions. Those who held the power and privilege in the place of origin or those who benefit the vacuum of power, seek opportunities in vulnerability and attempt to reproduce similar power relations in their own communities and may enjoy a state of isolation from mainstream society in order to maintain their power and privileges. This approach, coupled with the exclusive elements of mainstream society, could lead to further **marginalization and isolation** as well as lack of political engagement and representation. In recent years, such settings were found to be fertile grounds for radicalization. For instance, the refugee camps or camp-like settings such as the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon, a coastal city south of Beirut,

the Rukban camp in Jordan, the city of Gaziantep in Turkey as well as camps in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen<sup>85</sup> are rife with radical groups using cash, shelter and food for recruitment. In Europe, jihadi groups work in marginalized neighborhoods (UK, Netherlands, France) with lower economic means, indoctrinating children through an extremism-based education curriculum. The younger generations are seen as an easier target to indoctrinate with extreme values and create 'cells' for possible future actions<sup>86</sup>. Distanced from engaging in a constructive dialogue with diverse groups, radicalization is distinguished in two ways by scholars; cognitive and violent. Lorenzo Vidino defines radicalization as "the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence as a method to effect societal change"<sup>87</sup>. Cognitive radicalization, in this equation, looks to individuals that "adopt ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refute the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seek to replace it with a new structure based on a belief system that is completely different". Violent radicalization takes the additional step of "employing violence to further the views derived from cognitive radicalism".

### DIAGRAM 3 d -



<sup>85</sup> Comerford Milo, "Between Refuge and Radicalisation", *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, 7 September 2017

<sup>86</sup> Townsend Mark, "How Islamic State is training child killers in doctrine of hate", *The Guardian*, 5 March 2015

<sup>87</sup> Vidino Lorenzo, "Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland", *Center for Security Studies*, 2013, p. 4-12

In the absence of political consciousness and critical questioning, collective reactions might be subject to groupthink and populist rhetoric. In many cosmopolitan urban settings, it is common for minority communities<sup>88</sup> to organize distinct economic activities, interacting with mainstream society through the commodification of their cultural and social life as long as it is convenient for the dominant political culture. As Samim Akgönül puts forward, minorities “exist against the ‘will of the nation’ and their very existence is tolerated but not accepted by the majority”<sup>89</sup>. The reaction against immigrants from China and the Indian subcontinent is rather interesting in Italy (e.g. Venice) where they are legally business owners or workers in some cases second generation, but the relationships with mainstream culture are often limited to maintaining their economic and social interests. In Thessaloniki and Athens, specific neighborhoods are dominated by businesses that belong to groups from China and the Indian subcontinent, however, not much attention is paid to them when discussions on integration take place. While established communities of Asian immigrants are outwardly considered to belong to the same group as newcomers and might be considered vulnerable, the efforts for integration seems to be a selective process for specific groups. Although the established minorities might have made effort to ‘integrate’ as legal shop owners or business people, with children attending public schools, even this integration can be manipulated by **populist agendas**, leading the majority community to embrace identity politics and blame minorities as a whole for the difficulties they face as a group. The manipulation of public acceptance of minorities has a direct impact on the later acceptance of newcomers, which may be blocked in reaction to perceived integration of previous groups. This has historically been manipulated by right-wing politicians and there has been a resurgence in this strategy in recent years.

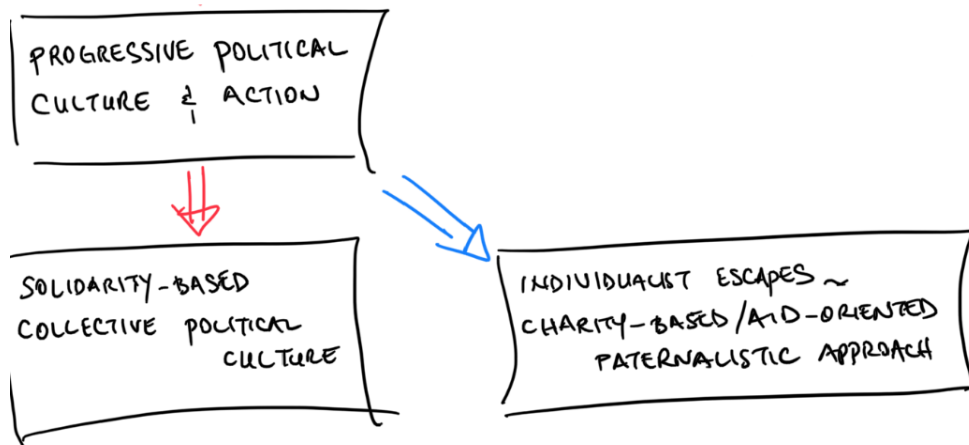
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<sup>88</sup> Minority community: A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the majority of the population. Minority communities often show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language. Although there is no concrete and unique definition of the term "minority" in international law, international instruments still refer to this term. In the context of this thesis, the concepts of minority and minority communities are conceptualized with regard to power and domination.

<sup>89</sup> Akgönül Samim, “Towards minority policies beyond reciprocity? The EU, Greece and Turkey” in Anastasakis Othon, Nicolaidis Kalypso Aude, Oktem Kerem (ed), *In the long shadow of Europe: Greeks and Turks in the era of Post-nationalism*, Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2009, p. 191-217

A collective reaction to engaging in the society at large allows people to create platforms where they can meet and work together for joint actions, addressing their common concerns. This much needed desire also emerges out of curiosity and political will to seek alternatives. This thesis focuses on **progressive political culture and action** in collective reaction and argues that by applying critical questions and analyzing fundamental concepts, the synergies can be channeled into a process of social transformation. Such a process requires that engaging in constructive dialogue to create a new society on equal terms, moving away from possessive and territorial arguments. In doing so, a clear distinction should be made between charity-based neoliberal progressive elements in the society and solidarity-based actions, leaving behind patriarchal and hierarchical tendencies that are so often embodied by the very existence of nation-states.

DIAGRAM 3 e -



**Charity/aid-based progressive actions** across the globe have contributed to making efforts to ameliorate humanitarian causes; their influence has mobilized substantial resources under the auspices of nation-states and international organizations. In the majority of cases, these organizations have managed to maintain a delicate balance between state actors and the corporate world despite facing many restrictions. They may

also have unintentionally perpetuated a system that has not been able to address the major challenges faced globally, including: environmental degradation, climate change, poverty, and violent conflicts. This non-profit industrial complex<sup>90</sup> has attracted many intellectuals and leaders of the progressive movements in communities across the world, in this case specifically in the Mediterranean region during the recent influx of refugees and migrants. Trained in the framework of the present international humanitarian system, with all of their good intentions and principles of universal human rights, rule of law and democracy, the members of the non-profit industrial complex have not been able to escape the hierarchical and paternalistic nation-state approach and their inevitable top-down reaction to vulnerability.

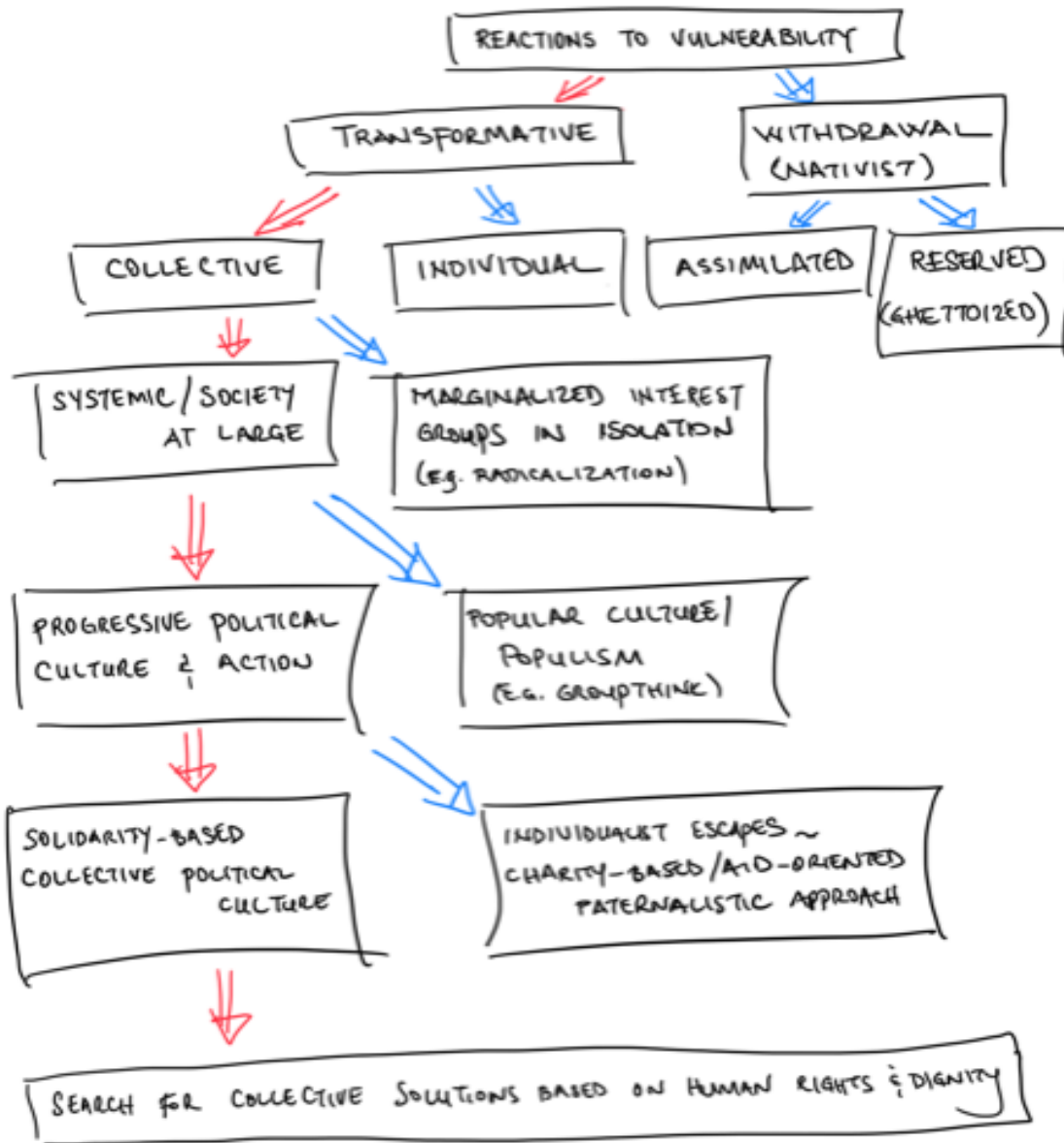
A **solidarity-based approach**, on the other hand, seeks to work outside of this hierarchical and patriarchal framing of society's organization, aiming to deal with such challenges by putting human rights, equality and direct democracy at the center of its existence. This approach, which is further explored throughout this thesis, considers the displaced as equal partners and treats displacement as a natural process in human lives, working toward the creation of a community of equals.

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<sup>90</sup> The Non-profit industrial complex is a set of interdependent relationships that link political and financial technologies of State- and 'owning class'- control, with surveillance over public political ideology, including especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements. Considering what is referred to as the NGO-ization of resistance, the non-profit industrial complex emphasizes depoliticizing resistance and threatening to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job.



DIAGRAM 3 - REACTIONS TO VULNERABILITY & THE PATH OF THE RESEARCH



SOURCE: HAKAN SHEARER DEMIR  
2019

## **1.2. Vulnerability: a crucial point for change in the process of displacement**

Vulnerability, fear and insecurity have become new norms, often linked to displacement and its aftermath. Despite decades of struggle, class, religion and race relations have had a significant and implicit impact on the way displacement is perceived, interpreted and treated. While increased nationalist and religious narratives overshadow discussions about displaced and displacement-affected communities, it is particularly the poor who are the subject of these narratives and face the burden; those with economic means are more accepted and empowered to cope with societal challenges, including discrimination, integration and social exclusion.

The concepts of vulnerability and resilience have cultural, economic and socio-political dimensions, all of which are influenced by the dominant political powers and are often linked to each other in times of crisis. The need to cope with undesired and stressful conditions – and efforts to leave them behind – are the main concerns for groups who become vulnerable due to displacement and those who are displaced due to their vulnerability. Both aspects of vulnerability have significant implications on the politics of population movements and conditions that produce and reproduce vulnerabilities, which needs to be questioned critically.

On one hand, it is essential to revisit intentional and unintentional policies that systematically generate and maintain vulnerabilities seen as a necessity for neoliberal economic structures. A careful analysis in the context of displacement is needed (in each specific case) as regards the definition of vulnerable people, how they are categorized by the nation-state and where their vulnerabilities lead them. Further attention should also be paid to the glorification of resilient individuals and communities as a heroic action in order to digress from main concerns of structural injustices and the incapacity or unwillingness of nation-states to offer protection for specific groups.

On the other hand, looking into the issue from a non-institutional perspective, further deliberation is needed on issues including the acceptance of the state of vulnerability, manipulation of the concept of victimization versus resisting vulnerability and the use of resilience as an act of empowerment. The term ‘mobilizing vulnerability’, introduced by Judith Butler<sup>91</sup>, fits well in this context, referring to a movement of vulnerable groups including immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, squatters, the Roma, etc. These groups are often associated with vulnerability, populate urban settings, including shantytowns, temporary shelters, low income housing options in the peripheries and in recent years, in historic centers in countries such as Italy. Consequently, as underlined in the 2011 article “The Politics of Vulnerability and Resilience”, “vulnerabilities are increasingly seen as a consequence of unresolved everyday development problems”<sup>92</sup>, subject to economic inequalities on a daily basis regardless as to whether people experience physical displacement or stay in one place.

### **1.2.1. Policies that generate vulnerability as a systemic approach and consideration of resilience as a heroic action (institutional perspective)**

- **Development induced dependency that creates vulnerability (vulnerability that leads to displacement)**

While large scale population movements have been a constant in human history, the role of colonial expansion is undeniable. Slavoj Žižek reminds us that “prior to colonization, countries mostly consisted of self-sufficient and relatively isolated local communities. It was colonial occupation that threw off the rails this traditional way of life and which led to large scale migrations”.<sup>93</sup> During the post-colonial era, a fundamental aspect of international development policies was human capital. It is this aspect that influenced the existing labor relations, traditional practices, and sustainable economies, aligning them with the new world order following WWII. Development has been portrayed as the ultimate

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<sup>91</sup> Butler Judith, Gambetti Zeynep and Sabsay Leticia (ed.), *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 8

<sup>92</sup> Frerks, Warner and Weijs, *art.cit.* p. 111

<sup>93</sup> Zizek Slavoj, *Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbors*, NY, London, Melville House Publishing, 2016, p. 51

path to progress with a gradual introduction of international financial institutions including the World Bank (1944), the International Monetary Fund (1945), the World Trade Organization (1995 following Uruguay round negotiations) that have been dominant in the world financial system through structural adjustment policies. Whether such development brought progress in regards to distribution of wealth and poverty eradication has been contested. Nanda Shrestha<sup>94</sup> refers to development-related human capital, highlighting that “a certain educated class was created that understands the language of progress, who aligned themselves with the ruling elite and the norms of the world order of neo-liberal policies.” This nation-state dominated the neo-liberal development process, heavily encouraged privatization, loss of public space and thought processes, glorifying and valuing the success of individuals, to exemplify how this world order was good for all. Werner Ulrich<sup>95</sup> skillfully laid out the objective of a neo-liberal world order, desiring “each class and group to know their place in the system but uphold the illusion of individual achievements, climbing the ladder without providing or gradually taking away equal opportunities while hyping the myth of materialism as human salvation, a source of happiness, emancipation and redemption from hunger and poverty”.

Such a concept of development, also seen as an extension of neo-colonialism, created a dependency mind-set, leading to the acceptance of impositions of the international financial institutions through nation-state policies and creation of vulnerabilities. Gradually removing communities from their land (e.g. indigenous communities) and livelihoods in order to extract resources, limiting community access to local resources and distancing them from traditional practices, systematically led to gradual disempowerment and dissolution of communities. Loss of livelihoods through these imported development processes facilitated by the educated class, as argued by Shrestha, has fueled struggles for power in favor of the ruling elite, generated conflicts and forced people to move. Franz Fanon wrote extensively on the internationalization of coloniality, the feeling of “constant

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<sup>94</sup> Shrestha Nanda, “Becoming a Development Category” in Crush Jonathan (ed.) *Power of Development*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 266-277

<sup>95</sup> Werner Ulrich quoted in Shrestha Nanda, “Becoming a Development Category” in Crush Jonathan (ed.) *Power of Development*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 270

inadequacy among locals because of the way people are taught either through formal or informal education”. Ashis Nandy, in his work on Colonization of the Mind<sup>96</sup>, builds on Fanon’s analysis that “the inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter”. By recognizing the impact of colonized minds and the process of ‘delinking’ as described by Samir Amin, a process of social transformation may begin.

Continued resource extraction from the Global South during the colonial and post-colonial era systematically excluded local communities from decision-making on their land and reduced them to mere workers, if not forcibly displaced from their land. Ironically, such processes were carried out by governments advised by the educated class and consultants of financial institutions, following the rules of the structural adjustments imposed by these entities. Eqbal Ahmad,<sup>97</sup> in reference to the colonial and post-colonial era, concludes that the colonial state was not at the service to the colonized as it was about exploitation and extraction of its resources. He further adds that “the post-colonial state is the same. The propertied class of the third world is as heartless in its lack of concern for the poor, in some ways more so, as the colonial state”. Stressing the class nature of development approaches, he highlights that the educated middle class is cut off from the problems of the people, separated from the poor and aligned with the rich. While in theory, the structural adjustments are aimed at more effective and efficient governance and financial stability, they often have a drastic and detrimental impact on the distribution of wealth, increasing inequality, leading to cuts in public services and increasing vulnerability. Aid programs and charity-like initiatives are offered to keep people on the edge of poverty, asking them to be patient and resilient.

Žižek’s analysis of the result of such structural adjustments (imposed by the WB and IMF) is useful for understanding how development processes have created dependency

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<sup>96</sup> Nandy Ashis, “Colonization of the Mind” in Nandy Ashis (ed.), *The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 168-177

<sup>97</sup> Ahmad Eqbal, *Confronting Empire: interviews with David Barsamian*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 2000, p. 112

through “the integration of local agriculture into the global economy: while crops were exported, farmers were thrown off their land and pushed into slums, available as a workforce for outsource sweatshops”. As a result, these countries had to rely more and more on imported food. In this way, “they are kept in post-colonial dependence, and are more and more vulnerable to market fluctuations; the skyrocketing of grain prices in recent years has caused starvation in countries from Haiti to Ethiopia”<sup>98</sup>.

As the reasons for population movement in the Global South cannot entirely be reduced to development processes, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that such processes have greatly contributed to community vulnerability, in many cases not leaving people any choice but to seek alternative solutions elsewhere for survival.

While the Global South has been facing the extraction of resources facilitated by power structures, many countries in the Global North, particularly in southern Europe have also been subject to structural adjustments and austerity measures in recent years. Although historical developments, intensity of measures and experience have been considerably different between countries, the logic of the structural adjustments continued to operate under the same neoliberal economic impositions, pushing working people to the edge of poverty and peripheries of power. For example, 2011 austerity measures in Greece under the bail-out from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had an extensive 5-year plan to cut benefits, public spending, public sector funding, and increase privatization while raising taxes. According to a study published by the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, more than half of Greeks endured financial hardship in December 2017. In spite of the statements from the European Commission in August 2018 about Greece being released from austerity measures, “years of austerity in Greece continue to ravage a population that struggles with crippling poverty and access to basic health care and education”, according to a recent report from the Council of Europe (CoE).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Zizek, *op.cit.*, p. 51

<sup>99</sup> Mijatovic Dunja, “Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe following her visit to Greece”, June 2018

There has been an increasing trend of communities who were historically able to meet their basic needs, gradually being distanced from their lands and small-scale local production, being forced to seek opportunities in other sectors or elsewhere. Once promoted as an attractive financial offer to reduce production (as per structural adjustments), small producers began to face challenges to survive, having to leave their practices to larger corporations. Government subsidies were cut as part of austerity measures in some countries, including Italy and Greece.

In the last decades, the number of working poor has increased, unable to pay their mortgage, losing their jobs or facing salary and benefit cuts. While the EU has allowed freedom of movement among the citizens of its member states, there has been increasing reaction to those migrating from the eastern (newly joined) countries, feeding into unhealthy nationalist and populist arguments. Although the richness in diversity is glorified among the progressives, this movement within Europe has generated reactions among conservatives, particularly against those who are coming from countries with a lower GDP, but also for those groups historically facing discrimination, including the Roma, travelers, Jews, Muslims as well as migrants and refugees.

Pre-existing conservative reactions to Europe's migrants have gained a broader audience with the migrant and refugee influx of recent years, further perpetuating nationalistic agendas, and playing into the psyche of the conservative elements in their respective societies. With right-wing positions increasing in strength, its proponents have played an active role in the creation of precarious conditions, skillfully playing one vulnerable group (local communities) off another (migrants and refugees), instrumentalizing them for their populist agenda and taking attention away from the structural problems that perpetuate inequalities across the board. The countries that are the focus of this thesis show concrete examples of this situation, including: Italy (5 Stelle and Lega Lombardia using the face of Salvini); Spain (significant economic concerns, abandoned rural areas, the problem of Madrid government with Catalonia); Greece (austerity measures, economic downfall,

refugee crisis), France (*gilet jaune*, and *gilet noir* movements); and, Turkey (refugee issues, human rights concerns, democratic rights, economic struggles).

With a decrease in public funds, there has been a negative impact on infrastructure and services especially in the peripheries and rural areas, prompting a significant move toward urban settings, due to lack of opportunities, employment, natural disasters, etc., in some cases abandoning rural towns almost completely as has been seen throughout Spain and Italy. The drastic changes in the labor market, chronic economic crisis, housing speculation, the use of the commons for private interest, and implicit systemic push of the working people to the peripheries, have combined to produce perilous neighborhoods around major cities. Under such precarious conditions, with limited security of work, housing, social and health services, a new social class has been emerging, termed 'precariat' by sociologist Guy Standing.

In case of displacement caused by natural disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, people with low economic resources are more vulnerable as they lack the means to secure basic needs, living in areas that are cheaper, built with lower quality materials and often lacking basic transportation and infrastructure. In the efforts of prevention, relief and recovery, acknowledgement of all inhabitants, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, is essential regardless of their status. This includes the elderly, people with special needs, the homeless, migrants and refugees<sup>100</sup>.

- **Interventionism that creates vulnerability (displacement that leads to vulnerability)**

Nation-state interventions in the Global South have been one of the major causes of forced displacement in recent times. Following the atrocities of WWII and the Cold War years, the world has witnessed a series of conflicts through the dissolution of Yugoslavia,

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<sup>100</sup> Shearer Demir Hakan, "Report on the International Conference on Culture Against Disasters Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters", *Council of Europe*, 2018



as well as Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq in the '90s, followed by increased militarization of coalition forces and military interventions in the new millennium in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria and Libya. In addition, bilateral interventions including Yemen, Mali, Ukraine, Georgia, Myanmar, with all their respective rationales, have led to military operations, displacing large numbers of civilians from their homes. Although most of these involved humanitarian missions, they damaged the infrastructure, social and economic lives of communities, in some cases leading to failed states, whose path to recovery has not been smooth. The increase of radical groups during the resulting power vacuum has led to catastrophic humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Magreb region. As these are some examples of interventions across international borders, there are many more interventions that have also generated internally displaced persons.

Military interventions, destructive in nature, inevitably generate conditions that displace people forcibly, disrupting their communities as well as living conditions and pushing them into a state of fragility. Vulnerability becomes a constant state of being, at the edge of fragility and poverty, and distanced from control over one's own and one's community's life. In such a state of ambiguity, people lose the ability to cope with the conditions in which they find themselves and are subject – and vulnerable to – the policies that determine their future. Such a paternalistic nation-state approach and the neoliberal system it represents needs and produces vulnerability in order to control certain segments of society. Inevitably, the system perpetuates displacement to create vulnerabilities and steers groups to become resilient, rewarding such behavior. Resilience then becomes framed as a heroic action. Whether displaced by structural socio-economic policies, natural disasters or conflict situations, displaced people struggle to find a place where they can live with dignity. The ideal scenario of returning home, in many cases, increasingly becomes a distant reality. This need to feel at home and continue with one's life is intricately linked to human dignity and should be realized through enjoyment of human rights and democratic societies. This constant displacement, during which the only type of permanency is the feeling of insecurity, changes the shape of the concept of home.

Smain Laacher in his 2013 article *Refugiés sans Refuge*<sup>101</sup> describes home as “the center of the world, not in the topographical sense, but in the existential sense: a place where the family comes together, a warm place where one makes fire, a place where one finds a shelter, a place of refuge.” He emphasizes that without homes, in its existentialist sense, life becomes fragmented, and loses its meaning, making a clear distinction between accommodation and home. In the world of the forcibly displaced, where finding a home with dignity is a major challenge, the logic and fairness of offering temporary accommodations to people and asking them to be resilient in these places is questionable.

Sarah Bracke notes that there is a “fetishization of resilience by global economic institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank that closely observe this resilience of people who are skilled in bouncing back from all kinds of shocks, including structural adjustment programs and other more recently invented, austerity measures”<sup>102</sup>. These international institutions, government authorities and aid agencies continue to sideline people-centered vulnerability reduction, and often work instead on risk reduction and mitigation measures that instead focus on technicalities.

Recalling Shrestha’s comment on the educated classes who understands the language of development and follow neoliberal policies, in reference to the well-trained citizen. Neocleus concludes that “neoliberal citizenship is nothing if not a training in resilience as in new technology of the self: a training to withstand whatever crisis capital undergoes and whatever political measures the state carries out to save it”<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Laacher Smain, “Refugiés sans Refuge”, *Pouvoirs*, 2013, n. 144, p. 126-136

<sup>102</sup> Bracke, *op.cit.*, p. 60

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62

### **1.2.2. Resisting vulnerability and victimization as a political action, and resilience as a step toward resistance and empowerment (individual / community perspective)**

Looking at vulnerability and resilience from a different angle, there is a non-institutional approach to these concepts which is intricately linked to the political stand of the persons as well as the concept of the colonized mind. The notion of solidarity beyond self, the immediate family and a small group of friends has become increasingly alien in modern consumer-oriented societies. Individual escapes with the image of a better life are embedded in the psyche of many, regardless of places of origin. The remedies of the colonial and post-colonial era are manifested through colonization of the minds<sup>104</sup> and a certain perception of the world that is perpetuated by the system, which advocates for individual salvation. Such a concept, conditioned by colonial domination as explained by Fanon, determines the parameters of ideals shared by many across the globe, glorifying certain cultures and lifestyles as epitomes of the civilized world. The irony is that this dream is promoted across the board, but access to it is limited to specific groups of power and privilege.

Beyond the aspects of human rights, democracy and rule of law, the self-promotion of western cultures with promises of neo-liberal values have become norms that shape the notions of how legal, regular and orderly crossing of borders should be conceived as well as how they are measured and adjudicated. Such an argument is not about qualifying what this culture stands for, nor what economic promises it offers, rather it emphasizes that the 'marketing' of economic, social, political and cultural states of being attracts 'clients'; be they tourists, visitors, high skilled executives or experts, or people seeking a better life for themselves and their families, regardless of their skills and backgrounds. As

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<sup>104</sup> Colonized mind is the inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter. In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. As a state of mind, colonialism is an indigenous process released by external forces. The first differentia of colonialism is a state of mind in the colonizers and the colonized, a colonial consciousness which includes the sometimes-unrealizable wish to make economic and political profits from the colonies, but other elements too. It sets out to use the emotions, the fear, the anguish of populations by instilling into their minds the concept of sin and damnation.

this group constitutes only about 15% of the world population<sup>105</sup>, the remaining 85% is ambiguously tasked as the custodians of these values, living in the peripheries and maintaining it with the hope that one day they might have access to these privileges. One should not undermine the creative outlet of the products that the present system offers and what such material goods it may bring, often at the expense of the extraction of resources from the Global South, mass production with health hazards, abusive labor practices including child labor, environmental degradation and so on. Lauren Berlant notes that “individuals in our societies remain so attached to fantasies of upward mobility: job security, political and social equality and durable intimacy, despite the evidence suggesting that these fantasies are unachievable”<sup>106</sup>.

It was interesting to note among the young African men whom the author met in Turin, Italy<sup>107</sup>, despite their limited formal education, their awareness of the challenges they would face during the journey and at arrival, and regardless of the fact they lacked skills in the labor market, many were still willing to take the risk to migrate to the Global North. They explained that the economic, social and cultural climate generated among the elite in their countries of origin, as well as stories and media images from the diaspora communities motivated people to take risks with migration.

While this determination to move is linked to having very few options for survival, their choice of destination offers some elements for further discussion. Žižek questions the paradox of a utopic place, giving examples of the displaced not being satisfied in Italy, Greece or France as safe places but further risking their lives to cross to the UK or try to arrive to the Scandinavian countries. In his view, this further attempt goes beyond arriving to physical safety and following the desire to achieve a certain standard of living based on a belief of what these countries are known to offer. He refers to the phenomenon as the explosion of the absolute utopia, arguing that “there is no Norway even in Norway for refugees” and “they will need to learn to censor their dreams”; that instead of chasing

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<sup>105</sup> OXFAM International, *art.cit.*, (An Economy for the 99%....), p. 2-17

<sup>106</sup> Bracke, *op.cit.*, p. 64

<sup>107</sup> Ex-moi Olympic village was visited in October 2018

dreams they should focus on changing reality<sup>108</sup>. Furthermore, he points to an increasingly common argument held in liberal circles that refugees and migrants are a (cheap) needed work force, underlining that this often takes place at the expense of local workers. Considering the increasing support that anti-immigrant populists are gaining in many countries, it must be asked who is benefiting from these work forces, whether the locals or the new arrivals, and how their precarious conditions can create further vulnerabilities that are then played against each other.

The argument that newcomers are seeking a better life and intend to manipulate the existing welfare systems is often utilized by populists. Such views are strongly represented in the displacement scheme even if the economic base data on migrants' contributions indicate otherwise. Stories of self-victimization and self-imposed prolongation of vulnerability is not unheard of, when facing the dilemma of fabricating refugee stories<sup>109</sup> or joining the mass influx in order to reach Europe. Although these numbers are small, they are easily instrumentalized by conservative elements in society against migrants and refugees. While it is not the intention to justify such actions in this thesis, it should not be surprising to see such attempts in the displacement equation, particularly for those who rely on a development-induced dependency culture or dependency that is created in refugee camps and urban settings due to restrictions of the host country, including the right to work, education in native language, etc.

Numerous elements may lead to radicalization; not least the isolation and alienation from people sharing similar concerns and struggles, the lack of political action and self-imposed exclusion. The result is that people enter into an antagonistic relationship with other groups and individuals who may otherwise act in solidarity for alternatives against neo-liberal structures. Accordingly, resilience is instrumentalized where the power structures feed into the emotional aspects of colonized minds and ask them to be resilient until an unknown deadline in the future. Indeed, such cases are often used by the

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<sup>108</sup> Žižek, *op.cit.*, p. 59-60

<sup>109</sup> As per author's work experience with UNHCR in Turkey 1998-1999.

conservative elements as an excuse or blame 'lazy, unskilled' foreigners coming to benefit from their tax contributions and welfare state structure without making any distinction between economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, etc.

Prolonged displacement, even if it is welcomed at the beginning, may gradually lead to a negative reaction among locals, whose reactions may be discriminatory or involve hate speech. This is observed more often at places where there are large number of refugees and migrants, and among local communities with low economic means who find themselves competing for scarce resources. The significant change in response between 2015 and 2020 in the island of Lesbos is a good example to note where deteriorating economic conditions and continuous migrant/refugee influx created conflict between newcomers, long-term residents and security forces. Similarly, refugees in Turkey who were initially welcome, in recent years became the target of hate speech as their displacement was prolonged. While progressive elements make an effort to bring the concerns for the vulnerable into the agenda of government program, and fight for equal opportunity and rights or address their needs, conservatives also make a similar argument of being vulnerable; claiming that communities, culture, heritage, and jobs are at risk. In this regard, there is a shared sense of vulnerability and the discussion is stretched for the political benefit.

The mainstream argument of the developing world constantly longing for the west and western values is a rather Eurocentric view of the world. It is worth noting that 86 % of the displaced remain in the Global South, though it should be acknowledged that there is an unavoidable attraction towards lifestyles in Europe and North America, both in the Global North and South. The partial success of cultural dominance of the western nation-states, with all their progressive elements, tends to create a monocultural lifestyle and economic structure under neoliberal policies. At this point, as expressed by Erin Araujo, "more than people's vulnerability, the focus also could be the vulnerability of our worlds, our diversity at risk, which are under constant assault by local and international organizations that work

to incorporate each one of us into capitalism and the obedience to the state and corporate rule”<sup>110</sup>.

While the existence of nation-states constitutes the present world system and order, the conceptualization of vulnerability and resilience goes beyond nation-states and encompasses a specific political understanding and action beyond borders, based on human dignity and human rights for all in solidarity. Therefore, a shift in the way society is organized with more progressive transformative elements beyond dominant neoliberal perspectives would value and mobilize the agency of people, turning their vulnerability and resilience into resistance and political action. Human dignity and a desire for autonomy are empowering notions beyond any institutional framework or regulations. Vulnerability and resilience need to be treated as temporary normal human conditions and a phase of reflection in order to move forward, resisting oppressive practices and seeking alternatives for a progressive change.

As this transformative process cannot happen alone and requires resourceful organized community action, a careful critique of social and political relations of oppression considering power, privilege and authority should be made. Such a critique would help to clarify the necessities and rationale beyond socio-economic resilience and the relationship between privileged groups and peripheries of power, opening the door for alternatives. As Bracke skillfully states; “the concept of resilience has a tendency to dispose individuals and communities from future visions beyond the future imagined as disaster and overcoming disaster. Neoliberalism as a hegemonic worldview is generally known to colonize imaginaries of alternatives and other worlds possible, and subsequently to deprive practices of resistance of oxygen they require”<sup>111</sup>. Therefore, while there are profound systemic and historical causes of vulnerability and marginalization, self-imposed vulnerability with individualist approaches also exist and

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<sup>110</sup> Araujo Erin, “Resource-full Organized Communities Undermine Systems of Domination; How the Poor Rise-up in San Cristóbal de las Casas” in Truscello Michael and Nangwaya Ajamu (ed.) *Why Don't the Poor Rise Up? Organizing the 21st century resistance*, Chico, CA, AK Press, 2017, p. 211

<sup>111</sup> Bracke, *op.cit.*, p. 70

feed into each other. Paulo Freire explains<sup>112</sup> that critical consciousness is about becoming aware of the structural sources of oppression in society. With this consciousness, intellectual along with socio-economic and physical displacement could be vehicle for progressive social transformation and working toward alternatives.

Considering displacement as a potential for progressive social change, it is essential to be aware of structural approaches to vulnerability and resilience that benefit the privileged groups and instrumentalize vulnerability, directly or indirectly serving the conservative political narratives. Creating conditions for self-reliance and management as well as breaking away from dependency are essential political actions. In today's humanitarian and development field, as resilient individuals and communities are shown as good examples and project subjects, resisting resilience becomes an empowering political act, with the goal of abandoning oppressive traditional practices. This can be instigated through solidarity among the displaced peoples with necessary political action. Ultimately, the process of displacement could become a trigger and struggle for a progressive transformation process with the potential of collective alternatives. Ahmad talks about discovering humankind in struggle, emphasizing that "only through the process of resistance [does] one go beyond a specific topic (such as race) in their comprehension of social realities and political struggles. Collectives of oppressed people discover themselves, their strengths and their humanity through struggle. If you do not resist, you don't struggle, and you don't discover it"<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> Freire Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London; Bloomsbury Academic, 2000

<sup>113</sup> Ahmad., *op.cit.*, p. 23





## SECTION 2: Perspectives and Treatment of Forced Displacement

Responses to forced displacement present significantly different views, gaps and contradictions at international, national and local levels, often using the same terminology but utilizing different rationale for their respective actions. These different views are also reflected in the way entities address the various stages of displacement, often fragmented with notable coordination challenges, from first response to solutions that are sustainable.

Often considered a temporary phenomenon, the responses to forced displacement have been based on rather short and mid-term planning, with a well-accepted understanding that repatriation is the ideal solution. However, permanency in displacement has been widely acknowledged, as solutions that are durable do not seem to be applicable at a required level. Recent years have shown that displacement does not follow a linear logic, as it has multidimensional causes, which may change over the course of displacement, leading to further displacements within displacement. The interviews carried out in Greece and Italy within the context of this research indicate that in spite of the striking and dangerous journeys of many who have arrived in Europe in the last five years, most of the displaced will likely continue their movement to new destinations in Europe, taking more risks, even if they spent many years in their current places building relationships.

*Mamadou Koffi* (a long-term resident in Palermo), pointed out that the approach to migration has changed for Africans over recent decades, as the younger generations are no longer planning to return. He added that “in the past, Africans would go to Europe for education or to make some money and go back home in order to improve themselves and their living conditions. Nowadays, their purpose seems to be going somewhere, following a dream that does not exist for them as Africans”. *Amadou Gassama*<sup>114</sup> explains that they grew up with messages that life in Europe offers many things not available to them at home. Now they are in Italy, they continue to receive similar messages that

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<sup>114</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Gassama is a newcomer from Gambia (Male early 20s), a resident of Palermo for the last three years and affiliated with Arci Porco Rosso.

Northern European countries offer more. Currently trying to obtain his high school degree, *Mr. Gassama* explains that among his peers that there is constant motivation to go somewhere else, which he realizes is an illusion at this point. This example supports the argument made earlier by Žizek as “the explosion of the absolute utopia.”<sup>115</sup>

This section has attempted to consolidate various responses to displacement in clusters as per their rationale to offer a wider global overview beyond an institutional framework. It is argued that most known responses to forced displacement today can be grouped together based on the following rationales; Nonacceptance/Rejection, Charity-based, Business, Labor Force, Humanitarian Professionals / Experts, and Solidarity<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> Žizek, *op.cit.*, p. 59-60

<sup>116</sup> Please see table 1 for further explanation. These clusters were formed based on observations, the field visits and experiences of the author, and are not necessarily exclusive of exceptional cases or initiatives that were not considered in the scope of this research as they may fit in more than one rationale.

Rationale of the responses	Description	Longevity
Non-acceptance / rejection	Often uses the argument of the culture, heritage, identity and way of life being under attack as long-term residents reject the arrival of newcomers, particularly when the numbers are large. This nativist approach holds a protectionist stand and is fueled by populist rhetoric based on a culture of fear (e.g. in Greece people chose not to send their children to school with refugees, vendors in the Thessaloniki market refuse service).	<i>Temporary and fluctuates with popular politics</i>
Charity-based	Presents a fundamental and instinctive reaction to help and address the problem in one's own capacity and means, which is not limited to but often has religious roots and connotations, whether it is explicitly elucidated or not (e.g. donations, refugees welcome, religious communities, volunteers, etc).	<i>Temporary and relationship based</i>
Business	Considers migrants and refugees as clients and adapts quickly to address needs, at times taking advantage of vulnerability. Every opportunity to make money is easily turned into a small business initiative that generates a short-term income with calculated consequences. Such approaches range from providing materials, food, temporary accommodation, transportation (for example, the establishment of small ateliers and production of life jackets in western Turkey for immigrants who cross the Aegean Sea). Quick money is generated, to access unregistered cheap day workers and more organized smuggling circles (e.g. Libya to Italy). Inevitably, along with local business transactions, crossing borders, human trafficking and other businesses relevant to these human rights violations are also included in this approach. Some examples also include local businesses in Greece and Italy; overpriced rentals for humanitarian workers, smuggling in the Mediterranean, government programs-SPRAR or accommodation scheme in Thessaloniki.	<i>Temporary</i>
Labor force	Sees the newcomers as a potential labor force to keep their economy maintained and offers basic needs to keep migrants and refugees in the socio-economic sphere. This neo-liberal approach to newcomers opens doors and is perceived as positive as long as newcomers integrate / are included in the mainstream dominant culture (e.g. abandoned villages, need for agricultural workers, or urban domestic workers etc., in Italy, Greece, Spain, France and Turkey).	<i>Mid and Long-term</i>
Humanitarian professional / expert	Has gained momentum particularly after WWII with the creation of the UN and other international bodies. Gradually expanded its sphere to local and international non-governmental organizations, establishing a global nonprofit industrial complex. These humanitarian, human-rights focused, development-oriented entities work within an institutional framework that is carried out with strong donor-recipient relationships.	<i>Short – mid term</i>
Solidarity based	Seeks alternatives with a focus on social transformation. This rationale is often adopted by local initiatives coordinated by activists, together with the people concerned. It generally has leftist roots and sees engagement as part of a political stand. Working at the peripheries of the non-profit industrial complex, they seek alternatives with newcomers, considering forcibly displaced people beyond the mainstream perceptions of weak, victimized or illegal individuals. Although a long-term vision for an alternative world constitutes the basis of such rationale, they are rather undermined and sidelined as they create discomfort for the mainstream dominant culture (Kilkis, Palermo, Thessaloniki, Athens, Rome).	<i>Short-mid-term with a long-term vision.</i>

**Table 1** – Responses to forced displacement (clustered).

**Source:** Hakan Shearer Demir, 2019.

## 2.1. Institutional approach

Regardless of the variety of responses prevalent today, all the financial and institutional power, as regards including status determination, protection and advocacy, remain with the States and international organizations. The institutional stand of the nation-states and intergovernmental bodies relies heavily on institutional frameworks with agreed upon international conventions and laws, based on the principles of human rights. These international instruments pay particular attention to the sovereignty of nation-states, respecting agreed upon borders and regularities in border crossings as well as national laws, ideally aligned with the international conventions.

The concept of what is considered legal sets the legislative framework of how migrants and refugees are viewed and treated in any given country. Roberto Gonzales and Steven Raphael<sup>117</sup> in their joint work; “Illegality: A Contemporary Portrait of Immigration”, summarize the studies on illegality over the last few decades, including various perspectives; from “crossing invisible political borders and surviving in the shadows” to “arrival to a new place outside of formal or authorized channels” as well as “considering undocumented people as illegal”. More recently, a more holistic approach focuses on “examining the mechanisms that produce and sustain illegality”, particularly youth and children, aging out and losing their protection status. This approach considers the issues around legality of displaced (migrants, asylum seekers and refugees) as more of a societal issue and highlights the importance of the condition of illegality shaping the daily lives of communities.

According to the interviews conducted in Palermo, many youth and children who are under protection according to international agreements (the UN Convention on the Right of the Child) and Italian laws, systematically lose their protection as they reach age 18, while still waiting for very lengthy asylum procedures in Italy. *Diego Pandiscia*<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Gonzales Roberto G. and Raphael Steven, “Illegality: A Contemporary Portrait of Immigration”, *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, vol.3, n.4, 2017, p. 1-17

<sup>118</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Pandiscia works with an INGO (Male, early 30s), specialized in working with newcomers, particularly unaccompanied minors.

explained that minors, upon their arrival, are automatically accepted in the reception centers (CPAs - *Centri di Prima Accoglienza*, a temporary place with about 50 children). Then they are sent to a smaller second center (more settled with approximately 15 children) while they are waiting for a response from their asylum request. However, during the waiting period, it is quite common that these children become adults and find themselves in the streets, and often disoriented.

From an institutional point of view, the displaced people are identified by specific categories and are subject to set policies and governance. Particularly within the last 100 years, the rise of the nation-states and the machinery of these entities have adopted policies around border controls and regulations at border crossings, through surveillance of goods, people and services entering and exiting countries. Prior to this period, when borders were less secure or not clearly mapped out, such categories of migrants and refugees meant less, and the concepts of regularity and legality did not have as much weight as they do today. In an era when security has become a fundamental concern for nation-states and substantial funds are spent on border security in the name of the wellbeing of their citizens, it is ironic to note that significant number of these citizens find the situation within European countries increasingly precarious, and seek alternative solutions in other countries. For example, in 2006 there were 3.1 million Italian citizens (excluding Italians born abroad) registered in the Registry of Italians Residing Abroad (*Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero - AIRE*). In the following decade, this number increased by 60 per cent, with almost five million Italians registering themselves<sup>119</sup>. Yet, Italy is one of the Mediterranean countries receiving the greatest number of migrants and asylum seekers, leading to changing demographics in the country.

Since the establishment of international bodies following WWII, particularly UN agencies at a global level as well as regional entities such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, comprehensive protection policies and mechanisms for the most

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<sup>119</sup> Registry of Italians Residing Abroad (AIRE), quoted in "Migration and Transnationalism in Italy", *IOM Italy Briefing*, col. 3, February 2018, p. 1-8. (As of 1 January 2017, 4,973,942 or 8.2% of the total resident population that year).

vulnerable, have been widely adopted in order to facilitate population movement in a regular and orderly manner. Agreeing upon international norms recognizing the rights of the displaced people has been a challenging process, most recently leading to the Global Compact on Migrants and Refugees of December 2018.

The increasing pace of the humanitarian crisis and forced displacement has exceeded the capacity of actors who work at the international level. Consequently, the international humanitarian community has become a reactionary body, responding to emerging needs with a limited mandate and compartmentalized areas of focus such as migration, refugee, labor, gender, development issues, etc., even if these issues have to be treated as part of a common concern. As each sector has mastered their area of work, they are often time-bound, with specific objectives, and restricted human and financial resources, with little or no requirement to coordinate with other entities. Although the needs and concerns might not have been met, the limitation of each engagement forces them to proceed to the next project, leaving them unable to reflect on long-term consequences or genuine solutions. *Lucio Melandri*<sup>120</sup>, who has over 25 years experience in the humanitarian field, suggests that NGOs have been losing their purpose and the spirit of the humanitarian work as they increasingly align themselves with governments in the name of keeping good relationships and ‘staying in the game’. He stresses that “large NGOs have become reactionary entities and remained silent when the governments took actions against human rights and humanitarian principles, such as saving lives in the Mediterranean Sea”. *Mr. Melandri* further calls for new ways of thinking and advocating in dealing with humanitarian issues as large-scale response mechanisms and entities do not address the problems in an effective and efficient manner. Therefore, he advocates for the localization of humanitarian work.

The current institutionalized humanitarian approach to displacement has not engaged with concepts of sustainable livelihoods, fundamentally treating displacement issues as

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<sup>120</sup> The interview was carried out in Athens, April 2019 as well as follow up on line discussions. Mr. Melandri is the head of UNICEF, Athens, (Male, mid-50s) who has been working with humanitarian operations for over 25 years.

a short-term phenomenon, purposely not creating attractive conditions (to avoid adding to the pull factor). Considering resettlement, one of three durable solutions for refugees considered in the Geneva Convention, it should be noted that only one in hundred refugees in need is resettled<sup>121</sup>.

Considering the situation of protracted displacement across the board, there seems to be a thin line between refugee and migration processes when one focuses on the issue of durable solutions to displacement. Obtaining refugee status, as much as it is necessary and important, often prevents refugees from finding sustainable solutions, prolonging their vulnerability as their status is linked to their supposed temporary displacement. The initial sectoral divisions and labels as well as certain ground rules set by the existing humanitarian system perpetuates a dependency culture, unintentionally reducing the refugees to passive recipients of aid (due to labor laws, integration policies, estimate duration of the displacement, etc., of their new countries).

On the other hand, as the average duration in displacement is approximately twenty years with no concrete solutions in sight<sup>122</sup>, 7.2 million refugees remain in protracted exile, trying to regain control over their lives in dignified manner.

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez<sup>123</sup> indicates that the discourses on refugees in the Global North are often shaped by either a humanitarian perspective or a regulatory approach. In her view, the humanitarian perspective emphasizes traditional (religious) values, with wealthy nations providing support for the displaced people. She further argues that the regulatory approach primarily focuses on securing the wealth of the local population; a protectionist position that is shared by all political parties in countries with a

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<sup>121</sup> Out of 17.2 million displaced under the UNHCR mandate only 189,300 persons were resettled according to UNHCR Global Trends in Forced Displacement in 2016.

<sup>122</sup> Long Katy, "When refugees stop being migrants: movement, labour and humanitarian protection", *Migration Studies*, vol.1 n. 1, 2013, p. 4-26

<sup>123</sup> Gutiérrez Rodríguez Encarnación, "The Coloniality of Migration and the "Refugee Crisis": On the Asylum-Migration Nexus, the Transatlantic White European Settler Colonialism-Migration and Racial Capitalism", *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, vol.34, n.1, 2018, p. 16-28



strong welfare regime. As per Rodriguez's analysis, those who are forcibly displaced are subject to these two approaches, not leaving much room for self-reliance.

Whilst the governance of displacement is shaped by the institutional approach, the nature of human and environmental rights should not be held hostage to these large scale national institutional frameworks. Today such large entities often get stuck in time and politics, not responding to real needs on the ground in a timely manner given their limited capacity, their specific mandates hampered by the increasing and changing nature of the problems involved. While the guiding role of international instruments may be inspiring, the centralized systems of nation-states, as well as their political interests, have shown major contradictions between central and local authorities and communities. The arrest of the mayor of Riace, Italy, in 2018, who had exhibited a constructive local response to displacement and integration, and the criminalization of the rescue workers in the Mediterranean by the same government<sup>124</sup> are concrete examples of such contradictions, bringing to light a certain irony; governments undermining the practice of fundamental human rights and dignity, while also promoting it.

Lucy Hovil argues that progressive refugee policies are mainly a rhetorical exercise, failing to offer meaningful alternatives. She further adds that genuine ideas and efforts are constrained by bureaucratic procedures at high levels of government, with little qualitative change on the ground. Concerned about political implications, government officials are reluctant to take crucial steps towards durable solutions for local integration and access to citizenship<sup>125</sup>.

There is a clear distinction between refugees and migrants and their diverse protection needs according to the UNHCR. The categorization of forcibly displaced as per the 1951 convention may help to manage the situation, however, this framework does not always recognize fully the conditions that force people to move, as they may fall out of the scope

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<sup>124</sup> June 2019, Italy has passed a law to fine any boat rescuing refugees from sea up to €50,000, with a risk of risk having their boats seized.

<sup>125</sup> Hovil Lucy, "We Need a More Honest Discussion of Uganda's 'Model' Refugee Policies", *Refugees Deeply*, 22 October 2018

of the institutional mandate (e.g. environmental refugees). The institutional approaches often focus on the primary motivation of displacement and make decisions on this basis, while the causes and impact change over time. In addition, considerable delay in response time in meeting needs leaves the people concerned in contained situations that are precarious and protracted. Conditions that force people to move, if defined and justified by governments only, often have political nature for the purpose of population control and balanced demographics in the interest of nation states. On the other hand, people who are under precarious conditions for an extended period of time, whether they are considered refugees, economic migrants or long-term residents share the same concerns of daily survival. Behzad Yaghmaian, commented on the artificiality of the distinctions between the displaced people. Yaghmaian points out that when locals, including children, are facing similar financial difficulties and working conditions without a contract and being paid below minimum wage, there will be little sympathy for refugees and they are more likely to be regarded as a drain on badly needed resources<sup>126</sup>. This is particularly true in countries such as Greece where public services are cut due to austerity measures.

The approach of intergovernmental organizations creates several challenges to much needed continuity and coordination among stakeholders. They are often reactionary, with a strict focus on their specialized mandates, and suffering from relatively limited financial resources and high staff turnover. Lack of confidence in the skills and knowledge of both local organizations and the displaced establishes unequal power dynamics. Over the decades, unintentional disempowerment of the displaced in camp or camp-like situations, coupled with the lack of legal documentation for work, has led to the creation of passive settlements where people are dependent on aid. Significant resources have been wasted due to a lack of coordination, where overlap or repetitive work became an unchecked norm. A project-based approach to humanitarian and human rights work, often with a corporate organizational management style, continues to reproduce ineffective hierarchies, and is reflected onto the work in the field.

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<sup>126</sup> Yaghmaian Behzad, "Protecting Refugees in Nations Struggling with Poverty and Instability", *Refugees Deeply*, 4 August 2017

*Misel Gannoum*<sup>127</sup>, an INGO worker in Greece, expressed his frustration as his and his colleagues' ideas were not being taken into consideration by the hierarchy, even with their on the ground expertise on a daily basis. He added that projects are short due to limited available funding, and staff are made to jump from one project to another, putting all their previous good work and efforts aside. He believes that without continuity or the possibility to see the progress in their work, the humanitarian workers lose motivation and funds are mismanaged, a situation that is far from meeting the real needs of the people of concern.

The highly hierarchical structure of international organizations coupled with the bureaucratic working conditions presents a number of challenges, alienating staff in the lower ranks in an undemocratic manner. Following instructions instead of being active participants in the problem solving and decision-making processes disregards their work, pushing them into isolated tasks, which, when analyzed, goes against the nature of the work in the field of human rights. When alienation and disempowerment of staff is part of the organizational culture, a working atmosphere develops where staff are quick to blame others for their failures; be it the political situation, their superiors, host governments, or even the people of concern. Ironically, despite the precarity of their positions, many staff members of the international and government entities have a conflicted relationship with hierarchy, as most have not been exposed to more democratic structures. Ultimately, organic intellectuals that exist in each organizational setting are disempowered not having needed impact on organizational culture.

There is an emerging trend to challenge hierarchical organizational culture and focus on alternative methods in human rights and humanitarian work. However, discussions are still limited to academic circles or those professionals no longer employed by international organizations. Thus, the hierarchical institutional approach continues to dominate, heavily influenced by bureaucracy and nation-state interests. Makau Mutua, highlights that “human rights must break from the historical continuum of Eurocentrism expressed in the narrative of human rights that maintains the hierarchical relationships between European

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<sup>127</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019

and non-European populations”<sup>128</sup>. Nathaniel Berman’s analysis is aligned with this argument.

“The contradictions between commitments to sovereign equality, stunning political and economic imbalances, and paternalistic humanitarianism cannot be definitively resolved logically, doctrinally, or institutionally; rather, they must be confronted in ongoing struggle in all legal, political, economic, and cultural arenas. Projections of a unitary international community, even in the guise of the inclusive U.N., or a unified civilizational consensus, even in the guise of human rights discourse, may be provisionally useful and important but cannot indefinitely defer the need to confront these contradictions”<sup>129</sup>.

### **2.1.1. Intergovernmental response**

The intergovernmental approach to displacement has been the determining element in displacement for decades, setting the framework for member states to adjust their laws. The 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol have constituted the basis for refugee work across the world. At the EU level, adoption of the Amsterdam treaty in 1997 marked a major step towards the establishment of a common European asylum system, gradually improving through the late 90s and arriving to the Dublin agreement, which has created some controversies in recent years. Ensuring balanced demographics while keeping the equilibrium between the national interests and a needed labor force in ageing Europe has been a challenge for governments. While the absence of a comprehensive European Convention on forced displacement remains a task ahead, the increased migration influx since 2015 has brought to the table, the necessity of a renewed role and mandate for the intergovernmental organizations, as the issues have been feeding into populist tendencies and increasing xenophobia.

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<sup>128</sup> Mutua Makau, *Human Rights – A political and cultural critique*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p. 11-69

<sup>129</sup> Berman Nathaniel, quoted in Mutua Makau, *Human Rights – A political and cultural critique*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p. 7

The specialized UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations have cemented their roles over the last eight decades as the main actors addressing the needs of displaced people across the world. They work, often with limited funds, and at times, in spite of the lack of political will of the governments, to implement much needed protection measures. The recent influx from the war in Syria, coupled with other conflict situations in Africa, the Middle East as well as Afghanistan, led a significant number of displaced heading towards Europe. Even if they simultaneously are the signatories of international protection mechanisms, Europe has been increasingly confronted with resistance and obstacles of single governments.

Raising right-wing populist tendencies in Europe have had a significant influence on the movement of displaced people, putting the refugee and migration issue at the center of their political battles and presenting the recent migration flow as the biggest refugee crisis since WWII. The sea crossings have dominated media attention with the Balkan route raising major contradictions between international agreements including EU asylum policies, and reactions of governments blocking border crosses including Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Austria, and Northern Macedonia. Germany and Sweden have received large numbers of the displaced arriving in Europe, however, such decisions created turmoil in the domestic politics of these countries. For the northern Mediterranean region, five countries<sup>130</sup> particularly have faced a heavy burden, trying to balance between the requirements of the international, regional (EU) and national asylum processes, and the daily challenges at the local level.

#### - **Commonly referred instruments**

Intergovernmental organizations focused on the management of migration base their work on specific legally binding instruments when addressing forced displacement around the globe. These fundamental documents include: the Charter of the United Nations; the International Human Rights Law (IHRL); the International Humanitarian Law (IHL); the

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<sup>130</sup> Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey.

UN Geneva Convention of 1951; and, the Optional Protocol of 1967. During the ensuing decades numerous amendments have been made and key documents developed, including the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as well as several conventions and protocols relevant to the people of concern. These international human rights and humanitarian laws together with the 1951 convention have been at the core of many valuable efforts in subsequent years.

The Charter of the United Nations<sup>131</sup> was signed in 1945 with the purpose of maintaining worldwide peace and security, developing relations among nations, and fostering international cooperation in order to solve economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian international problems. Having the statute of the International Court of Justice as an integral part of the Charter, it constitutes the basis for all UN human rights texts.

The International Human Rights Law<sup>132</sup>, representing the core values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lays down obligations which states are bound to respect. Further, states must undertake necessary domestic measures and legislation compatible with their treaty obligations and duties. In the case of failure of domestic legal procedures in addressing human rights abuses, regional mechanisms (such as the European Court of Human Rights) or international mechanisms (such as the International Court of Justice) are available to ensure that the standards of international human rights are respected, implemented, and enforced at the local level. The International Humanitarian Law (IHL), as the legal framework applicable to situations of armed conflict and occupation, is considered public international law; its principles and norms regulate relationships between states. It covers a broad range of actors and recognizes obligations for both states and non-state armed groups that are parties to an armed conflict<sup>133</sup>. The IHL has two fundamental principles;

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<sup>131</sup> United Nations, "the Charter of the United Nations", *UN Charter website*, San Francisco, 1945

<sup>132</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "International Human Rights Law", *UN Human Rights Office website*, 1948

<sup>133</sup> International Justice Resource Center, "International Humanitarian Law overview", *IJRC website*.

1. Persons who are not, or are no longer, participating in hostilities must be protected;  
and
2. The right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods and means of warfare is not unlimited.

A major part of international humanitarian law is contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (the protection of wounded and sick soldiers on land during war; wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during war; prisoners of war; civilians, including in occupied territory<sup>134</sup>) and supplemented by two further Additional Protocols of 1977 relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts. Other agreements prohibit the use of certain weapons and military tactics and protect certain categories of people and goods. These agreements include:

- The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, plus its two protocols (1954);
- The Biological Weapons Convention (1972);
- The Conventional Weapons Convention and its five protocols (1980);
- The Chemical Weapons Convention (1993);
- The Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines (1997);
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000).

The UN Geneva Convention of 1951 and the protocol of 1967 created the mandate for a specialized UN agency, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to work with the forcibly displaced people including the stateless, asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), deportees, and returnees. The fundamental work of UNHCR has been serving refugee populations across the world, providing protection to millions of people of concern to the organization. In order to expand the scope of the 1951 convention, the 1969 the Organization of African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on

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<sup>134</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols" overview, 2010

Refugees, the 2009 Kampala Convention<sup>135</sup>, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (article 78), the Charter on the Fundamental Rights of the European Union (article 18), and the Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees (1966 and final adoption in 2001) were gradually introduced.

As such instruments guide humanitarian work today, there are also increasingly pronounced concerns about the international institutional approach and its diminished capacity to address issues around forced displacement. Substantial efforts have been made in recent years at an international institutional level for the governance of population movement. Dating back to 1985, the Regional Consultative Process model was established, engaging countries in regular but informal dialogue on migration. During the 1990s, the introduction of the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families was followed by a number of conferences such as the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, and working groups, including the Working Group on Migration established by the Human Rights Commission. As of 2000, UNHCR Global Consultations on International Protection and Global Consultation Process as well as International Organization for Migration's (IOM) international dialogue on migration policy in 2001 furthered efforts on the issues regarding displacement. A 2002 report by the Secretary General of the UN, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for future change", highlighted the need to take a more comprehensive look at the various dimensions of the migration issue.

The appointment of special advisors on migration from this point forward led to the establishment of the office of the Special Representative to Secretary General of the United Nations on international migration in 2006, and the first Global Forum on Migration Development in 2007, which has continued to meet annually. Meanwhile, the Global Migration Forum has been formed, comprising 21 UN agencies with the objective of

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<sup>135</sup> African Union, "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)", 2009



setting up links to the field. This forum, however, has faced a number of challenges<sup>136</sup>. Among all the efforts made by the UN agencies based on the conventions, an important initiative was launched in 2012 in order to address the protection of a significant numbers of disaster-induced displaced people who are not covered by the 1951 Geneva Convention. As 61% of the forcibly displaced today are disaster driven, such a gap in protection presents an increasing concern in years to come. The Nansen Initiative has been an important step in the development of the Platform for Disaster Displacement, with discussions beginning in 2010 aiming to develop a protection agenda for displaced people across borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change. The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>137</sup> in 2015 provided further substantial guidance concerning disaster-induced displacement which is widely referenced by governments and other international agencies.

- **A new face to old power relations**

The 2016-2018 New York Declaration and Global Compacts process addressing large movements of migrants and refugees has been the most recent focal point for intergovernmental institutions for addressing the concerns of displaced people globally. Although the UN summits focused on multi-agency discussions on the issues of displacement (either by force or choice), the outcomes of these efforts were embodied in separate documents as per the mandates of the concerned UN agencies, underlining strong interagency cooperation. These comprehensive documents; the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and Global Compact on Refugees, present frameworks for entities working with migrant and refugees today, with the aim of addressing challenges in a more holistic manner.

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<sup>136</sup> Betts Alexander and Kainz Lena. "The history of global migration governance", *Refugee Studies Center Working Paper Series*, n. 122, 2017, p. 1-18

<sup>137</sup> The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries over with the framework between 2015 and 2030. It sets a global framework for all the organizations focus on four priorities.

As these two comprehensive documents base their work on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as numerous relevant conventions<sup>138</sup> they continue to promote a traditional approach of the United Nations in implementation.

In analyzing these two main and most recent instruments, it is crucial to note the UNHCR's long-standing but rather rigid mandate, and its position as reflected in the Global Compact for Refugees. While acknowledging the role of climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters as the drivers of displacement, these factors are still not acknowledged as the causes of refugee movements. In its guiding principles, the document<sup>139</sup> indicates that "the global compact is entirely non-political in nature; however, it plans to achieve its objectives through the mobilization of political will among states and other stakeholders", which is rather contradictory. The statement on operational partnerships between relevant actors, referring to IOM, and a participatory approach involving refugees and host communities seem to be restricted by the member state leadership in the process, reproducing traditional hierarchical relationships in implementation. "The primacy of country ownership and leadership"<sup>140</sup> of the process is upheld by UNHCR while relevant actors are invited to assist, but not play a role in decision making. Thus, the top-down approach that has dominated such institutions and their work in the field for decades prevails. This approach allows international entities to maintain their presence in failed states and vulnerable situations, and perpetuates a culture of dependency, which essentially disempowers local communities.

The acknowledgement of the role of local authorities and other local actors in both urban and rural settings is important and the planned actions have been well considered.

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<sup>138</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the other core international human rights treaties<sup>1</sup>; the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; the Slavery Convention and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; the Paris Agreement 2; the International Labour Organization conventions on promoting decent work and labour migration; as well as on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the New Urban Agenda.

<sup>139</sup> UNHCR, *The Global Compact on Refugees*, UNHCR, 2018, p. 5-6

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7

However, the international community, while expressing its support for a comprehensive and people-centered response, also implies the political nature of this work by stressing national priorities, strategies and policies. Such examples of political will of single governments sacrificing the basic principles of human rights has been witnessed in recent years.

The document reflects on the importance of linking humanitarian and development work with the consideration of the joint needs of host communities and refugees, portraying it as a lesson learned. Nevertheless, the fixed position on durable solutions evident in UNHCR's mandate inevitably places restrictions on community development, where the differentiation of host community and refugees presents problems. As concerns of maintaining a nation-state based hierarchical approach to people of concern, the Global Compact on Refugees does not address the danger of an uneven relationship between development and humanitarian actors. While local solutions are emphasized in theory, the process being followed and reviewed through the Global Refugee Forum (every four years by high-level officials) and meetings among UNHCR and relevant stakeholders (every two years with annual reporting) presents further contradictions. As extensively argued in this thesis with examples from the field visits in Greece and Italy, a top-down approach to decision-making as well as monitoring and evaluation have resulted in the exclusion and disempowerment of the displacement-affected communities, denying them agency in constructing their lives together in a democratic manner.

While a strong emphasis on border protection of nation-states sets the tone for the nuances in implementation, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration presents a more flexible look at displacement. Not being mandated by a specific convention on migration, the IOM seems to contain more liberal views on migration, and considers a wider range of migrants, including those who are affected by natural disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation. The Global Compact on migration covers several transversal topics including gender, sustainable development, and cooperation. It has a people-centered and entire society approach and gives the

impression of a more integrated conceptualization of the issues around displacement. However, it is essential to note where and to whom these conditions apply or are enforced, and how the legality has become a subjective and fluid political power battle regarding the selective aspect of crossing borders.

As 245 million people are on the move today for various reasons, with an additional 70 million forcibly displaced, such concerted efforts under the authority of nation-states and the political interests of global powers puts the human rights movement in an awkward position, weakening its potency in the face of nation-state and corporate driven human rights violations. The dominant war-on-terror narrative of last two decades has sacrificed many of the principles enshrined in human rights legislation, causing a 'moral paralysis and fatigue' among human rights defenders, as described by Mutua<sup>141</sup>. An ongoing dilemma between the sovereignty of nation states with their strict border controls, and the struggle for human rights beyond the imposed conditions of legality, regularity and order of nation-states through the prism of Eurocentrism, has been seized and shaped by the hierarchical and patriarchal impositions of hegemonic powers and cultures across the globe. The representation of this underlining ideological stand through intergovernmental entities, in spite of their declaration of neutrality and non-political positions, perpetuate the positions of power, privilege and authority across the board and have tremendous influence on the population and freedom of movement; a basic human right.

The efforts to bring together multi-stakeholders and engage them in an 18-month dialogue in order to agree upon the global compact documents is a challenging task, which deserves to be praised. The scope of the working groups includes a variety of pertinent elements of displacement. However, this well-studied and positive look of the Global Compacts, with their embedded contradictions, does not shy away from the existing common philosophy, conditioned by the colonized minds and coloniality of migration<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> Mutua Makau, "The Crisis of Human Rights – Why TWAIL still matters", Symposium I "(Post-)Colonial Injustice and Legal Interventions" of the "Colonial Repercussions/Koloniales Erbe" event series at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 26 and 27 January 2018

<sup>142</sup> Coloniality of migration refers to the continuity of the logic of coloniality in current relations of power structures, control and hegemony in migratory movements. The contradictory divide among people establishes racial differences between the insider

Without stepping out of this dominant framework and reconsidering displacement and human rights issues from alternative perspectives, the concept of a transformative social change will remain mere hypocritical discourse, distanced from the people who are the subject to displacement.

The dominant presence of western philosophy in the international instruments and organizations has been critiqued by scholars and some civil society organizations from the Global South and North alike. Mutua points out that “the universalization of principles and norms of human rights are European in identity where western philosophy of human rights were imposed on the rest of the world as it dominated the UN at its inception”<sup>143</sup>. UN agencies’ soul searching and the efforts to reform them and other intergovernmental entities as well as international non-governmental organizations have made in recent years have done little to distance themselves from this rooted philosophy. Caroline Wanjiku Kihato and Loren Landau<sup>144</sup> draw attention to personal and institutional interests invested in preserving existing mechanisms. They point out that thinking of new and more pragmatic alternatives might be uncomfortable, challenging the status-quo and put the relevance and funding of the entities in question.

#### - **Main organizations that work with the displaced people globally**

This thesis is not focused on the details of the mandate and current work of the main organizations tasked with working with the displaced, as this is an issue which has been studied and analyzed at great depth by many scholars and practitioners. However, it is pertinent for the ongoing discussions on durable solutions and the concept of integration as they are crucial part of the work carried out by these entities. While the processes from first response to durable solutions require a substantial and holistic approach, the

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‘citizen’ and the outsider, ‘non-citizen’; aliens, immigrants or *extra-communitaire* (non-EU citizens). Such differentiation between these two groups determines the access to the labor market, education, political participation, the health system, media and cultural representation, a system that was established in the colonies and continues to be implemented today. The center and its dominant norms continue with a similar process of coloniality of power through their existing policies of the nation-state, and their impositions of integrating all the peoples in this process.

<sup>143</sup> Mutua, *op.cit*, p. 18

<sup>144</sup> Wanjiku Kihato Caroline and Landau, Loren B., “Stealth Humanitarianism: Negotiating Politics, Precarity and Performance Management in Protecting the Urban Displaced”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 30, n. 3, 2016, p. 420

arguments made in this thesis primarily focus on the durable solution aspect, construction of communities after displacement. Following the emergency and post-emergency phases, it is common for organizations to prepare an exit strategy, gradually handing over the responsibilities and management of their tasks to national authorities and organizations. This is when, in theory, humanitarian missions phase out and development begins under the authority of the nation-states, a long-standing approach that has been increasingly questioned.

At the global level, having based their work on the main international instruments, UNHCR – the specialized refugee agency – and IOM – with its specific focus on migration – are the driving forces in the Global Compacts of 2018, tasked with coordinating cooperation and partnership with all relevant UN agencies and other stakeholders. A number of UN agencies' work also intersects with migration and refugee issues, including but not limited to the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UN Habitat and the International Labor Organization. The coordination between these agencies, together with other intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations (INGO), and regional organizations, constitute a concerted effort to address issues around displacement, each playing an essential role according to their specific mandates. For example, at the invitation of the Greek government the refugee influx in Greece has been dealt with through a joint effort of a number of international organizations, led by a close partnership between UNHCR and the EU.

In 2019, **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** began the implementation of its exit strategy, in particular in the accommodation scheme, gradually handing over major responsibilities to the Greek authorities, a process that has been

criticized by civil society organizations. *Stefanos Kamperis*<sup>145</sup> who has been working with the refugee and migrant arrivals in the Idomeni area in Greece says that a local response, led by civil society groups and communities, was in place before any government and international entities arrived. Upon their arrival, the voices of local groups were sidelined for several months until these entities realized that there were local solutions that actually produced positive results. While the funding mainly focused on the accommodation scheme, UNHCR/EU decision makers ignored the integration aspect, which is a growing concern in 2019. As CoE's remit is not humanitarian, its involvement has been more limited.

Given the increasing numbers of forcibly displaced people, in contrast with the significantly small numbers of people opting to resettle or returns as well as the funding difficulties and enforced restrictions by governments, UNHCR is in a difficult position; sandwiched between respect for territorial sovereignty and the need for international responsibility and human rights. Laura Barnett points out that "UNHCR must recognize that the Convention refugee definition no longer applies to many of today's problems. Although the organization has made numerous changes in interpretation, evolving to adapt to the international context, this definition still only applies to those who cross national borders"<sup>146</sup>. She further quotes Kushner and Knox in her article, warning that "broadening definition of refugees will not be a sufficient response as many states are quick to close their doors at the threat of massive population influx". From a community viewpoint, newcomers, regardless of their status, have similar needs, skills and concerns that need to be considered as an entire community as they need to live together. Institutional definitions lose their significance, and humanitarian responses and local development become integral elements of this equation.

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<sup>145</sup> The interview was carried out in Kilkis, March 2019. Mr. Kamperis is a long-term resident (male early 30s), activist and works with a local NGO, Omnes, has worked at the Idomeni border crossing as well as the housing program in Kilkis

<sup>146</sup> Barnett Laura, "Global governance and the evolution of the international refugee regime", *UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper*, n. 5, 2002, p. 18

Consequently, UNHCR will need to reconsider many of its policies to address the changing needs and conditions on the ground while maintaining the delicate balance of local laws, customs and the international system. The Commissioner of UNHCR, Filippo Grandi<sup>147</sup> points out that the organization has a delicate role of trying to obtain the best possible deal for the refugees while negotiating with states. Emphasizing the disproportionate burden in the Global South, Grandi argues that the Global Compact on Refugees will help to better share responsibility and establish a model for more effective refugee response. Understanding UNHCR's efforts for positive change and presenting the Global Compact as a good step forward, the skepticism among interviewed staff of international organizations on possible impact of the Global Compact somehow overshadows this positive outlook.

With the principle of humane and orderly migration benefiting migrants and society, the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** has been operating since 1951 and currently works with 173 member states. The organization is considered as the point of reference in migration, working with a variety of issues across the globe, including voluntary and forced migratory movements. As the main advocates of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, in the context of Europe, the IOM supports its members states "in developing and enhancing adequate migration management responses and support measures that promote regular migration and integration of third-country nationals, voluntary return and reintegration schemes, and activities to prevent and address irregular migration"<sup>148</sup>. Furthermore, the organization plays a pivotal role in engaging a debate on emerging issues, including climate change, environmental degradation and migration, the migration-development nexus and the key role played by diasporas in Europe.

Outside of the UN system, **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**<sup>149</sup>, composed of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and

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<sup>147</sup> Setrakian Lara, "UNHCR Chief: We Must Fix Broken System, Not Export or Deny Crisis", *Refugees Deeply*, 24 January 2018

<sup>148</sup> International Organization for Migration, <https://www.iom.int/europe-and-central-asia>

<sup>149</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "The Movement", *ICRC website*, 2019



the 190 individual National Societies, is the largest humanitarian network in the world. Established in 1863 and being the first organization in emergency zones, the ICRC has a high level of access to the most complicated areas. Its founding principles are based on humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Having based its work on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols, its Statutes, together with other prima facie organizations in conflict and disaster zones, ICRC's work in the field of displacement is essential.

Considering forced displacement as a development challenge, **the World Bank (WB)**<sup>150</sup> is another global entity that has dedicated a substantial amount of its work on displacement. The WB states its priorities as: working with countries to end poverty and boost prosperity for the poorest people; help to create sustainable economic growth; investing in people; and, building resilience to shocks and threats that can roll back decades of progress. While the criticism that the WB perpetuates inequalities and encourages debt and dependency culture across the globe remains valid, its acknowledgement of communities being displaced without being removed from their places is important to note.

**The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**<sup>151</sup> with its 40 member states, works on establishing international norms and finding evidence-based solutions to a range of social, economic and environmental challenges. Its goals of shaping policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all, are closely linked to displaced people as the organization focuses on topics including: economic aspects of migration; integration policies and indicators; migration and development; as well as migration policies.

**The Nansen Initiative**<sup>152</sup>, inspired by Norwegian polar explorer who introduced the Nansen passport to facilitate refugee influx in early 1920s, aimed to cover a major legal

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<sup>150</sup> The World Bank, "Forced Displacement: Refugees, Internally Displaced and Host Communities" *The WB website*, 2019

<sup>151</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Migration", *OSCE website*, 2019.

<sup>152</sup> The Nansen Initiative and Platform for Disaster Displacement websites.

gap with regards to people displaced by floods, windstorms, earthquakes, droughts and other disasters. With his innovative response to the refugee crisis, the Nansen Initiative had a symbolic value in addressing the protection needs of a group of people that are not covered under international law. As the challenging criteria of distinguishing displacement by force and choice in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change is still not clear, millions of people are not considered refugees under 1951 Geneva Convention, lacking their basic rights in terms of admission, stay as well as other protection needs. With the recognition of climate change-induced migration, displacement and relocation as an adaptation challenge, this initiative by Norway and Switzerland is a consultative process “to build consensus on a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change”<sup>153</sup>.

The linkage between climate change and displacement have been recognized and are gradually being addressed among the international actors. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1994), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (1994) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 are some of the main results of these efforts. In addition, **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** also target climate change and migration respectively even if they lack explicit connections and present a risk of getting caught in a world of their own making comprising bureaucracy and regulations.

These intergovernmental organizations, with their global mandates, have their regional and country offices dedicated to their operations in specific regions, working with regional and national entities. One such region has been the Mediterranean region and these organizations have worked with many of its countries in recent years.

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<sup>153</sup> The Nansen Initiative website.

## 2.1.2. Main organizations that work with the displaced people in the Mediterranean region

In the Mediterranean region, the European Union, the African Union, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Center for Migration Policy Development are key organizations that either directly work or have specialized directorates that are dedicated to displacement.

While **the European Union** with many of its agencies play a crucial role, many disagreements among the EU member states regarding migrant and refugee influx for the last five years have brought to the surface the gaps and challenges of a common policy on this delicate issue. Within the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs there are a number of agencies that deal with migration, immigration, and refugee issues<sup>154</sup>. These agencies work with their respective member states as well as neighboring countries in order to secure the asylum process in the EU. With the aim to project the EU's asylum and migration policies beyond its borders, the EU's External Dimension scheme was introduced in 2004 as a policy priority. Such externalization of borders by the EU has taken various shapes and dimensions in recent years by signing agreements with an increasing number of countries or by negotiating them in order to control migration movements. In line with the EU Global Strategy, the EU-Turkey agreement of 2016<sup>155</sup>, and the Partnership Framework on Migration<sup>156</sup> with priority countries of origin and transit, including Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, and Ethiopia were agreed. The EU made available nearly €8 billion over the period 2016-2020 to work with these countries to

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<sup>154</sup> FRONTEX, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, with the mission of ensuring safe and well-functioning external borders providing security.

CEPOL, The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training with the purpose to develop, implement and coordinate training for law enforcement officials.

EASO, European Asylum Support Office acts as a center of expertise on asylum.

EU-Lisa, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice provides a long-term solution for the operational management of large-scale IT systems, which are essential instruments in the implementation of the asylum, border management and migration policies of the EU.

<sup>155</sup> European Council of the European Union, "EU-Turkey statement", European Council Press Release, 18 March 2016

<sup>156</sup> European Union, "Partnership Framework on Migration- One Year On: Lessons Learned, Challenges and Way Forward", *EU* 2017

address the root causes of displacement and regularize migration through its various instruments.

The 2016 EU-Turkey deal has shown the significant role of Turkey in governing population movements at the regional and international level in recent years. Gerda Heck and Sabine Hess emphasize the growing concerns in the EU regarding irregular migrant crossings through Turkey since the beginning of the 2000s, and how a threat of sanctions was discussed unless Turkey took stricter measures to control irregular movements<sup>157</sup>. While this pressure was not well received, Turkey continued to take measures to control population movements, including the introduction of visa requirement for Syrians and the construction of walls at the borders with Syria and Iran<sup>158</sup>. Following the open border policy to Syrian refugees in 2011, Turkey passed the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013) in line with the EU negotiations, which led to creation of the Directorate General of Migration Management. This agency is mandated with the administration of all population movement related matters in Turkey, including refugee status determination, which had been managed by UNHCR until 2018. Heck and Hess stress<sup>159</sup> that the Turkish border regime has always been shaped by different national, regional, and international developments and aspirations. EU's externalization of migration control politics has provided the Turkish government with political leverage: the Turkish government has demonstrated that they understand how to use migration in negotiations, playing into fear and the reactionary elements of EU countries.

While the allocated funds seem rather significant, Victoria Anders' argument of viewing migration into Europe as reparations for colonization remain as a solid counterargument along with these institutional efforts. She points out that "movements south to north and east to west can be seen a rebalancing of resource extraction and prosperity-seeking

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<sup>157</sup> Heck Gerda and Hess Sabine, "Tracing the Effects of the EU-Turkey Deal" in Ataç Ilker, Heck Gerda, Hess Sabine, Kaslı Zeynep, Rattisch Philipp, Soykan Cavidan, Yılmaz Bediz (Eds.), *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, v 3, n 2, 2017, p. 39

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51

from Europeans to former colonies and otherwise invaded land<sup>160</sup>. Anders further suggests that European politicians and citizens should not believe the illusion that such movements will be short-lived or resolved with development aid programs, peace agreements. Instead, they should consider future relationships within the dialectics of historical events and their implications.

Within the EU, The Dublin Agreement (1990 and 2013) determines the responsible country for processing the asylum application of someone from a non-EU country or a stateless person. Assuming that asylum laws and practices are at the same level across the EU countries, the Dublin agreement has faced significant challenges in its implementation, as the system puts all the financial and logistical burden of receiving the displaced on the country of first entry.

During this research, interviewees in both Greece and Italy indicated that the inadequacy and, in many ways, disfunction of the Dublin agreement left many in these countries with the feeling of having been abandoned by other European governments, a key source of controversy at EU level. In addition, lengthy waiting periods, without knowing even if applications are accepted, force people live in difficult conditions, including detention centers and camps. As the EU is not a party to any international human rights treaties, its accountability is not subject to any international body able to monitor its human rights records, raising concerns about the lack of checks and balances.

**The African Union (AU)**, with its 55 member states and renewed vision of 2002, “an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena<sup>161</sup> is the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999). In recent years, the African Union has deployed significant efforts through various sub-regional organizations on the continent. However, there has been a wide gap between the plans and the actual accomplishments as the world’s

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<sup>160</sup> Anders Victoria, “Making up for the What we’ve caused: Viewing Migration into Europe as Reparations for Colonization”. *World News*, 15 May 2018

<sup>161</sup> African Union, “About the African Union” African Union website, 2020

'money poorest' continent has been facing frequent, widespread as well as most deadly conflicts<sup>162</sup> and environmental disasters, leading to significant forced displacement. Regarding its work on migration, the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) provides strategic guidelines to its member states and Regional Economic Communities "in the management of migration through the formulation and implementation of their own national and regional migration policies in accordance with their priorities and resources". Camille Le Coz and Antonio Pietropolli<sup>163</sup> indicate that the AU's Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-30) covers areas including labor migration, migrants' rights, internal migration, and migration data management. As they consider the endorsement of the Global Compact on Migration by all but two African countries (Algeria and Libya) a positive step, they point out that Migration Policy Framework illustrates a holistic approach with its approach to migration governance in an integrated manner through "comprehensive, human-rights based and gender-responsive national migration strategies and policies."

The African Union and European Union partnership focuses on cooperation and dialogue on migration and mobility and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement. The International Crisis Group (ICG) calls for revisiting and resetting the relationship between two entities, highlighting that AU-EU relations are overshadowed by Europe's colonization of Africa in spite of the EU affirming that it is an equal partnership. While there seems to be a genuine interest in equality, a paternalistic approach by the EU and its member states is manifested in various versions, to the degree that a 2017 program 'German Marshall Plan *with* Africa' did not consult African partners in developing the plan, according to interviews<sup>164</sup> carried out by ICG in 2017. The interviews also showed that "the discussions between the two bodies only focus on African countries and continental issues, never European problems such as Brexit or the treatment of African

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<sup>162</sup> Møller Bjørn, "The African Union as Security Actor: African Solutions to African Problems?", *Crisis States Research Center, Crisis States Working Papers Series No.2, Working Paper n. 57, 2009, p. 16*

<sup>163</sup> Le Coz Camille and Pietropolli Antonio, "Africa Deepens its Approach to Migration Governance, But Are Policies Translating to Action?", *Migration Policy Institute, 2 April 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/africa-deepens-approach-migration-governance>*

<sup>164</sup> International Crisis Group, "Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations", *ICG, Report, n. 255, 17 October 2017*

migrants in EU member states". Such a relationship raises the concerns whether the agenda of the AU will be different from that of the OAU as indicated by Meles Zenawi in 2002 (former prime minister of Ethiopia) that AU would not be preoccupied with freeing African territories from colonialism or focusing overwhelmingly on protecting national sovereignty, but focus on "creating one political and economic space, on integration"<sup>165</sup>.

Historical power relations between nations and regions are still prevalent in the present-day relationships between and within organizations, constantly reproducing hierarchies and patriarchal relations internally and externally.

**The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** is another actor in the field focusing on a wide range of security issues and joint actions to improve the lives of individuals and communities through forums for political dialogue. With its 57 members states, OSCE has a significant field presence working with: confidence building; conflict prevention; crisis management; and, post-conflict rehabilitation. Its work on migration in the region – the 'Mediterranean Partnership for Cooperation' – focuses particularly on Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, "exploring new avenues of co-operation and interaction and to explore the scope for wider sharing of OSCE norms, principles and commitments"<sup>166</sup>. Nihal Eminoğlu, focusing on the issue of minorities with particular focus on new minorities, notes that the OSCE, as a security-based organization, addresses the issue of minorities to the extent that the minority problem presents a threat to the security and stability of a State<sup>167</sup>. Her assessment highlights a common concern with the institutional approach where human rights and dignity could be compromised in the name of the state interest.

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<sup>165</sup> Harsch, Ernest "African Union: a dream under construction" *Africa Renewal*, April 2002

<sup>166</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, OSCE website, 2020

<sup>167</sup> Eminoğlu Nihal, "Evolution de la prise en compte et du traitement des anciennes et nouvelles minorités dans le cadre des systèmes de l'OSCE et du Conseil de l'Europe : Nouvelle minorité: nouveau concept, nouveaux enjeux de la nouvelle Europe", Université de Strasbourg, 2015, p. 217

**The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)** with the mission of ‘making migration and mobility of people orderly, safe and regular, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies,’ provides policy makers and politicians with the necessary groundwork needed to make decisions. Its substantial work on migration management links research, migration dialogues and capacity building. Bringing theory and practice together, ICMPD offers substantial resources based on field experience in order to stimulate discussions in the field.

**The Council of Europe**, with its 47 member states and its main pillars of human rights, democracy and rule of law, was the first European institution established following WWII. In essence, it serves as a pan-European platform for dialogue for governments, parliaments and local authorities as well as civil society and as such it offers a slightly different flavor to the institutional framework in the region, where a number of progressive instruments have been introduced and discussions have taken place. Regarding issues concerning displacement, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees<sup>168</sup>, with its thematic work on children, alternatives to detention, integration and global compact, has worked closely with other branches of its organization including the Parliamentary Assembly as well as other regional and global entities. The abovementioned Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE<sup>169</sup> has expressed its concerns regarding Europe’s inadequate response to unfolding developments and continuing mass arrivals of refugees and migrants, pointing out “the systemic weaknesses in the existing legal instruments and mechanisms”. These weaknesses specifically addressed the inability to control external borders, the practical inapplicability of the Dublin Regulation, dysfunctional asylum systems and divisions between countries, depending on their political stances and geographic situations”. Regarding local governance, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has been influential in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which will be further discussed in part 2 chapter 1.

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<sup>168</sup> The Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees website.

<sup>169</sup> Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, “Resolution 2147: The need to reform European migration policies”, CoE, 2017



It would be important to note that there have been increasing attempts among regional and global intergovernmental organizations to cooperate and look for opportunities to work together to address challenges related to displacement. For example, in 2018, the EU and OSCE set up a framework<sup>170</sup> between the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the OSCE's Secretariat, including 'regular consultations on all levels to maximize efficient and effective cooperation in areas of common interest in the European neighborhood, enlargement regions, Central Asia and Afghanistan'. Periodic bilateral and multilateral meetings between these entities attempt to put cooperation efforts in practice.

While global and regional international organizations have crucial roles, the countries that are member states of these organizations have the ultimate decision-making power regarding the status of migrants, refugees, internationally displaced persons, and asylum seekers in their territories. Some of these governments have managed to advance their policies and implement programs that are exemplary to the whole world. On the other hand, some, with increasing populist rhetoric, have brought extensive restrictions, for example Italy's withdrawal of humanitarian protection status and the criminalization of rescues on the Mediterranean Sea, which are of great concern among human rights advocates. The CoE Human Rights Commissioner Mijatović's statement on some member states reframing their response according to human rights standards points to how delicate the balance is between "the right to control the borders and ensure security, and the duty to effectively protect the rights enshrined in maritime, human rights and refugee laws. The recommendation"<sup>171</sup> further emphasizes states' "legal obligations "to ensure effective search and rescue operations, swift and safe disembarkation and treatment of rescued people, as well as the prevention of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment".

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<sup>170</sup> European Union External Action, "The EU enhances its operational cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)" EU press release, 22 June 2018

<sup>171</sup> Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, "Recommendation: Lives saved. Rights protected. Bridging the protection gap for refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean", *Council of Europe*, June 2019

### 2.1.3. Government responses

Nation states and their approach to displacement determines the parameters of population movement according to their laws in regularizing and legalizing people's status. In the context of the northern Mediterranean region, governments have enforced a wide range of responses.

In welcoming refugees and asylum seekers, Turkey has shown a remarkable open-door policy to Syrian refugees, currently hosting four million people. Feyzi Baban, Suzan Ilcan and Kim Rygiel refer to the EU-Turkey deal as having further solidified the paternalistic dependency approach, with refugees shifting from political subjects to objects of humanitarian assistance, stuck with a series of ambiguities under temporary protection<sup>172</sup>. Changing perceptions at a local level have led to violent attacks and hate speech campaigns in 2016 and 2017 against Syrian refugees. According to Ataç *et al.*<sup>173</sup> the reaction of local communities was prompted by government policies and overwhelming numbers of refugees, together with socio-economic challenges in the country.

Greece exhibited a great amount of resilience taking the direct and unshared burden as an EU first entry point while still working through the impact of the austerity measures. In late 2019 and early 2020, there were strong reactions from local communities who rejected the establishment of new camps and arrivals through the land border with Turkey. More recently, Spain has become the destination for higher numbers of newcomers as the central and eastern Mediterranean routes are blocked. The radical shift in Italy; its initial welcome contrasting with the strict measures and hostile approach of its recent government (since June 2018) has created substantial reaction internally and within the EU. Finally, France's conflicting policy and its harsh treatment of people, for example in Calais, have shown contradictory responses in recent times.

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<sup>172</sup> Baban Feyzi, Ilcan Suzan, Rygiel Kim, "Playing Border Politics with Urban Syrian Refugees. Legal Ambiguities, Insecurities, and Humanitarian Assistance in Turkey" in Ataç Ilker, Heck Gerda, Hess Sabine, Kaslı Zeynep, Ratfisch Philipp, Soykan Cavidan, Yılmaz Bediz (Eds.), *Movements: Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, v 3, n 2, 2017, p. 94

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

One common approach that is widely shared by all governments has been the drastic increase in border control. Through the externalization of their 'imaginary borders', they believed to create 'safe areas' for asylum seekers and control their movements outside of their territories. In addition, bi-lateral agreements, for example between Italy and Libya, and Spain and Morocco, and the attempts to create a corridor in northern Syria in the case of Turkey, all share a rationale of national security and provide arguments with an interesting human rights twist; they are 'preventing people for attempting risky travel' or encouraging return to their place of origin by declaring the countries safe or conflict free. These are examples of a new strategy used by the Global North to stop population movement through securitization, an approach that is often militaristic, and which has led to several human rights abuses. A 2018 report of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights report "Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya"<sup>174</sup> describes "patterns of serious human rights violations and abuses suffered by migrants and refugees in Libya at the hands of State officials and members of armed groups, as well as atrocities committed by smugglers and traffickers, amid the failure of the Libyan authorities to address these violations and abuses and provide redress to victims".

Further, human rights violations at border crossings through the Balkan route, in North Africa, and the Middle East are well documented by human rights defenders while many have gone unreported or unaccounted for by government agencies. A much-needed balanced voice, seen in efforts made by civil society and local initiatives, reflecting the situation on the ground, has been sidelined by nation-states. With the protracted displacement and absence of transparent and no sight of concrete solutions, anti-migrant/anti-refugee sentiments have been on the rise.

On the other hand, there are positive and encouraging government responses across the world where effective policies have played a crucial role addressing the issue of

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<sup>174</sup> United Nations Support Mission in Libya Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right, "Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya", *UN*, December 2018, p. 1-61

displacement. Many have had a positive impact on public opinion. For example, in Canada, a model based on the concept of community-based refugee sponsorship, “Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program”<sup>175</sup>, has been developed. This places newly arrived refugee families with networks of community sponsors who take the lead in integrating the arrivals into their new communities. Supported and promoted by the government, this model has also inspired similar programs in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, the UK, and elsewhere. While the sponsorship model is reported to produce better outcomes than government-sponsored routes to resettlement, refugee status determination and admission to the country remains strictly under the responsibility of the government. Responses from countries that do not neighbor conflict zones or experience high levels of migrant arrivals often operate in the context of resettlement programs, in close contact with UNHCR. Therefore, they use a thorough selection process that favors skilled persons as well as those with relatives and connections, at times limiting opportunities for vulnerable cases identified by UNHCR.

In those situations where migrants and refugees cross borders in large numbers, Uganda presents a very generous and progressive approach to hosting refugees, as refugees are allocated pieces of land to put up shelters, grow food and start their own businesses, given relative freedom of movement, equal access to primary education, healthcare and other basic social services. The rationale behind these rights and services aims for self-reliance within five-years, moving away from aid dependency. The Refugee Act of 2006 which granted essential rights, was further expanded with the 2010 Refugee Regulations, making obtaining work permits easier, as well as allocation of land. Such approaches also present an alternative to traditional refugee camps, which are increasingly problematic and feed into dependency culture. The UNHCR representative in Uganda, Joel Boutroue<sup>176</sup> pointed out that the Ugandan model is a good example of a system that leads to durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons whilst also ensuring sustainability for displacement-affected communities. Brian Boon in his 2018 article ‘Uganda: A Model

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<sup>175</sup> Gordon Grant and Gurumurthy Ravi, “Refugee resettlement: Minister Ahmed Hussen explains the Canadian model”, *International Rescue Committee*, 12 March 2019

<sup>176</sup> At the African Union meeting in Feb 2019, Addis Ababa

for Refugee Policy' indicates that in spite of its progressive policy towards refugees, Uganda's naturalization policy has its shortfalls as the Ugandan Constitution does not allow the offspring of refugees to become a Ugandan citizen even if one of the parents is Ugandan. He adds that "this policy does not provide a permanent solution for refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin, forcing these refugees to stay in Uganda inevitably."<sup>177</sup> Amnesty International (AI) calls attention to rich countries that have turned their backs on people fleeing conflict in terms of resettlement, which would put models like Uganda's in jeopardy if durable solutions are not supported by the international community. AI reports that in 2016 only 11 South Sudanese refugees were resettled from Uganda<sup>178</sup>.

In the Mediterranean region, population movement has been a recurring aspect of its history, influencing languages, architecture, food, lifestyle, politics, and numerous other group affiliations for many centuries. The countries observed during this research show a rich diversity of socio-cultural affiliations, yet they are also sandwiched between the political views and financial difficulties inherent in the Global North/Global South relationship. There is a dilemma of being part of the EU with the values of the Global North and experiencing the precarious conditions of the Global South, with their diverse demographics. Some of the places visited during this research shared this distinct reality in the daily lives of communities, as *Samia Chabani*<sup>179</sup> stated "we are from Marseille not from France, but a colony of France, the way we are perceived and treated by the authorities." Some of the inhabitants of Huelva, Spain, Sutera and Palermo in Sicily, Italy or Exarcheia in Athens, Greece give similar impressions and expressions of feeling much farther from Europe than someone from the Middle East of Northern Africa. Castles<sup>180</sup> eloquently notes that today, "the most crucial borders are no longer those between nation-states, but those between North and South: that is, between the powerful nations of North America, Western Europe, Japan and Oceania, and the poorer countries of Africa, Asia

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<sup>177</sup> Boon Brian, "Uganda: A Model for Refugee Policy", *Refugee Spotlight*, 28 June 2019

<sup>178</sup> Amnesty International, "8 things you need to know about refugees in Uganda", *Amnesty International*, 19 June 2017

<sup>179</sup> The interview was carried out in Marseille, on March 2019. Ms Chabani (female, late 40s), is an activist, NGO worker and a long-term resident who works with immigrant communities in the northern district of Marseille.

<sup>180</sup> Castles Stephen. Why migration policies fail. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 2004, vol. 27, n. 2, p. 211

and Latin America. The North-South divide is not a geographical expression, but a political and social one. It is a useful term for the growing disparities in income, social conditions, human rights and security linked to globalization”.

Consequently, the discussion about responding to displacement through the mechanism of nation-states, as the dominant actors in the equation, is less about imagining a future without nation-states, but more about understanding alternative views on the governance of displacement-affected communities beyond the nation-states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as stated by Daphne Bullesbach of European Alternatives<sup>181</sup> that “no single state alone can address the challenges of migration and refugee influx, climate change, and security concerns in today’s digital and globalized world.”

#### **2.1.4. International (INGO) and local (NGO) non-governmental organizations**

Non-governmental organizations, either operational locally or internationally, have become important actors in addressing the challenges of forced displacement. In many cases they play a major, if not a leading, role in the field with their operational capacities, access to communities, and increasingly, their advanced research and policy advice. Organizations like the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), OXFAM and Amnesty International provide extensive research and data while many others such as Save the Children, CARE, Action Against Hunger, and Doctors without Borders have a strong presence globally. In addition, there are a number of agencies which function as arms of their governments, including Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, German GIZ, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Italian Cooperation. These organizations benefit from government funds, but also closely work with other donor entities, including UNHCR and the EU. Furthermore, there are thousands of organizations of various sizes that are currently operational and take part in the non-profit industrial complex. For example, in any given period, one worldwide online humanitarian network called Reliefweb, has more than 3,000 organizations in its vacancy

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<sup>181</sup> Bullesbach Daphne, “Nation-states alone will not solve the problems of our times”, European, 25 October 2017

listings<sup>182</sup> (most based in the Global North) that are running projects across the globe. As neither the intergovernmental organizations nor governments are able to meet the diverse and complex refugee protection challenges, NGOs fill this need with ever-increasing competences in the field. Large numbers of NGOs working with displaced populations provide assistance. Some are involved in the establishment and maintenance of camps and other settlements, including urban areas as well as resettlement projects. Therefore, they are well placed to build direct relationships with people of concern, monitoring and reporting on rights violations, and rapidly adapting to changing operational needs.

Although they may be known for their humanist values and the vital role that they play, it is equally important to acknowledge the place of INGOs and NGOs in the non-profit industrial complex. They are subject to donor-recipient relations and operate under conditions that generate positions of power and privilege both between organizations, NGOs and donor entities. The power relation between the authorities, donors and governments has been explored by James Petras, who stated that “the NGOs receive funds from overseas governments who work as private sub-contractors of local governments and/or are subsidized by corporate funded, private foundations with close working relations with the state. Their programs are not accountable to local people but to overseas donors who ‘review’ and ‘oversee’ the performance of the NGOs according to their criteria and interests”<sup>183</sup>. Petras clearly lays out long-standing relationships in the international system and how it is linked to the concept of the coloniality of power.

Gramsci argued that the consent of the ruled is achieved through the state’s education of the masses. Recalling Shrestha’s reference (section 2.1) to certain educated class “aligning themselves with the ruling elite and the norms of the world order of neo-liberal policies”, the humanitarian and development field under the current power relations and mimicking “a corporate structure and hierarchy that rewards bourgeoisie credentials and

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<sup>182</sup> Reliefweb organizational lists. <https://reliefweb.int/organizations#content>

<sup>183</sup> Petras James, “NGOs: In the service of Imperialism” quoted in INCITE, Women of Color Against Violence (ed.). *The Revolution will not be funded: being the non-profit industrial complex*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 2007, p. 14

upward mobility”<sup>184</sup>, has become an ‘industrial’ norm, a comfortable place and a dominant model, mostly for the economically privileged. In spite of their genuine interest and care about the people of concern, staff of these organizations are caught between securing much needed funding to provide services, and the formal and informal hierarchies of the non-profit world that absorbs their potential, often reducing them to program-specific categories and imposed specializations.

*Mr Kamperis*, activist for an NGO, Omnes, expressed his frustration concerning the position of this genuinely engaged local group working to resolve the humanitarian crisis at Idomeni. They mobilized and worked with people in need long before the arrival of the government officials and international organizations. After the donor entities arrived, his organization received international funds (EU/UNHCR) and was able to reach out to large numbers of people in need. Since then, Omnes has noted that these additional funds have impacted their relationship with the overall solidarity movement, as the receipt of outside funds has been interpreted as being excessively interested in funds rather than being focused on solidarity efforts. Aware of the upcoming departure of donor organizations, *Mr Kamperis* and his colleagues spend a substantial amount of time working on local development issues, as well as helping with the needs of displaced people in their efforts to sustain the wider community, beyond their daily work with refugees and immigrants. However, they are quite concerned about the loss of momentum among NGOs in Greece with the absence of a long-term vision and funds in the coming period. A similar situation has also been observed in Italy where the ambiguous future of the protection and assistance scheme, subject to the whims of changing government policies, prevent the NGOs from making long-term plans. There are some exceptions, with some organic actions generating their own funds independently with a greater focus on solidarity.

The responses to forced displacement from institutions – intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental – primarily take place in the context of the same

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<sup>184</sup> Incite - Women of Color Against Violence, *op.cit.*, p. 83-84



international system that determines the framework of human rights, humanitarian and development fields. The bigger the organization, the harder it is to respond in a human way to people, and responses become problematic and rather mechanic.

## 2.2. Non-institutional approach

The development of a non-profit industrial complex is shaped and maintained by the perpetual donor-recipient relationships. Mostly funded by nation-states directly or through multilateral international and regional bodies such as the UN and the EU as well as powerful foundations and corporate entities, the non-profit industrial complex has a record of working with (although at times they are critical) governments to help them secure their national interests in line with international agreements. Dylan Rodriguez defines the non-profit industrial complex as a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology including especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements<sup>185</sup>. This definition aligns well with Arundhati Roy's theory of the NGO-ization of resistance; by 'depoliticizing resistance and threatening to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job'<sup>186</sup>. It interferes with local peoples' movements that have traditionally been self-reliant.

While the global non-profit industrial complex has been the visible face and legitimate actor in the displacement and governance nexus, and has been working on the regularization of population movements, there is an alternative world that operates in a non-institutional manner, efficiently driven by communities. Through social connections and non-institutional networks, this alternative world has significantly influenced the choice of a destination and means of travel of migrants and asylum seekers. Richard Mallett and Jessica Hagen-Zanker's<sup>187</sup> study of displaced people from Eritrea, Senegal

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<sup>185</sup> Rodriguez Dylan, "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex" in *Incite - Women of Color Against Violence* (ed.) The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex, Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 2007, p. 21-40

<sup>186</sup> Roy Arundhati, "The NGO-ization of resistance", *Pambazuka News*, 23 September 2014  
<https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/ngo-ization-resistance>

<sup>187</sup> Hagen-Zanker Jessica and Mallett Richard, "Policy brief - Journeys to Europe: The role of policy in migrant decision-making", *ODI Insight*, 2016, p. 1-8

and Syria who had recently made it to three European countries: Germany, Spain and the UK indicate that most of the displaced decided to move as a result of the advice and previous actions of people they knew and through personal contacts who had already made the journey. By sharing these experiences in online communities one can see that there is a dynamic and pragmatic system in place for border crossings.

Mallett and Hagen-Zanker's study argues that "in spite of media coverage portraying refugees and migrants as passive victims with no control over their lives, taken advantage of by the smugglers, the displaced join forces, develop solidarity, negotiate and fight for a dignified life". In line with this research, it would be good to consider what has been defined as a refugee crisis by the non-profit industrial complex is indeed a series of organized communities facilitating movements in a parallel world (unofficial and irregular as the borders bring a set of restrictions), at times with unfortunate consequences, but often going to extraordinary lengths to protect fellow vulnerable individuals. The community-based local responses in Europe, particularly in Greece and Italy, have brought a strong sense of solidarity to the surface and provided people with the chance to respond to displacement regardless of the status of new arrivals. While the sustainability of these local initiatives cannot not be guaranteed, their efficiencies and human dimension deserve further understanding and support. This can be seen in the interview with *Fausto Melluso*<sup>188</sup> in Palermo, who explains that their work is in solidarity with the displaced people; they try to change public opinion that sees migratory behavior as a criminal act, and challenge the view of migrants as victims, a status that is often internalized by the migrants themselves.

While nation-state interventions are widely recognized and publicized, local responses remain the most connected to the reality and play a core role in addressing the challenges of the displaced. An interview carried out with an humanitarian worker who is based at the Syrian border in Turkey indicates that even if an institutional and structured approach

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<sup>188</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Melluso (male - early 30s), is a long-term resident of Palermo, activist, founder of Arci Porco Rosso and a member of the municipal council.

by local and national authorities is necessary, and has helped the refugee influx in Turkey, the most effective work has been done by local community members initially getting organized and offering assistance at the local level. *Hüseyin Güvercin*<sup>189</sup> emphasizes that he is not sure how all the influx could be managed without the government support as an authority on the ground; however, it is obvious that without the willingness and efforts of the receiving community members, the response would not be this effective. Having lived in the area and worked with urban refugee cases since 2013, *Mr. Güvercin* indicates that coordination by authorities prevents chaos, but he also admits that he has not considered other ways of decentralized coordination mechanisms and whether they would work better in the context of Turkey, where the management is very centralized.

Currently, the urban refugee cases in Turkey receive TL 120 per person (20 euro) per month and must seek additional income to survive, the temporary rights provided by the state are insufficient. It is the understanding of *Mr. Güvercin* that even if the war was over and the return to Syria safe, most of the refugees would stay in Turkey or try to move to another country, if they had the chance. This expectation would raise the issue of local integration, leading to problems in the public sphere in Turkey, including hate speech. It is important to note that the change in demographics following mass displacement will further expose a number of challenges regarding basic rights and engagement in socio-political life in all five countries analyzed by this study. Such a change calls for reconsideration of the concept of integration, as in some cases the refugee community members outnumber the local population or are significantly high in number<sup>190</sup>.

In the European context, there are also pro-migrant and refugee voices, stressing the importance of potential workers to an ageing Europe. As opposed to an existing young labor force in Turkey, a number of EU countries face difficulties in meeting their labor needs and see the skills of young immigrants and refugees as a resource. These liberal

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<sup>189</sup> The interview was carried out in Ankara, February 2018 and February 2020 as well as follow up meetings on line. Mr Guvercin (male - late 40s) is a long-term resident in Ankara, and NGO worker who has been working with humanitarian issues over 20 years

<sup>190</sup> Mülteciler ve Sığınmacılar Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği, "Suriyelilerle İlgili Doğru Bilinen Yanlışlar" 15 July 2019

views remain valid as they echo similar discourses to the guest worker programs of the 1950s and '60s in Germany. While these arguments might open the door to the labor market for newcomers, there is a danger that refugees and migrants might be reduced to economic assets and workers only. Such a scheme would present a new way of regulating and controlling class, race and gender bound labor migration. In spite of the recommendations from the International Labor Organization on working standards for those given asylum<sup>191</sup>, these kind of programs, if they do not consider human rights in their entirety or the active involvement on the democratic and political processes, tend to recreate colonial and post-colonial era labor relations between Global North and Global South. Such 'coloniality of migration'<sup>192</sup> calls for a comprehensive review of policy making in the governance of displacement with a focus on hierarchical and patriarchal aspects.

Mostly concerned with economics and the labor market, migration policies tend to neglect the human aspect. The hegemonic approach to displacement, with established hierarchies in the workplace, with identities (religious, gender, geographic, etc.), and language, risks setting the parameters of relationships between groups for generations to come. The final statement of the World Conference of the Peoples in June 2017; *For a World Without Borders towards Universal Citizenship* emphasizes the need to overcome the hegemonic perspective of migratory policy which raises an administration of migrations in 'a regular, safe and orderly' way, and replace it with: a humanist vision that allows us to receive, protect, promote and integrate the migratory people; rejecting the criminalization of migrants that acts as a fake cover for security and control; and underlining the elimination of migrant detainee centers"<sup>193</sup>.

In 2016 alone, considering that only 189,300 persons were resettled (by the UN) out of 65.6 million displaced (17.2 million were under the UNHCR mandate), of which 18,175 were in 20 European countries, there remains a large number of people, who resort to

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<sup>191</sup> Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised 1949), Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (1975)

<sup>192</sup> Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *art.cit.*, p. 16-28

<sup>193</sup> The World Conference of the Peoples, "For a World Without Borders towards Universal Citizenship", *Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, 2017, <http://links.org.au/bolivia-world-conference-peoples-world-without-borders-towards-universal-citizenship>

seeking alternative ways. Human smuggling into Europe is a sizeable business, with an annual total budget, according to the Europol/Interpol joint report of 2016, of 5-6 billion euros. The figures released by Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency) for the period of 2010 and 2016 indicate that there were some two million illegal border crossings at the Italian and Greek borders alone<sup>194</sup>.

Many asylum seekers and refugees whose displacement is protracted for many years, with no visible solutions, gradually begin to seek alternative, irregular, migration routes, particularly if they have the funds to do so. Paul Collier of the University of Oxford in his lecture on global migration<sup>195</sup> argues that the act of migration is a costly investment and the poorest cannot afford it. Collier stresses that the two main reasons that migration accelerates are; 1. Income in poor countries is rising (so poor begin to finance the move); 2. The existing diaspora lowers the cost of immigration. Those who migrate are relatively middle-income people, who can afford the move.

From the perspective of the nation-state, an all too common lens for examining displacement, strong arguments exist for ensuring population movement is regularized. Considering the relatively small numbers of displaced people being covered by national and international organizations, the majority of the movement is indeed mostly coordinated by migrant networks. These arrangements are often considered to be criminal acts, and indeed many are operated by large, illegal groups. Sheldon Zhang defines them, using irony, as ‘crimes of solidarity’<sup>196</sup>. Tekalign Ayalew<sup>197</sup>, in his study on the smuggling route from the Horn of Africa through Libya to Europe, emphasizes that there is a small network of multiple actors facilitating movements, as opposed to large

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<sup>194</sup> Campana Paulo, “Macro Trends in the Smuggling of Migrants into Europe between 2010-2016: Analytical Remarks and Policy Implication” in Sanchez Gabriella and Achilli Luigi (ed.) *Critical Insights on Irregular Migration Facilitation: Global Perspectives*, Luxembourg: the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2019, p. 10-12

<sup>195</sup> Collier Paul, Lecture on Global Migration, *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, online, 26 September 2016.

<sup>196</sup> Zhang Sheldon, “Dare We Question the Obvious and Recommend the Impossible? —Crimes of Solidarity and a Quest for a Humanitarian Response to Migrants in Peril”, in Sanchez Gabriella and Achilli Luigi (ed.) *Critical Insights on Irregular Migration Facilitation: Global Perspectives*, Luxembourg: the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2019, p. 44-47

<sup>197</sup> Ayalew Tekalign, “The smuggling of migrants from the Horn of Africa through Libya: processes, practices and impacts” in Sanchez Gabriella and Achilli Luigi (ed.) *Critical Insights on Irregular Migration Facilitation: Global Perspectives*, Luxembourg: the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2019, p. 6-9

international criminal networks. While not ignoring the influences and presence of state and criminal actors in such a process, his research indicates that “shared nationality, ethnicity and religion among migrants and smugglers generate the necessary resources and knowhow” operating through particular transnational social relation. This study further explains that those who are involved in these small networks are ordinary people, including family members, diaspora, local people on the route such as shepherds at the border areas, actual smugglers, border guards, etc. Information generated by the migrant networks provides those who take the route with “guidance on how to behave, communicate, hide their valuables, access medicine and food as well as other survival details”.

It is clear that smugglers have had a major impact in undermining government efforts to control illegal border crossings; their activities break national laws and challenge international order. However, it is also essential to understand the counterarguments. Tensions in non-EU countries are exacerbated by raising physical walls. The tightening of security measures in many European countries forces the hand of many. People leave behind situations of scarcity, with poor resources and opportunities. EU border externalization, as seen in Libya (funded by Italy), Nigeria and Turkey (funded by the EU) create imagined borders and leave local communities anxious, caught between strict government policies and the services of the smuggling industry. Meanwhile, national authorities conveniently instrumentalize refugees and migrants using them in their negotiations, as seen in case of Turkey (further discussed in Part 2 Chapter 2). David Spener’s analysis in his book *Clandestine Crossings* is worth referring to; looking into the actors and roles in displacement, he highlights that “human migration from open to clandestine and from legal to illicit is not a mere reflection of migrants’ preferences in travel, but rather the manifestation of the obstacles created not by criminal networks, but by governments striving to keep out those they consider undesirable<sup>198</sup>. To a degree, those undesirable people’s search for a dignified life is embodied in Zhang’s irony of

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<sup>198</sup> Spener David, quoted in Sanchez Gabriella and Achilli Luigi (ed.) *Critical Insights on Irregular Migration Facilitation: Global Perspectives*, Luxembourg: the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2019, p. 46

‘crime in solidarity’, forming a sort of resistance against unjust power relations, the privileged and the authority. The examples in Greece and Italy, where migrants and asylum seekers are gradually being pushed out of the protection systems, point out the path from legal to illegal, setting further problems in years to come, not only in these two countries but in Europe at large.

Beyond the arguments phrased around legality and regularity in displacement, the systemic dehumanization of people has had a major impact on public opinion and response toward the forcibly displaced. The growing trend of associating terrorism-related activities with refugees and migrants in recent years has led to unpleasant policies and reactions, increasing the vulnerability of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Given their desire to control, regularize and in some cases block these movements, nation-states also play a role in the creation of alternative routes, regardless of whether these actions are criminalized. Given that there is abundant evidence of the inhumane treatment that people trying to cross borders are subject to, including human trafficking; abduction; exploitation; sexual exploitation; slave labor; and, other forms of human rights abuse; displaced persons should not be further dehumanized by nation-states.

The resilience, flexibility and capacity of people on the move – and their facilitators – to adapt, means this phenomenon will continue to exist as long as the migration routes are blocked. According to Europol<sup>199</sup>, more than 90% of migrants travelling to the EU use the services of smuggling networks. Whether operated by small networks of scattered individuals or large criminal organizations, a macho struggle between these groups and the nation states, as well as regional entities such as the EU, does not help the situation. Such policies cost more human lives, undermine human dignity and further marginalize displaced people.

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<sup>199</sup> Europol, Facilitation of Illegal Migration, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/facilitation-of-illegal-immigration>

In June 2019, a case was brought against the EU and member states at the International Criminal Court (ICC), calling for punitive action over the EU's deterrence-based migration policy after 2014. The submission, with an allegation of crime against humanity, states that: "In order to stem migration flows from Libya at all costs and in lieu of operating safe rescue and disembarkation as the law commands, the EU is orchestrating a policy of forced transfer to concentration camps-like detention facilities [in Libya] where atrocious crimes are committed"<sup>200</sup>. The case brings the issue of preferential treatment of the rule of law and human rights by the nation-states into question with the accusation of more than 14,000 people having lost their lives, more than 40,000<sup>201</sup> people caught in the Mediterranean and taken to detention camps under a European migration policy.

Rethinking displacement and the displaced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is essential to consider who is subject to these kinds of mistreatment as the control on population movement rarely applies to the privileged and wealthy. Recalling figures from the OXFAM report of 2017<sup>202</sup>, 85% of the world population have limited means and the little choice but to fight to meet their basic needs and access resources. With the implicit and constant message encouraging upward mobility in the present system and the capitalist myth of the 'economic trickle-down effect', it is inevitable that people will continue to search for better opportunities elsewhere. The critical question, when constructing lives after displacement, is whether this search for a better life was driven by the idea of arriving at or maintaining a certain standard of living, or by gaining civil liberties and rights with a concept of collective wellbeing and a quality of life, in balance with the environment.

Finding a unified global response to durable solutions to displacement, despite the many international efforts, is challenging. For instance, the most recent mechanisms on migrants and refugees today, the Global Compact on Refugees and Migrants, as well as the Dublin regulation in the EU context, having faced difficulties in gaining political consensus, maintain the same ineffective hierarchical approach of previous solutions.

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<sup>200</sup> Bowcott, Owen, "ICC submission calls for prosecution of EU over migrant deaths", *The Guardian*, 3 June 2019

<sup>201</sup> Hinnant Lori, "EU migrant policy: Lawyers call it a crime against humanity", *Associated Press*, 3 June 2019

<sup>202</sup> OXFAM International, "An economy for the 99%" report, January 2017 p. 2-17



Beyond the global overview given in this section, it is important to consider the main instruments and actors working with displacement in order to understand the implications of their responses today and conceptualize what other steps may be possible.

### **2.2.1. Local – civil society responses**

Although many initiatives have been reported by the media and analyzed by the engaged research community in recent years, local responses have received the least attention, as they are seen as rather sporadic and short-lived. While this is true in some cases, such as spontaneous community-based responses in Lesbos, Kos, and Chios, particularly during the 2015-16 influx, there are numerous initiatives that present alternative ways of addressing the issue. These initiatives are not limited to the examples provided within the context of this research; however, they present possibilities of organic and genuine local responses, which essentially exhibit true human nature and consideration of human rights. *George Tyrikos*<sup>203</sup> summarizes their response as “when you wake up to a beautiful morning and are enjoying your coffee, and suddenly notice hundreds of desperate people; children, elderly, women, have just crossed the Sea and are showing up at your doorstep in need of help, you don’t philosophize or politicize the issue, you have no option but help them. That’s where everything starts. We are not trained; we are not part of an organization... we are humans... we all knew that we had to roll our sleeves up as a community and start from the basics. Then, the numbers increase every day, thousands more arrive, it gets complicated, unmanageable but volunteers showed up from all over Europe, which was a great sense of solidarity. How could we stop and turn our heads? This is where we live”.

Local responses have taken various shapes and sizes across the region. People from all walks of life have joined their skills, time, labor, and finances, seeking solutions together. Some of these efforts have been halted by determined governments; for example, in

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<sup>203</sup> The Interview was carried out in Lesbos, August 2017. Mr. Tyrikos (male-late 30s) is a long-term resident in Lesbos, folklorist, local business owner who has worked with migrant/refugee influx with NGO “Agkalia” since 2015.

Calais, France and Riace, Italy, but many continue and try to honor human dignity. While it would be difficult to argue that these initiatives operate in a perfect manner and provide for all the needs, most have adopted the principles of self-management and self-reliance, practicing more democratic means of co-existence and survival.

- **Parallel worlds – occupied parks, buildings and solidarity in the peripheries**

Beyond the institutionalized and commonly known humanitarian work, parallel worlds have been created. They have emerged out of necessity; to address the needs of people who are not or cannot be covered by the institutional framework. The occupied buildings in the ex-Olympic village in Turin; hotels, parks and buildings in Exarcheia in Athens, Rome, Thessaloniki, and Palermo as well as buildings that accommodate a number of migrants and refugees legally and illegally across the region have offered basic but mostly inadequate responses to needs. Places like Refugee Village for Freedom<sup>204</sup> in Athens accommodates families while a connected farm provides basic food and income for the involved community members. As these initiatives often take place in the peripheries of cities together with long-term residents, new considerations of coexistence emerge. Such self-managed common spaces offer significant alternatives to co-construction of communities under the current conditions of constant displacement and changing demographics. These parallel worlds not only present a challenge to the status-quo, but present viable alternatives in dealing with basic human rights issues and solidarity among the marginalized and ‘undesired’ people of the present system.

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<sup>204</sup> To address the need of refugees who are stranded or decided to stay in Greece, Refugees Village for Freedom was created by the Syrian United Refugee Fund and the Syrian Solidarity House. It aims to create a self-sustaining eco-village where refugees can live, work and integrate. Beginning in late 2016 and located 2 hours outside Athens, the initiative contains agricultural land, dairy farm, houses, pharmacy, and a clinic which will support both refugees and local Greek communities. The meeting point and the retail shop in Athens was visited in 2019 by the author. The information was provided by Youssef Kubis, of the Syrian United Refugee Fund.

### **2.2.2. Perspectives of the displaced**

As much as the international bodies and their member states categorize displaced people for their administrative purposes (e.g. protection policies, funding, rights, etc.) for the communities who directly face and have to live with the newcomers, these categories are not very significant. However, there are some exceptions, with allocation of funds provided by the central governments (e.g. Italy's SPRAR program) for a certain amount of time. Ultimately, local communities have to coexist with the newcomers whether they are labelled refugees, migrants, IDPs, and asylum seekers. Thus, the needs of all inhabitants have to be considered in their entirety as a community, and necessary adjustments have to be made.

Community life is essential for human groups and their survival. When they face a sudden arrival of a large number of people on their shore (e.g. Greek islands) lacking basic needs, neither the long-term residents nor new arrivals have any choice but to address the issue as soon as possible. Regardless of whether the newly arrived people are annexed in a camp-like situation, occupy parks or abandoned buildings, or are welcomed by long-term residents, they become a part of community life, unbalancing pre-existing relationships. Following the crisis of influx, there is a need to find a balance where the quality of life and living environment meet the minimum requirements for all residents, so that they can peacefully co-exist. The examples of the Greek islands in 2015 and consecutive years have heavily relied on local responses to address a humanitarian issue with limited or no support from the central government or the EU at the initial stages. The bureaucratic complexities and funding allocations have paid attention to the place of origin of the newcomers, their legal status (whether migrants or refugees) and have treated them accordingly, as per the rule of law of the territory and international conventions.

For the communities of first response, newcomers were simply human beings in need. This is the very nature of human rights at the community level as declared by international documents, slowed down by its own limitations and contradictions at the nation-state

level. The dilemma between the nation-state approach to displacement with its legal frameworks, regulations, policies, contradicted with the real need of communities with basic concerns of humanity and dignity. Local communities and governance that have to address these very local issues, are at times paralyzed and instrumentalized by central level political interest. The incapacity of national and regional administrative bodies to address large population movements has been exposed in recent years, where the EU has had major difficulties in coming to an agreement with a common policy to address the issue since 2015. Meanwhile, the communities continued to receive newcomers (as boats in the Mediterranean Sea were denied the right to disembark and lives continued to be lost) and coexist for an unknown period of time until their legal status was clarified and their future moves were determined by the national authorities.

Considering an average displacement of about 20 years<sup>205</sup> even if the location may change, the idea of “temporary” displacement is questionable. In spite of notable backtracking and restrictions by the right-wing governments to block such actions in the name of national interests, many local initiatives have taken a proactive role in addressing the issue of humanitarian needs. In some cases, they combine these efforts to address highly local challenges – the abandonment of villages; declining population and labor force – such as Riace and Sutura in Italy among many other examples.

With all the changes in politics at national and international levels, local communities are the ones that remain and continue to face the challenges of displacement on a daily basis. The local elections of 2019 in Greece, Spain and Turkey, general elections in Greece and Italy as well as the EU parliamentary elections, all led to changes in central governments, which resulted in further specific policy changes. A non-institutional focus on the displaced, separated from the politics of the nation state and purely focusing on human rights, might be considered unrealistic and naïve, but it also highlights the hypocrisy of the international approach, often using limited mandates and regulations as an excuse to back away from the complexity of the problem.

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<sup>205</sup> UNHCR, Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2018, *UNHCR*, 2019

This human-to-human approach is essential if we are to develop empathy and understand the process of displacement and its impact on communities. It helps the actors to identify where the communities are in the process of displacement, and find a common space and point for dialogue. It should be noted that communities who experienced emigration in the past are more likely to accept newcomers and develop empathy. In this regard, Italy and Greece have long standing experience with emigration, population exchange and displacement in general. *Valentina Pelegrini*<sup>206</sup> a resident of Sutera explains that “the presence of asylum seekers as part of the SPRAR program has changed the opinion of relatively older residents of Sutera where they have come to appreciate different cultures and religious customs, and celebrate them”. According to her, for a rural place with limited access to such diversity, the distant concept of refugees and migrants has gained a face, it has humanized them.

In protracted displacement, particularly in areas with economic difficulties, the discussion takes a different form, with a lack of resources and continued ambiguity leading to further discomfort between groups. At this point, the discourse becomes more a survival and sustainability issue. From the community perspective, a rare distinction between refugee and migrant is made in such situations. *Symos Papazoglou*<sup>207</sup>, a long-term resident of Thessaloniki, expressed his concern about newcomers as he stated that the community understands the needs of the people running from war such as Syrian refugees, but the prolonged stay of other migrants who are looking for a better life is increasingly a burden and creates a reaction among Greeks as the economy in Greece is weak. He adds that “some sort of solution has to be found soon in order to avoid possible social problems”.

Regardless of the institutional categorization of the displaced, newcomers are present in the daily lives of their ‘host’ communities and develop relationships with their surroundings. Aside from their legal status and right to engage in political life, they are a

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<sup>206</sup> The Interview was conducted in Sutera, May 2019. Ms Pelegrini (female - early 30s) works with the NGO Girasole, which has been working with the newcomers in Sutera under the SPRAR project.

<sup>207</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. Mr. Papazoglou (male - early 60s) is a local community member and a market vender.

part of the community and such labels are meaningless. However, the parameters of co-existence conditioned by integration policies and activities come with mixed messages and different reactions. *Fade Garba*<sup>208</sup>, of Nigerian origin, strongly believes that one has to fit into the host culture, learn the language and local customs in order to blend in and gain autonomy, while *Ms Radi* an Iraqi in Greece believes that she will always be a refugee and has difficulty blending in, as she would lose her identity and the way she dresses, speaks and lives.

With all the efforts and funds spent locally and internationally, many people remain left out of the system, stuck in precarious conditions, struggling for survival. Out of the radar of the international and governmental entities, they try to continue with their lives despite a constant sense of displacement, longing for dignified autonomy and control over their own lives. This is where local responses, such as Porco Rosso of Palermo, reach out to those people left out of the system, and offer a sense of relief, a common space to recharge for the next step in their journey.

### **2.3. Impact of the responses**

The humanitarian responses to forced displacement neither reduce the impact today nor prevent future displacements. The accountability of international and national responses in relation to displacement-affected communities at local level is limited, if not disconnected. This disconnect is often caused by isolation, being part of an organization that has lost the sense of social justice in its work and lacks values. These workers are caught up in the power relations and hierarchy of the non-profit industrial complex. It can be argued that large-scale responses to displacement, with its increasing complexities, do not address the challenges effectively. Instead, local and concrete actions are urgently required, using effective networks that do not exclude the majority of displaced persons.

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<sup>208</sup> The interview was carried out in in Sutera, May 2019. Ms Garba (female early 30s) is a newcomer and single mother from Nigeria. She had been in Sicily for less than a year and was waiting for her status to be cleared.

In 2019, with 7.7 billion people on the planet, 4% of the world was on the move. These figures include 70.8 million of forcibly displaced (41.3 million IDPs, 3.5 million asylum seekers, 25.9 million refugees) and 245 million migrants<sup>209</sup>. In 2018 alone, there were 28 million persons newly displaced, of which 10.8 million were due to conflicts and violence while 17.2 million were disaster-induced. It is essential to note that 61% of the forced displacement was disaster driven, which is closely linked to climate change and environmental degradation.

In 2018, 141,500 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe through three main Mediterranean routes, with Spain the biggest crossing point in numbers. In the same year, 2,277 persons died at sea<sup>210</sup>. While the numbers have significantly decreased since 2015, the displacement-related figures in Sub Saharan Africa (10 million), MENA region (2.3 million) and South Asia (8.7 million) indicate that there will be a continuation of population movement from these regions in the coming years, and Europe remains one of the main destinations.

Disaster induced displacement and conflict/violence driven displacement feed into each other. The money poor, marginalized and those under precarious conditions are impacted the most, and are likely to be subject to forced displacement in the coming years as well. Focusing on the root causes and understanding the reasons of forced displacement requires further steps to be taken on alternatives, as more people will be arriving and settling in new communities, increasingly to urban areas, and cities are not able to absorb these large numbers of people.

Thus, the relationship to national and international decision-makers should be reconsidered. Alternative views are needed, including a stronger focus on local alternatives and localization of aid and development work, with close networking for global perspectives and links.

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<sup>209</sup> UNHCR, Global Report 2018, UNHCR, June 2019

<sup>210</sup> This number refers to only the bodies found.

## Conclusions for Chapter 1

Population movement has been a constant in human history, with well-established migration routes long before the creation of nations-state borders. The Mediterranean region has always been the stage for circulating people, goods and services, consistent with its development, shaping its rich cultural mosaic. Its people and culture have influenced not only its neighboring regions, but most of the regions around the world through emigration. As a result, its people have developed a tolerance to displacement and the displaced, acknowledging the history of migration in their respective countries.

As inequalities within and between nation states increase, people are even more susceptible to climate change, scarcity of resources, and violent conflicts. Against the backdrop of continued historical power relations between the Global North and South, forced displacement has become one of the major issues of recent times. What is presented as a refugee and migrant crisis situation today is essentially a problem of governance, which exposes the shortfalls of the nation-state approach to displacement; a phenomenon that is increasingly stigmatized by right-wing extremist rhetoric based on fear, otherization, dehumanization, isolation and alienation of people as per their relationship to power, privilege and authority. Such a relationship between nation states and displaced people, who often find themselves in the peripheries of power and subject to precarious conditions, continually undermines human dignity, human rights and democratic values in practice, regardless of declarations on the importance of such values through their international institutions.

This constant contradiction between declared values and practices of human rights on the ground, coupled with the inadequacy to address ever increasing global challenges, uses the security threat and the fight against it as a rationale to erode civil liberties, establishing a new set of norms. Dominated by the arguments of preserving national interests and national integrity, the nation-states' efforts and their representations through international bodies are increasingly irrelevant in a world where people go beyond the



traditional 'pure nation' idea and whose displacement leads to a mixing, triggered by displacement, that shapes changes across the board.

While international efforts attempt to make population movements more regular, orderly and safe, the closure of borders by nation states, specifically to undesired people<sup>211</sup>, is an assault on freedom of movement and human dignity, marginalizing displacement-affected communities into further precarious conditions. As vulnerability in displacement leads to further precarity both for long-term residents and newcomers, this thesis shows that small-scale alternatives and the reconsideration of displacement has the potential to shift vulnerability to resistance and political action in the context of a process of social transformation. Indeed, conceptualizing alternative ways to treat displacement and the displaced is unavoidable, leading us to question the current position of nation-state and supranational efforts to categorize people as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and hosts as well as who is legal and illegal at a global scale, specifically in case of durable solutions where such distinctions make little sense to the direct interlocutors; local communities.

The effectiveness and efficiency of international and government-led responses to migrant and refugee influxes in the northern Mediterranean region have been criticized extensively, particularly in Greece and Italy, pushing large numbers of people into a state of illegal existence, forcing them to seek alternative, often unsafe, solutions. Meanwhile local responses have achieved positive results despite restrictive centralized policies and delayed responses to the real needs on the ground.

Rethinking the issue from a different angle, displacement is considered a progressive socio-political transformation process, individually and collectively. Therefore, in the face of all the challenges it presents, it is an opportunity for individuals and groups to reflect upon, and make conscious decisions for positive change, including disregarding

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<sup>211</sup> Displaced people who often do not satisfy the asylum regimes, turned down for their visa requests, or those who do not fit in the selection process of the resettlement programs, due to lack of skills, affiliations, country of origin, etc.

traditional oppressive practices. For example, reversed gender roles and liberation of women, such as the position of an Iraqi and Syrian women in Greece<sup>212</sup> as well as the position of Kosovar Albanian women in post war Kosovo<sup>213</sup> are both important to note. In both cases, women assume what were traditionally men's roles in their society, and struggle against patriarchal treatment, thus demonstrating a positive transformation for the status of women in society. These are small but significant examples in these specific contexts.

Deliberation of the long-term residents, also facing displacement, without actual physical removal but facing precarious conditions, brings the issue of seeking durable solutions to a different dimension. The enhanced definitions of displacement and the displaced draw attention to the theoretical similarities impacting individuals and communities at times of displacement, further analyzing the drastic causes and consequences of forced displacement. Therefore, the specifics of displacement must be understood in order to carefully assess the common ground for groups and communities to meet, and develop a mutual understanding as a basis for the co-construction of new communities following displacement. In analyzing the *anatomy of displacement*, the vulnerability phase stands out as the crucial point for change. It needs to be mobilized into an act of resistance and socio-political action with a sense of solidarity among precarious groups using a process of social transformation.

The conclusions of this chapter indicate that as per their relation to power, privilege and authority, forcibly displaced people are better positioned to engage in a transformative process than those who displaced by choice. They seem more engaged in efforts to re-establish their dignity, identity, and autonomy with a renewed interest for a better quality of life.

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<sup>212</sup> The Interviews were carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019.

<sup>213</sup> Author's work with women in post conflict western Kosovo between 2003-2005.

The forcibly displaced, given the opportunity and space, seem to be motivated and have the political interest to explore alternatives to the status quo. While such willingness for political action is limited to a relatively small group of organic intellectuals<sup>214</sup>, there is great potential for progressive transformation as many displacement-affected communities share precarious conditions and strive for more autonomy to restore their dignity.

In spite of their small scale, in many places across the Mediterranean region these experiences and attempts for alternatives at local levels show that other ways in addressing displacement are possible. Examples from the Mediterranean region, including Spain, France and Turkey, which will be further discussed, also show that alternative ways are possible and what is presented in mainstream liberal and rightist circles does not fully present the realm of possible solutions. These Mediterranean examples are empowering acts of resistance and political action, presenting concrete results based on local approaches to displacement.

Responses to displacement, mostly driven by institutional frameworks, follow various rationale and paths. While other options are considered, this thesis focuses on observations that follow a path which is transformative and collective in nature, trying to engage society at large in a solidarity-based, progressive political action at local levels, with the consideration of network of municipalities that will be further discussed in Part 2.

The research outcomes conclude, in the case of both Greece and Italy, that institutional approaches to displacement and the efforts to achieve an orderly, regular and safe population movement increasingly result in legal persons becoming illegal even if the official procedures are followed. With changing policies, an increasing number of people fall outside of the legal system, and are forced to become irregular; security measures and border externalizations are pushing a generation of migrants and refugees to the margins of the societies both in and outside of the EU.

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<sup>214</sup> Will be further explored and discussed in Part 1, Chapter 2

Displacement, in its various forms both for long-term residents and newcomers, does not follow a linear path between two points, but is circular. While states hold the power to determine the status of forcibly displaced, local responses and approaches to displacement and the displaced are more effective, though short-lived and rather restricted by centralized decision-making mechanisms. For example, within the context of the EU, the Dublin III process has not been effective for the people in Greece and Italy, as the burden on these countries has not been shared by other members of the EU as had been desired. The externalization of borders has led to further human rights abuses outside of the EU. While the actual number of arrivals to the EU has decreased significantly in the last five years, the cost of human lives, dignity and rights outside of the EU rarely makes the news and receives public attention. Solution-seeking stays at the top level (with a top down approach), and is centralized and often manipulated for political gain both in right wing rhetoric and liberal circles.

In order to focus on the co-construction of lives and communities after displacement, this chapter highlighted the importance of conceptualizing, understanding and treating displacement from a different angle in the hope that these observations are useful for the future governance of displacement. Rethinking displacement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should essentially embrace the multiple stories of population movement using a historical perspective, including the colonial history of Europe. Recalling the European migration to Africa and Middle East in the 19<sup>th</sup> and mid -20<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>215</sup> under colonialism, during which resources were extracted and people displaced from their land, it is hardly surprising that a reverse migration towards Europe is taking place today, given its wealth, cultural influence and resources. Anders' point of such reverse migration from neighboring regions as a form of reparation is worth noting; it is "reframing the European position on displacement, integration in light of failed human rights and international law at times of colonization"<sup>216</sup>. Furthermore, the relationships in the co-construction of new

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<sup>215</sup> 62 million persons migrated to Africa and the Middle East - Anders Victoria, "Making up for the What we've caused: Viewing Migration into Europe as Reparations for Colonization". World News, 15 May 2018.

<sup>216</sup> Anders Victoria, *art.cit.* <https://intpolicydigest.org/2018/05/15/making-up-for-what-we-ve-caused-viewing-migration-into-europe-as-reparations-for-colonization/>

communities should not be guilt-driven but should be seen as an educational process for the communities; critiquing history and working toward egalitarian societies, as Jack Forbes, a native historian from the US, reminds us that “while living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did, they are responsible for the society they live in, which is a product of that past. Assuming this responsibility provides a means of survival and liberation”<sup>217</sup>.

Using this different approach to displacement allows us to analyze the coloniality of power and of migration with their impact on colonized minds in each specific situation at all levels; internationally, nationally and locally. Internalized organizational structures based on the corporate model, with embedded hierarchies and patriarchy, should be questioned extensively as it essentially contradicts the democratic nature of human rights work. Misleading and toxic myths and stereotypes concerning migrants as well as those long-term residents that are pushed to the peripheries should be refuted. It is crucial to ask whether those working to defend the human rights of the displaced are in fact more invested in protecting and maintaining borders, wealth and the status quo as opposed to advancing people's efforts to reclaim their human rights and dignity and create more egalitarian and democratic structures.

As per the main question posed in this thesis regarding the potential of displaced people to be mobilized in a socio-political transformation process, the forcibly displaced should not be considered poor vulnerable beings who are unable to take care of themselves, but courageous people with pride, dignity and strong identities who are seeking decent living conditions for themselves and their families. Amartya Sen points out that “poverty is also not having the capability to fully realize one’s potential as a human being”<sup>218</sup>, all the more reason why access to available resources and opportunities should not be denied. The displaced should not be infantilized or victimized, but be questioned about their views and positions during the process of co-constructing their lives and place in the community.

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<sup>217</sup> Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne, *An indigenous peoples' history of the United States*, Beacon Press, 2014, p. 235

<sup>218</sup> Mendonça dos Santos, Tiago, “Poverty as Lack of Capabilities: An Analysis of the Definition of Poverty of Amartya Sen”, PERI, vol. 9, n 2, 2017, p. 125-148

Changing demographics indicate that future communities will continue to be multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious, with multiple identities and affiliations<sup>219</sup>. While such diversity is a reality for many neighborhoods and communities, the present system perpetuates the control of political and economic power, determining the rules of socio-economic and socio-political governance. Keeping the displaced in the peripheries allows the privileged few to benefit from their labor, while imposing regulations on unions and collective bargaining power.

The ruling classes maintain their primary interest of making profit, protecting wealth and the system that maintains these factors by any means. This power adjusts to changing demographics, tolerates diversity, but ensures that borders among socio-economic classes are maintained. The success stories of some immigrants' economic 'achievements' and integration in the new place are often promoted by the nation-states in order to set examples for newcomers to follow a specific path toward 'good citizenship'. While these success stories apply only to small numbers, this sporadic tokenism releases the steam in social movements, and perpetuates the continued coloniality of power. In this regard, there has been a great emphasis on integration in line with the values of the nation state, drawing the borders between the center and peripheries<sup>220</sup> as well as what is acceptable way of fitting in the system for the newcomers to become 'good citizens'.

Displacement is constant and circular as the communities continuously regenerate themselves. Given current predictions, that it will only increase, it is essential to pose the questions of 'integration into what' and 'in what form'. In the 21st century, the approach to durable solutions in the interest of nation states must be demystified in order for alternatives to be imagined. The critical question of whether integration really takes place, or is an interchangeable terminology that has been strategically launched by the donors in order to shape the programming, needs to be genuinely addressed. More egalitarian and democratic communities, functioning autonomously but rooted in networks

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<sup>219</sup> Lacy Swing William, "The Mediterranean challenge within a world of humanitarian crises", *Forced Migration Review*, n.51, 2016, p. 62-64

<sup>220</sup> The concepts of center and peripheries by Samir Amin will further be explored in Chapter 2.

addressing issues around displacement and the displaced, will further be explored in the context of a local governance model. The findings of this research present similarities with the conclusions of Anthony H. Richmond's work as he points out that 'the flow of international migrants [displaced], both proactive and reactive, will be responsive to a more egalitarian economic order and to the creation of a more peaceful, demilitarized society"<sup>221</sup>.

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<sup>221</sup> Richmond Anthony H., "Sociological Theories of International Migration: The Case of Refugees", *York Space*, Vol. 36, n. 2, 1988, p: 7-25

## CHAPTER 2 - Rethinking Integration

*Reverse anachronistic thinking makes us live in a postcolonial time with post-colonial imaginaries; because of it, we live in a time of informal dictatorship with imaginaries of formal democracy; we live in a time of racialized, sexualized, murdered, dismembered bodies with imaginaries of human rights; we live in a time of walls, trenches dug along borders, forced exiles, internal displacements, with imaginaries of globalization; we live in times of silencings and of sociologies of absences, with imaginaries of a digital communicational orgy; we live in a time of victims turning against victims and oppressed electing their own oppressors, with imaginaries of liberation and social justice. When the great majorities are only free to be miserable in different ways, it is the misery of freedom that reveals itself.*

– Boaventura de Sousa Santos<sup>222</sup>

As demographic changes have become more predominant, discussions on integration at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have gained a different dimension in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, challenging the stereotypical characterization of nations. The long-standing beliefs concerning integration have been questioned; now displacement is considered to be a more dynamic process than previously conceived. In addition, acknowledgment of multiple dynamic identities, affiliations and the impact of those who are perceived as newcomers has gained importance in the discussion. Recent years have shown that size and frequency of population movements as well as the place of origin of the displaced have a significant impact on reactions towards the displaced. The search for a better life with dignity, which is a right for all, is ironically portrayed negatively in the media and stimulates reaction when the flow is from the Global South to the Global North, perpetuating embedded historical race, gender and class relations.

Displacement has changed the face of local communities, particularly in large cities, either due to the arrival of large numbers such as the recent influx through North Africa and the Middle East in the case of Mediterranean routes, or individuals arriving to Europe

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<sup>222</sup> De Sousa Santos Boaventura, "Horizons needed", *Other News*, May 2017



separately through regular channels and regrouping, in the case of migrants from China and the Indian subcontinent. In addition, it has also become apparent that population movement is a circular activity as displaced people are no longer satisfied with being contained in a place with a specific job for long periods of time.

While rooted value systems, cultural narratives, traditional practices, and official language use are reinforced by long-term residents at the community level, there is an inherent hierarchy based on citizenship rights, and integration policies put forward by nation-states. Despite the arrival of new members who may require new norms, social interactions, culture, economy and eventually politics, fitting into the mainstream culture remains the main criteria and a driving principle of “integration<sup>223</sup>”.

In the international humanitarian system today, integration is an expected outcome of the three commonly practiced durable solutions to forced displacement; voluntary [or forced] repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

Repatriation has been considered the ideal solution as the responsibility of protection is shifted from international organizations to national authorities. Given the lengthy periods spent in displacement, if and when conditions allow, the displaced persons' repatriation to their place of origin requires a re-integration process. Having been exposed to diverse cultural, socio-political and economic contexts in displacement, returnees still need to find a balance with their new conditions, regain mutual understanding with those who did not leave who dealt with the very difficulties that forced others to flee. In addition, the post-conflict or disaster reconstruction process is not always a smooth path to recovery, its impact can lead to further displacement.

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<sup>223</sup> Integration is increasingly considered as a two-way process of mutual accommodation, depending on how resourceful is the individual and how open the society. It relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country, as well as to newcomers' own perceptions of acceptance by and membership in the host society. Despite the varied semantics used, such as inclusion, harmonization, adaptation, and assimilation, the term indicates invisibility, dissolving and newcomers fitting into the dominant cultural norms. The etymologically its synonyms refer to forming in one whole or being included as a constituent part, assimilate incorporate and swallow. There is subtlety of the majority expecting minority to be invisible and minorities claiming majority to accept their visibility. In either case, in a successful integration, the minority ceases to exist with its distinct characteristics, absorbed by the norms of the dominant culture.

One such example was the 1999 Kosovo conflict, featuring the fastest mass voluntary repatriation in UNHCR history where most Kosovo Albanians, Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali (RAE) returned to their homes in order to help build a new country. Having dealt with a number of challenges in the following 15 years, in late 2014 and early 2015, approximately 100,000 Kosovars<sup>224</sup> (5% of the population) emigrated to EU countries, disappointed with social and economic conditions, as well as the political situation. *Branislav Ćup*<sup>225</sup> who was displaced three times in the late 1990s, and has been living in Kosovo for the last 15 years, states that even though he has a decent job, spends extensive time with majority community members, and speaks the local languages, he still lives in an enclave and does not feel integrated. *Mr. Ćup* stated that “once you are forcefully removed from your home, you never go back. Even if you go back physically, it is not the same place, you are not the same person, people are not the same...displacement continues...”

Local integration is closely linked to national policies, and their willingness to grant a range of rights and entitlements, ideally aligning with those enjoyed by citizens. As they vary from country to country, such rights are often restricted for refugees, including freedom of movement, access to education, the labor market, and to public services including health care. Often, local integration policies come with a number of conditions, with language classes, vocational training, cultural orientation, employment schemes, etc. facilitating the adaptation of newcomers into mainstream society as soon as possible. From a technical point of view, refugees should not be subject to integration policies as their stay is considered temporary. Although governments try to maintain their programs within the context of humanitarian aid, prolonged time spent in displacement, primarily in urban settings, has forced governments to develop integration policies, even if they may use a different terminology such as the term harmonization used in Turkey. The introduction of the New Integration Strategy in Greece in early 2019 has received criticism

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<sup>224</sup> Gollopeni Besim, “Kosovar Emigration: Causes, Losses and Benefits”, *Sociology and Space*, v. 54, n.3, 2016, p. 295-314

<sup>225</sup> The interview was carried out in Pristina, March 2019. *Mr. Ćup* is a long term-resident (male, mid-30s). His country of origin is Bosnia and he has resided in Kosovo for 15 years.

from civil society organizations who voiced their concerns during interviews that it came quite late, after many of the newcomers had already been in the country for 3-4 years and most of the focus had hitherto rested on accommodation schemes. An observation of the Integration Strategy by the Representative Council for Research and Documentation – ASET<sup>226</sup> highlighted that newcomers had substantially varied profiles, as some are recognized beneficiaries of international protection and national asylum process, some more established and others newly arrived, as well as a number of people who are undocumented and lacking data. Pointing out the shortcomings of the integration strategy, ASET emphasizes “the need to approach the integration strategy as a tool, with a clear target of the full political and social inclusion of immigrants”<sup>227</sup>.

ASET’s observations on the strategy puts a spotlight on a number of important issues, including the importance of developing a common identity and solidarity as well as the need to strengthen society as a whole in light of contested dispersed unilateral management programs. The position of the Greek state presents the issue of integration as a form of heteronomy in practice, with the objective “to facilitate the return to legality for immigrants who are unable to maintain their legal residence status due to the economic crisis, with the ultimate goal of completing their inclusion in Greek society”.

Resettlement is the last option of the commonly practiced durable solutions where repatriation is impossible, and the rights and entitlements in the country of first asylum are not granted to the individuals and groups as per country specific internal regulations. In such cases, resettlement countries (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia) offer specific quotas every year and select newcomers in coordination with UNHCR. Resettlement programs also have substantial integration components in line with the policies of a given country. Meredith Hunter, studying self-reliance in refugee resettlement<sup>228</sup>, points out that few

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<sup>226</sup> ASET is an initiative of Generation 2.0. Generation 2.0 is a nonprofit organization based in Athens with a focus on action research. It aims to promote human rights, equality and diversity, fight racism, xenophobia and discrimination. The organization has been active since 2006 but increased its efforts working with asylum seekers since 2013.

<sup>227</sup> Representative Council for Research and Documentation (ASET), “ASET’s observations on the National Integration Strategy”, *Generation 2.0*, 18 February 2019.

<sup>228</sup> Hunter Meredith, “The failure of Self-Reliance in Refugee Settlements”, *POLIS Journal*, vol. 2 winter, 2009, p. 1-5

donors and host countries are willing to provide the resources necessary to meet refugees' needs beyond the initial emergency phase, despite the fact that displacement, and its many impacts, endure for some time. Hunter critiques current policies has unrealistic expectations of refugees (without accompanying them with their much-needed rights) to become independent and self-sufficient as soon as possible, a condition that is not even probable for long-term inhabitants in the same context. Both in Italy and Greece, such expectations from newcomers have often proved to be unattainable, as in many cases newcomers rely on humanitarian aid for extended periods.

In some situations, asylum seekers continuing to seek aid rather than accept local jobs area due to low pay, according to *Alexandria Benelou*<sup>229</sup> in Thessaloniki. She pointed out that throughout the austerity measures, many Greeks, including herself, have worked for similar or less salaries for extended periods. Many Greeks left their homes to move in with family members, or had to emigrate as they could not survive on their earnings.

In all three durable solution scenarios, the cross-cutting assumption is that these fixes are long-lasting, and integration is a key aspect, encouraged by international organizations and driven by national authorities. Whilst national strategies give direction to integration efforts, communities play a pivotal role in implementation. In most integration cases today, common efforts designed to encourage newcomers to fit into existing communities, often placing additional burdens and pressure on newcomers.

While the discussions at an international level pay more attention to the protection aspects of forced displacement, life following displacement is influenced by the integration policies of nation-states, where it is expected that newcomers fit into the existing socio-political structures.

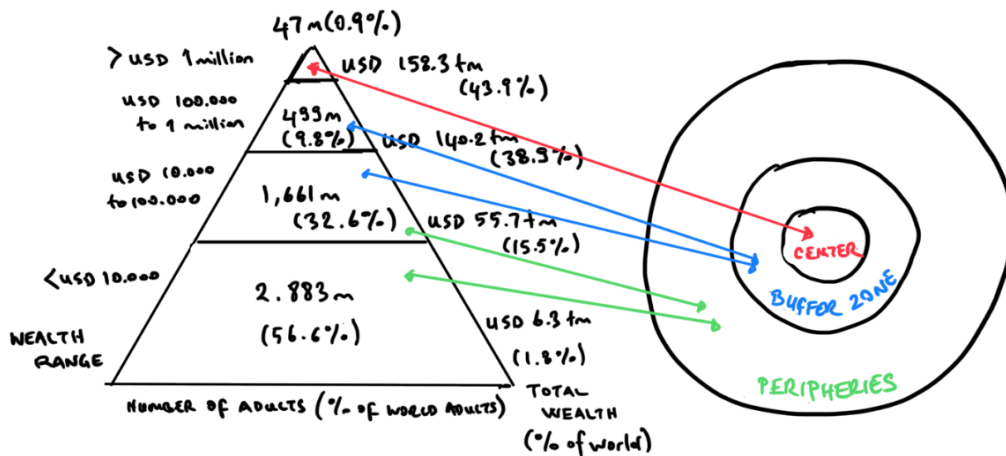
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<sup>229</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. Ms. Benelou (female, late-30s) is a long-term resident, and employee of a local organization that works with displaced communities in Syndos.

- Seeing integration from a different angle

The concepts of center and peripheries introduced by Samir Amin, which essentially focus on capital accumulation in the world economy, are useful in the context of displacement, particularly in addressing the notion of integration. As a consequence, the center, in addition to accumulating capital, represents the dominant cultural narrative shaped by the neoliberal economic policies. It establishes the socio-political relationships and norms of how society operates. The ruling elite (top 1%)<sup>230</sup> of a country (the establishment), who holds the majority of the assets, has a vested interest in controlling and maintaining its power and privilege. By creating and supporting a buffer zone of educated managers composed of bureaucrats and technocrats (top 14%), this ruling elite has historically formed a relationship with the people in the peripheries (remaining 85%) as their labor force and increasingly loyal consumers.

DIAGRAM 4 - THE GLOBAL WEALTH IN RELATION TO THE CENTER AND PERIPHERY



- THE GLOBAL WEALTH PYRAMID 2019

Source: JAMES DAVIES, RODRIGO LUBERAS AND ANTHONY SHORROCKS, GLOBAL WEALTH DATABOOK 2019

Source: HAZAN SHEAR DEMA

<sup>230</sup> Credit Suisse Research Institute, *Global Wealth Databook 2019*, Zurich, Credit Suisse group, 2019, p. 5-16

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

This relationship of power and privilege bases its existence on a centralized, heteronomous structure, establishing the social, political, economic and cultural norms and rules of a society through its core dominant cultural narrative, and promotes its politics to maintain this status quo. Integration, in this regard, is the degree of alignment with the core values of national interest (economic) and integrity (heritage and identity), which, in the final analysis upholds the values of the ruling elite and the members of their buffer zone.

Another consideration is the fundamental question for individuals and communities as to whether they choose to accept to fit into the existing norms and structures as often expected by the present system of the center and peripheries, or prefer to co-construct a new set of norms and rules in the context of the new and changing circumstances in which they find themselves.

Cornelius Castoriadis' work on heteronomy and autonomy describes these relationships of power. In analyzing both concepts, Castoriadis explains that most societies have instituted themselves as heteronomous through history while autonomy has been the historical anomaly. He conceives autonomy as "the capacity, of a society or of an individual, to act deliberately and explicitly in order to modify its law and its forms"<sup>232</sup>. His emphasis on autonomy, seen as a vivid process of education, political activity and a constant critical questioning as opposed to a goal to be achieved, makes it simultaneously an individual and collective phenomenon. One example of an attempt to implement such an approach is that of Floxenia in Common<sup>233</sup> in Thessaloniki, where the focus has been about creating a safe space for mutual education and working with people to support them in taking the next steps in their movement. It is reflexive, encouraging the free use of the imagination and creative capacity of the people, coupled with political education. It lays

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The chart on the right was prepared by the author of this research to demonstrate the unequal economic relationship between the center, the buffer zone and peripheries that have a drastic influence on power relations discussed in this thesis. Two figures should be read with the percentages (1%+14%+85%) indicated on this page where there is a fluidity between the upper and lower end of the buffer zone as per their vicinity to the center.

<sup>232</sup> Straume, *art.cit.*, p. 2

<sup>233</sup> An organization based in Thessaloniki, visited as part of this research in March 2019.

the groundwork for consciousness of autonomy and allows newcomers to establish a harmonious and respectful relationship with their surroundings.

Castoriadis' concept of 'social imaginary signification' articulates that there can be no constituted society without a collective imagination. The interviews carried out through this research revealed a common thread; that the aspiration for self-sufficiency and autonomy were essential for dignity, self-value and sense of belonging as displaced people have a strong desire to take control of their lives. The argument made by Castoriadis supports this finding as the self-managed accommodation and work schemes as well as common spaces that brought people together, regardless of their conditions, have had an empowering effect on the displaced. Although they might not be at the scale imagined by Castoriadis, these common spaces<sup>234</sup> as well as the process of commoning<sup>235</sup> both in Italy and Greece, present powerful foundations of critical thinking regarding the sense of identity, belongings, belief systems, and questioning and redefining social roles. In this regard, forced displacement plays a trigger role to bring different groups and cultures together, and opens a window of opportunities for questioning dominant norms or ideologies. This is essential for newcomers and long-term residents to collectively imagine alternatives, engaging in a constructive dialogue, possibly away from preconceived set images and ideas of the other.

This chapter analyzes the positions of the displaced (newcomers and long-term residents) according to their relationship to the center and periphery, as well as the implications of their alignment with heteronomous and autonomous tendencies, eventually gravitating toward alternative local governance models in co-constructing new communities after displacement. The role of organic intellectuals in dialogue and the co-construction of communities is explored. This chapter also looks at the meaning of integration to communities, and the main ideological and political reasoning behind integration beyond

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<sup>234</sup> Commons and common spaces refer to urban space, knowledge, social entitlement, and cultural and intellectual wealth. They are closely linked to the dialectical presence of social relations, networks and practices, including struggles and collective action that also constitute the commons, highlighting commons as forms of *non-commodified wealth* used by all.

<sup>235</sup> Commoning is the relationships between the commons and communities, beyond the single interest in the extraction of resources, focusing on the social reproduction of relations toward autonomy as a necessity to be organized for alternatives.

specific integration policies and practices which, individually, may be creative but fail to question the political basis of these actions.





## SECTION 1 – Integration: heteronomy in practice

While resettlement is only an option for a very small number of people, for those whom repatriation is not an immediate viable solution, local integration remains one of the most favorable options. Thus, the time spent in displacement will continue to be prolonged, not necessarily in an immediate continuum, and the focus on integration efforts will occupy a wider space in the discourse of durable solutions. In the cases in Greece and Italy considered in this thesis, changing political leaderships and resulting policy changes in recent years both at central and local levels has had an impact on integration efforts. Temporary safe spaces such as camp like situations and occupied buildings have been created or disturbed. Hostile environments have been generated in order to evict asylum seekers and migrants from camps and temporary accommodation, pushing them into further ambiguity. Short-term political gains postpone socio-political problems, creating the basis for further societal problems in years to come, a situation that is not limited to these two countries.

Following the 2015 influx, none of the three known aspects of a durable solution<sup>236</sup> – legal, economic, and socio-cultural – have been addressed efficiently either in Italy or in Greece while local communities continue to face the challenges of everyday life, driven by the policies and regulations of the central governments. The contradiction of nation-states not having the ability to address the problem at an adequate level, and at the same time interfering with the self-managed local solutions by dismantling established small scale socio-cultural and economic relations are well exhibited through the government crackdown on squats in Athens, Turin as well as putting pressure on municipalities such as Riace and Palermo in Italy. The blockage and criminalization of humanitarian rescue teams in the Mediterranean by the Italian government in 2019 has also showed a contradictory approach to human rights.

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<sup>236</sup> Crisp Jeff, "The local integration and local settlement of refugees; a conceptual and historical analysis", *New Issues in Refugee Research*, UNHCR Working Paper No 102, 2004, p. 1 -11

The efforts to ensure legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions, with substantial resources and time allocated in Greece and Italy, have been significantly bureaucratic, intentionally or unintentionally leaving a number of asylum seekers and migrants out of the regular channels. Those whose cases are still being processed, in spite of not having the guarantee of their future status, continue to remain under ambiguous and precarious conditions, with long waiting periods.

As a result of marginalization, both those who are regularized (with the potential of obtaining resident and travel documents) and those who are rejected by the asylum system live in the same areas in the peripheries, setting their own norms together with the long-term inhabitants of these peripheries, while the expectation of fitting into the mainstream norms remain solid. It is these places of multiple existence and 'otherness' that are subject to the impositions of the center where people engage in a process of commoning and work towards creating a community of equals. This core concept constitutes the backbone of this thesis, which is cognizant of concerns regarding daily survival and the ambiguity around status that often prevents displaced people from engaging in an environment that might further creative imaginaries and give birth to autonomous initiatives for a socio-political transformation process.

One reactionary response made by newcomers is the tendency to minimize interaction with mainstream society in order to preserve their own norms and rules, resulting in the reproduction of hierarchies, and, therefore, perpetuating heteronomy. In fact, whilst this tends to create self-contained communities, which are subject to the political interest of their countries of origin, particularly when the numbers and time spent in the diaspora are notably significant. The connection between diaspora and political interest from countries of origin has long been discussed in the field of migration with increased pro-migrant arguments concerning the well-documented economic contributions made to their countries of origin as well as their new destinations<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>237</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "2019 International Migration and Displacement Trends and Policies Report to the G20", OSCE, 2019, p. 1-35

Beyond the economic aspect of newcomers co-constructing new communities, the socio-political aspect plays a crucial role. Within the context of nation-state, these traditionally linguistically, ethnically and religiously affiliated groups gaining political power might present a threat to the center. Samim Akgönül's comprehensive analysis on Turco-Islam in Europe<sup>238</sup> and the political implications of the relationships between nation-states and their loyal citizens in the diaspora must be considered for its positive rationale and may be seen as a counterargument to the necessity of a space for political engagement of newcomers.

Particularly, at a time where Islamophobia/Muslimophobia<sup>239</sup> has a considerable presence in the psyche of the public in Europe and the European governments, the influx of people from countries with predominantly Islamic populations contributes to the fear of power battles in the political realm. Akgönül, focusing on the Turkish state's interest in keeping its influence on the diaspora in Europe along ethnic and religious lines, points out that a state's ideological tools and institutions expand their presence through various strategies. These attempts by the Turkish state created discomfort among some of the European states including Austria, Netherlands, Germany and France, who see it as a potential threat and external influence on the relationships with their minority groups. Akgönül argues that the influence of the Turkish state goes beyond the classic definition of an ethnic and religious affiliations, affecting the social cohesion of affiliated Muslim groups in Europe. He stresses that a strategy of carrying internal battles from Turkey to the European political field and social life adds to an already paradoxical and incoherent relationship between EU and Turkey, further instrumentalizing refugee and migrant issues.

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<sup>238</sup> Akgönül Samim, "L'Islam Turco in Europa: Attivismo Politico e Conflitti Interni", *Oasis*, 2019, p. 1-9

<sup>239</sup> Often used interchangeably, Akgönül's distinction between Islamophobia and Muslimophobia is interesting to note. While Akgönül analyzes "Muslimness" as per one's behavior, belief and belonging, he refers to Muslimophobia as "the concrete actions of discrimination against Muslims in education, housing, the job market, and within other aspects of life on the one hand, and physical attacks on the other". On the other hand, according to Akgönül, Islamophobia is "a very pointed arrow" instrumentalized by the majority to maintain dominance and "a shield against all discourses, attitudes and criticisms" of Islam, skillfully utilized by the minorities. Emphasizing the distinction between these two terms, Islamophobia and Muslimophobia, while the former a useful term and a systemic tool for political actors today, the latter is an actual act of discrimination which is difficult to measure, and contributes to the de-humanization of minority community members.

Akgönül Samim, "Islamophobia, Muslimophobia: From Words to Acts" in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, Vol. 9, 2017, p. 5-24

The influx to Europe, particularly through Greece, is closely linked to the situation in Turkey. In light of the statements made by Turkey in the fall of 2019 regarding the opening the borders unless certain demands were met, and the subsequent opening of the border in early 2020 makes this link more sensitive. Aware of these nation-state power struggles, it would not be surprising for EU countries to use the argument of Turkey's style of influence being mirrored by other neighboring countries which are, for the time being, tasked with controlling population movement towards Europe. EU agreements on border externalization have proved to be fragile, presenting significant risks of a further mass influx as political balances and relations shift in the region.

Consequently, the engagement of newcomers in socio-political life is not favored by nation-states, as possible reactionary and short-lived opportunistic alliances may be formed among marginalized groups in the peripheries of power, perceived potential threats to the status-quo of the center. As explained in Chapter 1, Diagram 3, 'reactions to vulnerability', such alliances find a platform with a transformative collective outlook among marginalized interest groups in isolation. Akgönül' s analysis is useful when forming a more comprehensive picture of the potential reactions of the nation-states and their influence on integration.

Heteronomy, as opposed to autonomy, refers to hierarchy, conformity and an inherited way of thinking. Entailing fixed impositions and excluding alternatives, heteronomous structures tend to operate around a single narrative, expecting all to fit in, regardless of their social and historical relevance and meaning to society. Nation-state structures enjoy heteronomy, using the rationale of national interest and integrity, promoting a dominant national identity and its cultural narrative, a notion that is increasingly challenged by populations on the move. The state, with all its institutions and laws, sets the norms for rights and justice, cushioned with religious, traditional and other forms of heteronomy, ideally representing mainstream ideology and politics. While the society educates its population to maintain this status-quo (vicinity to the center), newcomers are expected to fit in and accommodate these established norms, regardless of their backgrounds, culture

and heritage. These heteronomous structures privilege their citizens while excluding 'others', which essentially creates an obligatory path of integration towards a single goal; that of obtaining citizenship. In this regard, citizenship essentially regulates the legal status between the citizen and the nation-state, ensuring the obligations and responsibilities of the citizen to the state, affirming the alignment with the values of the center. Any divergence from this path or external influence by another nation-state presents a threat to the status-quo. Akgönül's analysis puts a spotlight on the nation-state and its diaspora that has been present in Europe for over six decades. Europe's complex history with the Middle East, Asia and Africa would inevitably create anxiety among the elites of the center, affecting their policies towards integration.

At a time where communities continuously regenerate, particularly in the peripheries, specific attention must be paid to the multiplicity of identities and narratives, to be considered essential elements of a transformative construction process. Castoriadis explains<sup>240</sup> that it is not possible to understand a person without taking into account the social and historical settings that form his/her beliefs, desires, cultural upbringing, especially in terms of how societies continually recreate themselves. Arguing for more autonomous structures, Castoriadis believes that the self-institution of society must be considered following displacement, moving from heteronomous to autonomous structures, a distinction and a conscious choice that must be made in co-constructing new communities.

Integration, as a multi-dimensional concept, with its socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects, is a well-studied subject in the field of forced displacement. The approaches have evolved over the decades, where today it is increasingly promoted as a two-way process, a process of mutual accommodation, depending on how resourceful the individual is and how open the society<sup>241</sup>. According to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) "integration relates both to the conditions for and actual participation

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<sup>240</sup> Straume, *art.cit.*, p. 1-6

<sup>241</sup> Ager Alastair, Strang Alison, "Understanding Integration; a conceptual framework", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 21, n. 2, 2008, p. 177

in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country, as well as to refugees' own perceptions of acceptance by and membership in the host society"<sup>242</sup>. While significant political differences exist among states as regards equal opportunities for refugees, political integration is closely linked to conditions that allow newcomers to participate in all aspects of political life in a new place. The access to political life in traditional sense, including but not limited to the right to vote, takes place in the last stage of integration, on the path to citizenship. The lengthy process toward citizenship is an opportunity for nation-states to shape newcomers toward the norms, mimicking ideological objectives of state-driven education systems and citizen education in general.

Both in Italy and Greece, the participation in democratic life through political processes in the first instance might seem unrealistic, due to extended periods of status determination, most newcomers' intention to continue with their journeys to other countries, as well as long-term residents' skepticism and reluctance to allow newcomers to be engaged in decision-making processes. Similar reactions and fear were observed in 2019 local elections in Turkey, with over 53,000 Syrians (as per acquired citizenship) were able to vote<sup>243</sup>. As all involved seem to perceive displacement as temporary, these discussions do not feature in integration efforts, with the exception of self-managed local anarchist settings such as squats and occupied buildings. As much as it might seem irrelevant, delays or unwillingness of the states and local governments to grant such rights or block platforms that attempt to work with the newcomers result in their marginalization, minimizes integration efforts, and pave the way for future social problems.

Therefore, it is essential that newcomers find a common space to assume responsibility for their rights and actions, and enter in a dialogue with long-term residents at a community level. Such dialogues have taken place in common spaces created through local initiatives in Palermo, Sutera, Athens, Thessaloniki and Kilkis, where organic intellectuals play a crucial role in steering the process. While they remain in their relatively

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<sup>242</sup> European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), "Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe", *ECRE*, 1999.

<sup>243</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Over 53,000 Syrians to vote in Turkey's elections", 19 January 2019  
<https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/over-53-000-syrians-to-vote-in-turkeys-elections-minister-140617>

small networks, this work represents a series of constructive models that should be considered for their strength in redefining the roles of inhabitants. Žiga Vodovnik<sup>244</sup> argues that a new concept of citizenship should be advanced, moving away from the nation-state as its territorial reference point as well as the notion of permanence and continuity, and highlighting the importance of alternatives within the network of local initiatives. Vodovnik emphasizes this new citizenship's epistemological aspect, noting that it should be understood not only as a legal status but also as a practice, as the concept of citizenship was not originally related to the state but to a relationship with the city.

The dilemma between nation-states' insistence on heteronomous structures and people's desire for autonomy should be at the basis for discussions concerning integration. Thorough critical questioning and a search for something beyond integration after displacement is necessary in order to avoid the reproduction of the historical relations of oppression and inequality. A social transformative process, triggered by forced displacement, seeks an alternative world view and governance, and cannot be stagnated in the process of integration with its neoliberal policies, which essentially benefits the maintenance of the status-quo of the elite and their nation-states.

Portes<sup>245</sup> points out that newcomers do not alter the fundamental structure of the class system regardless of which class they belong, but "they simply populate its different layers with new names and new faces". In this regard, the diversity that the newcomers bring consists of the growing presence of these new faces in existing organizations, at times with some changes in institutional rules to accommodate this population, such as making services available to the public in various languages. Portes emphasizes that the underlying class system, with its heteronomous structures, remains untouched. While the 'rules of the game' and norms are set by the elite in the center, diversity that is promoted in neoliberal sense is contained by the streets, away from political significance and influence. Ultimately, people in the peripheries, with a few exceptions of upward mobility,

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<sup>244</sup> Vodovnik Žiga, "The Performative Power of Translocal Citizenship", *Dve domovini/Two homelands*, vol 34, 2011, p. 13

<sup>245</sup> Portes Alejandro, "Migration and Social Change: Some Conceptual Reflections", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, n. 10, 2010, p. 1550



are destined to live permanently with economic concerns about everyday survival, alienated and isolated from any transformative process and socio-political engagement as well as decision-making processes concerning their daily lives and environment. Integration, under the present system becomes one of the processes that perpetuates these heteronomous relations and structures.

### **1.1. Integration today and efforts to localize humanitarian and development work**

The international system focuses on the idea of repatriation being the ideal solution in durable solutions, as historically most displaced persons have eventually returned home. However, among the displaced persons interviewed in Greece and Italy, most indicated that they plan to continue with their journeys instead of returning to their places of origin, as they are well aware that the conditions which forced them out in the first place have not improved. They were reluctant to entertain the idea of local integration as they all considered the situation to be temporary. The circular nature of displacement today suggests that the known three durable solutions should not be seen as mutually exclusive as displaced people in precarious conditions may find it feasible to live in one place while retaining the possibility of return or seeking other solutions. The strategies and programs put forward are often the work of central governments without the involvement of people of concern and local communities who are direct interlocutors, therefore, their durability is questionable.

An increasing emphasis on refugee self-reliance and reduction of camps and camp-like situations is assumed to be a positive step toward integration. In Thessaloniki, with the collective accommodation scheme being reduced and the focus shifting toward integration, there is a belief that finding housing for families in various neighborhoods will speed up the integration process and prevent ghettoization. While such an approach is welcomed by local authorities and long-term residents, there are concerns among some newcomers that solidarity networks that had already been established among vulnerable groups would be dismantled, indirectly forcing them to find individual solutions. Research

carried out in 2017 by the Oxford Refugee Studies Center<sup>246</sup> concludes that refugees' livelihoods often operate on familial and community levels, as current humanitarian programs tend to individualize self-reliance, and primarily focus on employment and income generation. The research highlights the necessity of measuring self-reliance beyond economic indicators as many refugees find value in social and cultural interactions in livelihood programs.

Alastair Ager and Alison Strand<sup>247</sup> highlight the importance of social connections: social bridges; social bonds; and, social links in order to be properly informed and access employment, housing, education and health services. Positive interaction between residents, and the willingness to engage in a constructive dialogue for a life together is an objective set by local communities for a better quality of life. While Ager and Strand's emphasis on social capital among newcomers is essential, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital<sup>248</sup> is worth considering, particularly activist long-term residents who have previously been part of social movements and local struggles and are known to the community and authorities. Examples of this have been observed in Palermo where including newcomers in local struggles has been easier due to the symbolic capital of local groups. Social connections established gradually create common spaces and experiences that also shape the political sphere. Murray Bookchin's<sup>249</sup> analysis of cultural communities in urban settings becoming social worlds, gradually leading to political awakening, stresses the essence of continuity in relationships in various levels.

The emphasis on refugee self-reliance places the responsibility on refugees with the aim of reducing and eventually stopping dependency on aid through individualized self-reliance programs. Introduction of livelihood training (e.g. hairdressing, tailoring, catering, etc.) particularly in urban areas where the economy has been struggling in the last

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<sup>246</sup> University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, "Refugee Self Reliance: Moving Beyond the Market Place" *RSC Research in Brief*, n. 7, October 2017

<sup>247</sup> Ager, Strang, *art.cit.*, p. 178

<sup>248</sup> Ihlen Øyvind, "Symbolic Capital", in R. L. Heath & W. Johanesen (eds.), *The international encyclopedia of strategic communication*, n. 8, 2018, p. 1-8

<sup>249</sup> Bookchin Murray, *Urbanization Without Cities - The Rise and Decline of Citizenship*, Montreal, New York, Black Rose Books, 1992, p. 39

decade, offers a number of opportunities, however, close linkage between economic opportunities and rights-based and social issues should not be sidelined, perpetuating the vulnerabilities of newcomers in a new environment. The prolonged vulnerability of newcomers has an impact on community well-being in the long run. Therefore, separating newcomers' socio-economic concerns from their wider community through specialized projects is no more than a short-term, band-aid, solution. A healthier departure point for community well-being considers the community in its entirety, with newcomers an integral part. Given that expectations and needs are diverse, and there is an increased circulation of individuals and groups, this new community-based perspective focuses on adapting to an environment in constant flux. Refugee self-reliance in this regard should be reconsidered and treated as an essential part of a collective approach to community, and go beyond efforts to advance the economic means of a specific group. In this sense, as our understanding of the limitations of humanitarian services through both international and nation-state contributions has improved, community-based solutions with active political engagement of community members have become crucial in recent years.

In the last few decades, nation-states have been facing major challenges in the governance of displacement and integration, regardless of their role as sole authority in policy-making on these issues. Vested with the authority but unable to address people's needs, and hampered by political complications, nation-states have put millions of people into a situation of protracted displacement, living precarious lives. Therefore, aid localization has become a prominent discussion. *Lucio Melandri*, working with an intergovernmental organization based in Greece, argues that large international operations are not able to deliver aid on a large scale, as the role of the local actors are crucial to meet local needs. Policies and strategies for aid localization engages local actors effectively, integrating them into international efforts when responding to displacement at a local level. However, deeply embedded hierarchical relationships and implicit and explicit forms of mistrust between international and local actors should be revisited and redefined. These hierarchical relationships are also reflected on the

relationships between long-term residents and newcomers, and between the humanitarian workers in the field and refugees/migrants.

Despite the growing body of evidence of the effectiveness of locally led efforts to cooperate with displaced people, local groups tend to be regarded as subcontractors to national authorities or international entities<sup>250</sup>. Integration is still regarded as subject to the authority of the institutional environment of the receiving nation-states. Furthermore, it is increasingly understood that community perspectives and local efforts to respond to displacement go beyond the mechanisms of the non-profit industrial complex, as the communities must face up to challenges on a daily basis and cannot postpone the issue or refer to other actors.

Support by practitioners for 'localization of aid' concept, although lacking a practical road map under the present humanitarian system, is a positive step forward in conceptualizing the future of displacement and governance. Yet integration is a contradictory dilemma lying between displacement and governance. Closely linked to processes of local development and democratic practices, integration should be analyzed in light of the notion of heteronomy, which imposes the center's cultural norms on peripheries. Consequently, this fetishization of integration needs to be demythified and possibilities beyond integration considered when dealing with the co-construction of new communities. This would allow populations on the move to meet in a common space to engage in a genuine dialogue for autonomy, and a more dignified life for their communities.

Temporary and short-sighted solutions to protracted displacement, with camps and camp-like situations, perpetuates the notions of newcomers being in a constant state of vulnerability and burden to society. Considering the dynamic nature of population movement, the creation of favorable conditions with newcomers through community development has the power to shift the way displacement is perceived and treated.

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<sup>250</sup> Carstensen Nils, "Understanding and supporting community-led protection", *Forced Migration Review*, v. 53, 2016, p. 4-7

According to Sarah J. Feldman<sup>251</sup>, such favorable conditions include the right to freedom of movement and right to work; the resources made available for economic activities, benefiting long-term residents as well as newcomers; as part of the concept of development-assisted integration, a potential alternative to be considered.

Ager and Strang's conceptual framework defines the core domains of integration and puts an emphasis on rights and citizenship<sup>252</sup> facilitated by language and cultural knowledge. Local initiatives in both in Italy and Greece have focused on the attainment of legal rights, trying to ensure that newcomers have the right to stay. In most cases, language learning and cultural orientation were seen as fundamental for self-sufficiency (hospital visits, shopping, training sessions, courses, possible employment, etc) and interaction with local communities.

The concept of integration makes sense in the context of nation-state and unity, as there are valid arguments made for the importance of ensuring that newcomers fit in with cultural life and contribute to the richness of these nations. This approach is accepted by the majority, including local groups, it rationalizes the dominant culture stance, underlining the idea of a pure culture that must be preserved. Within the current mindset of the nation state, highly creative ideas and initiatives have been introduced and implemented across Europe. In many cases, efforts to improve integration policies and practices are substantial part of the work of both nation-states and European Institutions including the CoE and EU.

In the case of Greece, the integration of recently arrived refugees and other immigrants into society has been one of the main challenges for the state<sup>253</sup>. Recent efforts have focused on accommodation schemes (the Emergency Support to Integration &

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<sup>251</sup> Feldman Sara J., "Development Assisted Integration: A Viable Alternative to Long Term Residence in Refugee Camps?", *Praxis - The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, vol 22, 2007, p. 63

<sup>252</sup> Ager, Strang, *art.cit.*, p.184

<sup>253</sup> Vasiliki Karzi, Athanasios Theodoridis, Naya Tselepi, "Best integration practices in Greece" in *Agnes Lace (ed.) Newcomer Integration in Europe: Best Practices and Innovations since 2015*, Brussels, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2018, p. 25-37

Accommodation - ESTIA) and educational programs, specifically targeting refugees and asylum-seeking children in mainland Greece. Some of the examples of good practice include *Reception/Preparatory Classes for the Education of Refugees* (DYEP) in various public schools. *Zones of Educational Priority* (ZEP), previously implemented in France in 1975 and redefined in 1981<sup>254</sup>, provided additional opportunities for children to attend morning *Reception Classes*, which are part of the formal educational system and are for pupils with limited knowledge of the Greek language. Local NGOs played a crucial role in community outreach (e.g. NGO – METAdrasi) and promoting the cultural and social development of migrants and refugees, the Social Centers (e.g. “Steki Metanaston” in Thessaloniki) have also been active in providing Greek language courses and referral services to other local organizations. A significant number of these small organizations are funded by the EU and international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM whose funding structure does not guarantee the sustainability of these services in the long run. In some cases, other problems emerge, for example when long-term residents refuse to have their children in the same class as refugee/migrant children<sup>255</sup>.

Although the integration of migrants in Italy has been discussed by many scholars<sup>256</sup>, attempts at the local governance of integration and immigration have struggled particularly following the anti-migrant/refugee rhetoric and policies proposed by Salvini in 2018 and 2019.

Stefano Allievi, a long-term advocate of the regularization of immigrants, argues<sup>257</sup> that recent government policies, dating back to the 2002 Bossi-Fini law, but particularly under Salvini, have limited the debate on immigration to the controversies surrounding landing, reception centers and emergency matters. Allievi stresses that immigration issues must

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<sup>254</sup> Franchi Vijé, "Analytical Report on Education", Agency for the development of intercultural relations, Paris, 2004, p. 20-22

<sup>255</sup> Kougianou Angeliki, "Parents in Northern Greece Say They Don't Want Refugee Children in Their Schools" Huffington Post, 15 September 2016.

Among other examples Oreokastro in northern Greece and Samos island residents claimed that there are health risks associated with sending their children to school with refugee children.

<sup>256</sup> Samuk Carignani Sahizer, Fontana Iole, "Integration policies at the local level in Italy: The case of Lucca and Catania" in in *Agnes Lace (ed.) Newcomer Integration in Europe: Best Practices and Innovations since 2015*, Brussels, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2018, p. 127-141

<sup>257</sup> Allievi Stefano, Livi Bacci Massimo, "Il dovere di governare le migrazioni" 29 October 2019, <https://stefanoallievi.it/anno/il-dovere-di-governare-le-migrazioni/>

be addressed with a rational, lucid and long-term vision, avoiding controversy and separating them from emergencies or the influence of current affairs. He adds that the governance of population movements will have significant implications for the construction of an internal social pact within Italy, which will reflect on the future of democracy and the orientation of society<sup>258</sup>. Allievi emphasizes that this regularization process needs to be well coordinated with the countries of origin. Through this cooperation, the 'integration game' can be better addressed in the long run. While Allievi's analysis and suggestions for the Italian case might carry the progressive process a step forward, the insistence on the normalization of integration and state-centered solutions is concerning.

Non-state actors and local governance structures have assumed high levels of responsibility for integration at a local level. Besides the well-known power of organizations such as Caritas and their capacity for managing irregular migration and assisting immigrants, smaller local initiatives and municipalities have also attempted to work on integration projects for newcomers. Italy's experience of confronting the dilemma of mixed migration has been intense, with differentiation between economic migrants and asylum seekers challenged over the years among grassroots organizations as well as municipalities such as Palermo, Napoli, Bologna, Riace as the divisions are porous. In spite of concerted efforts, the lack of coordination, not only among local NGOs and associations, but also between associations and institutions, is an obstacle to addressing needs related to the social and economic autonomy of newcomers. According to Samuk Carignani and Fontana, those working on integration in Italy came to an understanding that "creating common ground, common interests and an inter-cultural understanding works better than just 'assisting' people". In this sense, promoting immigrant autonomy and independence is considered fundamental while efforts for integration should be consolidated in order for the approach to be more effective.

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<sup>258</sup> Allievi Stefano, "Immigrazione: un'agenda per il governo" 6 October 2019, <https://stefanoallievi.it/anno/immigrazione-unagenda-per-il-governo/>

At the European level, initiatives including Eurocities, United Cities and Local Governments, Strong Cities, and Intercultural cities<sup>259</sup> have inspired regional and global networks at municipal levels, some offering guidance and sharing best practice for refugee and migrant integration. Although through these programs, many interesting initiatives have taken place and contributed to integration efforts, the fundamental question of ‘fitting into what’ remains unaddressed, as most operate within the parameters and norms of the center.

It is crucial to be decisive concerning the overall direction of interventions on displacement and integration. Whether integration as a heteronomous practice plays a role in reaching ensuring solutions and analyze the actual benefits and beneficiaries of these solutions should be taken into account. It is necessary to further consider whether known durable solutions are a realistic expectation at this time in history. It is important to acknowledge the increased prominence of localization in humanitarian work, discussions on development assisted integration and the enhanced role of municipalities in governance of displacement and integration. However, their relation to heteronomous structures and the possibility that they perpetuate the status-quo should be clearly stated and further analyzed. In addition, displaced peoples’ genuine aspiration for autonomy, and their struggle for a dignified life should be lauded regardless of the opposition and impositions they may face from solidified mainstream societal values of the nation-state.

For these reasons, it must be underlined that current nation-state-oriented efforts for integration, by virtue of not engaging in intercultural dialogue on equal terms, fail to generate a just and egalitarian environment where opportunities flourish, are shared and contribute to new communities. These unsettled integration issues, contributing to increased alienation and isolation from political processes, combined with significant emphasis on identity politics, take focus away from a common cause; the right of communities to self-management and decision-making on matters relating to everyday

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<sup>259</sup> European and global network of cities that operate under the umbrella of international institutions, which will be further explored in Part 2, Chapter 1.



life, relevant to both new communities and the precariat. In this scenario, the reproduction of a hierarchical and patriarchal governance styles continues, which ultimately benefit the few, and perpetuates the historical global and regional relations of inequality.

Considering integration as a local issue, one that affects the daily lives and dynamics of local communities, and given the arguments presented above on the localization of aid and engaging in intercultural dialogue on equal terms, it is important to consider the definition of 'local' in more depth.

## **1.2. The local and reproduced hierarchies in the peripheries**

In spite of the need to engage in a continuous negotiated process between active community members, the pressure on newcomers to fit in generates anxiety between them and dominant groups of long-term residents, gradually leading to social and political problems. A constant impetus for national integrity and interest perpetuates the notion of a single and static narrative of a place, based on a possessive and territorial connection, which inevitably excludes newcomers, and creates a hierarchy among groups according to the time of their arrival. For example, the influx from Albania to both Greece and Italy in the 1990s, which was seen as problematic at the time, is now perceived as a good practice of integration by many interviewees in this research. They are considered well integrated as they supposedly adopted mainstream cultural norms and positioned themselves in a higher social category of migrants today. The refugees and migrants from Africa and Middle East are expected to follow a similar path.

In reference to dominance by a majority (regardless of the numbers) and the negotiated process between active community members, Serge Moscovici's work on the power of the minority and minority influence highlights a different approach. Moscovici argued that people with minority viewpoints could persuade the majority, provided they were

consistent in their position over time. Charlan Nemeth points out<sup>260</sup> that despite being ridiculed, facing pressure and even being punished, minority views hold power and have agency to skillfully exercise influence. Moscovici's notion of conflict creation and maintenance is closely linked to behavior styles<sup>261</sup> where he advanced the strong prediction that a minority has more social influence when perceived as unreasonable and being denied than when perceived as credible and being accepted<sup>262</sup>. He argued that social change arises from the power of minorities and it takes place because of conflict and the effect of behavioral style. Consistency on different viewpoints, which generate conflict, forces communities to either favor the majority position or minorities' innovative action which challenge established social norms<sup>263</sup>. In this regard, Moscovici's work is complimentary to the discussions on perceiving newcomers not as vulnerable and incapable individuals and groups, but equal partners and potential agents in processes of social change.

Integration remains high on the current international political agenda as it refers to distinctive differences at nation-state and local levels. The former aims to ensure alignment with the core culture and norms of the center, while the latter is concerned with the everyday life of communities in all their aspects and dynamic forms. Ultimately, in spite of centralized nation-state policies setting the tone, the perception and treatment of integration following displacement at local level determines the parameters of the so-called durable solutions. In this scenario, it is important to emphasize that durable is not about sustaining existing structures for a long period of time, but having the agency to adapt changes and rebalance following disorientation caused by each major change and influx, which will need to become the norm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>260</sup> Nemeth Charlan, "The power of the minority: A personal homage to Serge Moscovici" in memoriam Serge Moscovici (1925-2014), *Bulletin de psychologie, Groupe d'étude de psychologie*, vol. 27, n. 1, 2015, p. 23-27

<sup>261</sup> Moscovici refers to five behavior style to be influential as consistency, rigidity, equality, investment and autonomy. Orfali Birgitta, DOI: [10.1111/1468-5914.00195](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5914.00195)

<sup>262</sup> Gabriel Mugny, Juan Manuel Falomir-Pichastor & Alain Quiamzade, "Serge Moscovici: An innovative minority view of social influence in memoriam Serge Moscovici (1925-2014). *Bulletin de psychologie, Groupe d'étude de psychologie*, vol. 27, n.1, 2015, p. 31-35

<sup>263</sup> Orfali Brigitta, "Active Minorities and Social Representations: Two Theories, One Epistemology", *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol. 32 n 4, 2002, p. 395-416

In this regard, how the local community is defined sets the tone in engaging in dialogue. The distinction needs to be elaborated between the traditional concept of citizenship (legal), territorial connection to the place and surroundings (social and cultural) vs. being an inhabitant of a place without legal and social impositions with interest in community wellbeing. How a local is defined and accepted has multiple implications in community life and governance. Acknowledgement of all inhabitants in a community regardless of their legal status brings the concept of local to a different dimension, where a genuine dialogue based on human rights actually takes place, away from the restrictions and impositions brought by the institutions. While such conditions continue to maintain power relations and privileges in favor of long-term inhabitants, they may also lead to more balanced relations in a transformative environment.

The mayor of Palermo, Leoluca Orlando, in his response to media<sup>264</sup>, pointed out that for municipal officials there was no such distinction as migrants or refugees, but all were simply residents of Palermo. This contradicted the statements and policies of the Italian government at the time. *Mr. Melluso*<sup>265</sup>, who is also a member of the municipal assembly in Palermo, explained the municipality's plan to introduce a municipal identity card to all inhabitants. Such a document would ideally allow access to services within the Palermo municipality regardless of their legal status. However, they decided not to proceed as this would expose the inhabitants lacking legal status and put them in a vulnerable situation before central government.

The urbanized nature of refugee and migrant routes has a significant influence on demographic changes, particularly in the peripheries, where any connection to place is limited to private residential areas that tend to lack common spaces. This can have an impact on the norms of the dominant culture, making them less meaningful due to the multicultural and multidimensional nature of newcomers in the peripheries. Ironically, even if the long-term inhabitants living precarious lives are pushed to the peripheries, the

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<sup>264</sup> The Guardian, "He fought the mafia and won. Now this mayor is taking on Europe over migrants", 18 April 2017.

<sup>265</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Melluso (male - early 30s), is a long-term resident of Palermo, activist, founder of Arci Porco Rosso and a member of the municipal council.

parameters of current integration policies determine acceptability according to the norms of the mainstream, dominant culture, leaving little space for the diverse nature of demographics to shape their everyday lives and open up new ways of engaging in community affairs.

Peripheral neighborhoods, with their increasingly precarious living conditions, have developed through a process of exclusion by mainstream society as well as the need for newcomers to create their own support systems. Although they may present a multicultural and diverse outlook in urban settings, their existence often remains out of the political realm, creating their own community norms in their respective peripheries. These small communities tend to reproduce small pockets of hierarchies based on linguistic, cultural, religious and traditional affiliations and kinship, as has been noted in many neighborhoods in northern Mediterranean countries. Often creating self-organized networks of economic activities, their social and economic relations are repositioned after displacement in a new place, aligned with the legal structure and the needs of local markets.

Both in Greece and Italy, most of the discussion is focused on the legality and conditions of admission of asylum seekers and migrants from the Middle East and Africa, yet there are limited discussions concerning the presence of migrants from China and Indian sub-continent. One example is a small neighborhood on the edge of downtown Thessaloniki where immigrants from China work as shop owners, and workers from the countries of Indian sub-continent as well as low-income local Greeks live together. The diversity of this little 'China-town' in Thessaloniki is not typical of Greek cities. Its economy centers on service in the textile industry as well as the manufacture of small tourist ornaments sold in the city center. The neighborhood also contains Roma community members as well as customers who are Asian in origin, groups that are not seen in downtown tourist areas of Thessaloniki. These groups, who contribute to the wider economy and are economically self-reliant, do not seem to blend in with mainstream Greek culture, rather

they co-exist; a concept that is often misconceived as integration and does not have an impact on the power relations between the center and peripheries.

The precarious conditions of long-term residents place them in a unique but challenging position; in the nexus of displacement and integration in terms of both their relations to the center as well as to newcomers. As they have been exposed to waves of population movements in recent years, what they consider as local has evolved. For example, to consider what local communities are and what their culture is in Thessaloniki today, it is crucial to understand groups that pass by or stay with their influences on Greece and the Greek society, along with the long-standing influential Greek culture in the region. Such a situation could easily be compared to other cities in the region, including Marseille, Palermo, Barcelona, Istanbul and Athens.

According to *Charalampos Tsavdaroglou*<sup>266</sup>, in recent times following the population exchange with Turkey in 1923, Greece experienced three main population entries; the 1990s influx from Albania, the arrival of a workforce from the Indian subcontinent and Africa for the preparation of the 2004 Olympics, and the flow of asylum seekers following the war in Syria. Effie Voutira also highlights to the immigration of Pontic Greeks [particularly from Georgia] in the 1990s while examining the conceptual links between nationalism and the cultivation of national identity in light of the Greek state's repatriation policies to the homeland<sup>267</sup>. These ten-year intervals of population movements, coupled with Greeks emigrating during the time of austerity measures, has had a significant impact on the Greek society today.

Two informative interviews in Thessaloniki show the integration dilemma among long-term residents. *Mr. Papazoglou*<sup>268</sup>, a long-term resident of Greek origin, cognizant of his grandparents having migrated from Anatolia, understands the difficulties of integration

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<sup>266</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. Mr Tsavdaroglou is an academic (male, late 40s) specialized in urban commons.

<sup>267</sup> Voutira Effie, "Pontic Greeks Today: Migrants or Refugees?", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, v. 4, n 4, 1991, p. 400 – 420

<sup>268</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. Mr. Papazoglou (male - early 60s) is a local community member and a market vender.

and expresses empathy for the situation of Syrians. However, he admits that he finds Afghans, Pakistanis and Africans more challenging as he describes them as significantly different, and difficult to handle. He recalls the Albanian influx in early 1990s and is content that Albanians are well integrated, as they understand ‘the Greek mentality’. With their children having gone through the Greek school system, he believes that they learned ‘how to be Greek’ and he claims that all the others should follow this path. He further expressed his concern about thousands of years of rich Greek heritage and identity disappearing as the numbers of newcomers have increased in recent years. He contended that if Greece’s identity is lost, after a while, ‘Greece as a country would not make sense’. Ifigeneia Kokkali, in her study<sup>269</sup> on the changing image of Albanian immigrants from the 1990s to the 2010s, stresses that Albanians’ otherness has been silenced to fit in the Greek society and become ‘good immigrants’. A negative image of Albanians has been transformed over the decades where “the Albanians – via their ‘invisibility’ – do not challenge the existing order, values, practices, etc. of the dominant society and therefore are not the main subject of discussions on integration”. Also referring to *La double absence* of Sayad, Kokkali sets out a belief among the majority in Greece that “the ‘good immigrants’ are those who can be trusted because they behave like us” and concludes that silencing every difference of the immigrant that could be silenced has been a frequent prerequisite for ‘integration’.

On the other hand, *Mara Angelidou*<sup>270</sup> does not think that Albanians have integrated. Skeptical of the integration of newcomers, she questions what Greek identity is today with all the changes that have been happening over the decades. While there is the ideal or stereotypical image of Greeks, she believes that it is rather mixed and diverse with all nations passing by or settling across the country. She emphasizes that after many years of population movements, loss of identity does not happen but an identity evolves.

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<sup>269</sup> Kokkali Ifigeneia, “From scapegoats to ‘good’ immigrants?: Albanians’ supposedly ‘successful’ integration to Greece”, *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli*, n. 3, 2011, p. 161-173

<sup>270</sup> The interview was carried out in Thessaloniki, March 2019. Ms. Angelidou is an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common, (female, mid-30s) who has been directly working with the refugee/migrant influx since 2015.

Therefore, the argument of integration is a tricky concept as the definition of local changes alongside the diverse experiences and cultural norms of newcomers.

Displacement is continuously reshaping Europe. Given the political and economic trends in the neighboring areas as well as the impact of climate change and environmental hazards, it would be naïve to think that the 2015 influx will not be repeated. In fact, the autumn of 2019 has witnessed the largest influx since 2015 where over 600 persons arrived to the shores of Lesbos in one day, while arrivals through the Mediterranean routes were 90,000 at the end of 2019. When the Turkish government opened the borders in early 2020 there was a further influx, exhibiting the instrumentalization of refugees and migrants in politics. Despite increased security measures, the externalization of borders and criminalization of humanitarian rescue missions, population movement continues – with numbers fluctuating at times – changing the face of the streets and communities in Greece and Italy as well as the continent of Europe. It is inevitable that the growing Middle Eastern, Asian, and African diasporas in Europe will also attract further migration as well as people forcibly displaced seeking safety due to conflicts and environmental hazards. Stefan Lehne<sup>271</sup> argues that “the presence of relatives and friends in EU countries reduces the costs and risks of migration and exerts a significant pull effect”, which will eventually be channeled towards people-smuggling networks, making illegal migration an even more daunting problem.

The growing number of new diverse communities will not be satisfied with a “fitting in” approach as the new communities are formed and transformed. Initially caught between internalized cultural and traditional values and the impositions of the dominant culture, people of the peripheries are torn by contradictions. Channeling the plurality of separated existences into the monocultural framework of a heteronomous structure is not viable in the current demographic spectrum. The desire for autonomy that has been expressed in the individual interviews conducted through this research should be able to find space to materialize in new communities, where a clear choice to shift from heteronomy to

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<sup>271</sup> Lehne Stefan, “How the Refugee Crisis Will Reshape the EU”, *Carnegie Europe*, 4 Feb 2016

autonomy takes place. Such a shift, however, will need to go beyond socio-economic and cultural relations and adopt a political dimension in order to redefine the concept of 'local' and redesign relations after displacement.

Such presumed engagement in political action for social change in the peripheries is not a given whether those concerned are long-term residents or newcomers. It would be naïve to consider that all people in the peripheries have the political consciousness, and willingness to change the relations of power and privilege discussed in this context. Indeed, there is a strong belief in the trickle-down economic system with its educational upbringing that sustains such a narrative among the people of peripheries, particularly among long-term residents. As a reaction, and at times for survival reasons, a tendency to recreate hierarchies also exists among newcomers, described by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif M. Qasmiyeh<sup>272</sup>, as 'a hierarchy of refugee-ness'. More established residents with a refugee background, whether in urban or camp settings, put forward the power relations as they refer to newcomers as the 'other', using the length of their stay and certain privileges as part of the hierarchy and distance they tend to establish. Whether such an action is based on showing their degree of vicinity to the core culture (therefore more integrated) or simply in order to survive, the tendency to compete for resources, space and employment opportunities, is present in various degrees.

In summary, across Europe it is usual to see neighborhoods inhabited by waves of newcomers who often co-exist, engage in economic life, but still maintain their distance from other groups and political life. They are often acceptable to society as long as the dominant cultural norms are not challenged and they show signs of integration. Meanwhile they often reproduce hierarchical and patriarchal relations to which they are accustomed. *Mahmood Jadoon*<sup>273</sup>, a long-term-resident in Palermo of Pakistani origin indicated that even though many of his friends have lived in Palermo for several years

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<sup>272</sup> Fiddian-Qasmiyeh Elena and Qasmiyeh Yousif M., "Refugee Neighbours and Hospitality", *Refugee Hosts*, 20 March 2018

<sup>273</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo in May 2019. Mr. Jadoon is a long-term resident (male, early 40s) with the country of origin Pakistan. He is a street vender and has had legal residency in Italy over 12 years



and have regular documents, no one he knew engaged in political life. He pointed out that as first-generation immigrants, they are all concerned about daily survival and keeping their families together. He further described the reproduction of similar structures among groups from Indian subcontinent, emphasizing that women stay at home as a standard part of their culture. Consequently, these long-term residents keep themselves separate from society, continue with traditional practices, do not engage in any political decision-making, pay their taxes, do not disturb wider society, remain economically and socially self-reliant, send their children to schools, and meet all the requirements of integration; however, they are seen separate from the mainstream society. The presence of many groups with their diverse backgrounds and everyday life practices do not seem to satisfy the measure of full integration, a scale and framework that is determined by the center.

While the nation-state seems to be content with such a concept of integration, reproduction of hierarchies in small groups continue to perpetuate unequal power relations and vulnerabilities in societies, particularly among women. It feeds into systematization of victimization, keeping people away from political action and socio-economic life, reducing them into their corners within micro hierarchies created in the new place. This also gives permission for the continuation of traditional relations that have been oppressive and shielded by the arguments of cultural relativism. In reconsidering the concept of who is local today, and redefining relations among locals, the (re)construction of communities is a concrete platform where oppressive traditional practices should be questioned and abandoned. The change in conditions of women was brought up several times in a few powerful examples during the interviews in Greece and Italy, where the relationship of the interviewed women with their partners began to transform while some women felt more liberated without the control of a male figure. Such a transformation takes place in a common space through solidarity among people who aspire to change and a dignified life.

Current and predicted displacement in the 21st century with its potential implications will not be adequately addressed through the integration policies in most receiving countries, presenting an unrealistic picture on the ground. What is considered integration today is 'peaceful' coexistence, not disturbing the norms of the elite, containing subaltern groups living in separate realities which reproduce small hierarchies and patriarchy, and therefore, aligned with the norms of the ruling classes. The local, in the mind of nation-state sense, is perceived as long-term residents with rooted generational and territorial connections who ideally accommodate the norms of the center and reproduce these norms and heteronomous structures at local levels. Therefore, changing demographics and norms, if not regulated through integration policies, would present a threat to these 'local' norms, consequently to the power, privilege and the authority of the center.

Aware of the current dynamics and the presence of multiple and dynamic identities, this thesis considers the concept of local as expanding beyond a fixed category of individuals, born and raised in a specific geographic area. Thus, all the inhabitants, who have a connection to and are part of the everyday life of a place, regardless of their legal status, are considered local. Ann Armbrecht Forbes argues<sup>274</sup> that identities are fluid and change in time and space in various contexts, adding that "the mobilization of identity claims are more about politics than they are about geography". She stresses that the influences including "who speaks up, who claims to speak for whom, who chooses to remain silent and why, affect the label as local", which shows parallels with the dynamics between international and local actors in displacement. In his theory of liquid modernity, Zygmunt Bauman also refers to fragmented modern life, constant change and the need for individuals to be flexible and adaptable. Bauman explains that liquid modernity happens in different parts of the planet on different dates and proceeds at a different pace, with limited possibilities of being copied and reiterated<sup>275</sup>. Therefore, each case depends on the local conditions and dynamics among the local population.

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<sup>274</sup> Armbrecht Forbes Ann, "Defining the 'Local' in the Arun Controversy: Villagers, NGOs, and The World Bank in the Arun Valley, Nepal" *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, vol 20, n. 3, 1996

<sup>275</sup> Dawes Simon, "The Role of the Intellectual in Liquid Modernity: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman" *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, n. 3, 2011, p. 135

However, with the concepts of local and localization, attention should be paid to avoid parochial views, the 'local trap'<sup>276</sup>, which is the assumption of the local scale to be inherently more democratic than other scales. Purcell<sup>277</sup> warns that localization does not guarantee more democracy and could easily lead to oppression. Locals are not automatically the people of and for democracy, community does not refer only to a local-scale, and community-based actions are not always participatory, therefore, one should not glorify the idea alone, but consider it in its entirety in connection with radical democratic resistance at broader scales. While the localization of aid and development work is promoted by many experts in the field, the use of the term local remains associated with ideas including: traditional; weak; in need of capacity and development; seen as faults which need assistance in order to catch up with international standards.

In her analysis of the concept of local in social movements, Armbrecht Forbes points out that an emphasis on the local prioritizes place over politics, sidelining the impacts of multilevel engagement and solidarity efforts in the long run. In what she defines as a broader zone of influence, Forbes refers to the dialectical interaction between local and global, and concludes that the effectiveness of social movements depends on their skill in moving across boundaries of space and time beyond fixed identities.

### **1.3. Colonized minds, coloniality of power<sup>278</sup>, reproduction of unequal power relations and vulnerabilities**

The crisis of society today is linked to a historical period and processes that were initiated with colonization, followed by a post-colonial era, through the emergence of a new model of global powers. The integration of all the peoples of the globe in this process, through the most atrocious acts of genocides, post-colonial nation-state building, international development aid programs, and structural adjustments today, has been the underlying

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<sup>276</sup> Bertie Russel, "Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities", *Antipode*, Vol. 0 No. 0, 2019 p.1-22

<sup>277</sup> Purcel Mark, "Urban Democracy and the Local Trap", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 11, 2006, p. 1921 – 1941

<sup>278</sup> The "coloniality of power" is an expression coined by Anibal Quijano to name the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during the modernist era, the era of colonialism, which stretches from the conquest of the Americas to the present.

political stance over generations, ensuring the continuity of heteronomous structures and power relations in various forms. Anibal Quijano argues that “the modern world-system that began to form with the colonization of Americas, has in common three central elements that affect the quotidian life of the totality of the global population: the coloniality of power, capitalism, and Eurocentrism<sup>279</sup>”.

Referring to the current relations of global trade, the modes of production and social reproduction of global capitalism, Quijano points out the continuity of the structures of power, control, and hegemony since the colonial era; he, therefore, argues for the existence of the concept of the coloniality of power. Encarnacion Gutiérrez Rodríguez<sup>280</sup> reveals the contradictory divide created between ‘the insider and outsider’ of the nation, dating back to the emergence of the modern nation-state in 19<sup>th</sup> century. In line with the logic of coloniality, the divide refers to racial differences between the insider ‘citizen’ and the outsider, ‘non-citizen’; aliens, immigrants or *extra-communitaire*; a frequent term used in recent years for non-EU citizens. Ultimately, Gutiérrez Rodríguez argues that such differentiation between these two groups determines access to the labor market, education, political participation, the health system, media and cultural representation, a system that was established in the colonies and continues to be implemented today. The center and its dominant norms continue with a similar process of coloniality of power through their existing policies of the nation-state, and their impositions of integrating all the peoples in this process. The categorization of the displaced as well as an imposed distinction between citizens and non-citizens perpetuates and reproduces unequal power relations and vulnerabilities. Tom Nairn, building on Trotsky’s concept of uneven development, refers to the emergence of nationalist movements in peripheral regions due to regional inequalities and ethnic differences. It is interesting to note Nairn’s point on this ‘unevenness’ under nation-states, which goes beyond the concerns of development, and leads to an increase in ‘unevenness of consciousness’<sup>281</sup> between the center and the periphery. In relation to the coloniality of power and dominance, this unevenness

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<sup>279</sup> Quijano, *art.cit.*, p. 545

<sup>280</sup> Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *art.cit.*, p. 16-28

<sup>281</sup> Nairn Tom and James Paul, *Global Matrix: Nationalism, Globalism and Terrorism*, Pluto Press, London, 2005, p. 38

conditions power relations for generations to come, perpetuating acts of silencing and the need for invisibility for survival.

Quijano, focusing on the axes of the coloniality of power and modernity, points out that all power is structured in relations of domination, exploitation and conflict. These relations battle over control of “sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity, their resources and products”<sup>282</sup>. Such impositions, with its long history of colonization, has implications on the people of the peripheries through their colonized minds. As per her analysis of Maria Lugones’ work, Gutiérrez Rodríguez underlines that gender plays a significant role in relations of race, fundamentally shaping the coloniality of power within asylum and migration policies and she further proposes the framework of the coloniality of migration in order to analyze migration policies.

Traditional practices and rituals that are essential parts of the daily life of communities are often treasured in displacement in order to hold the community together and transmit culture to the next generation. The abuse of some of these practices and their oppressive use in displacement, particularly against Nigerian women, have been studied by IOM extensively. A comprehensive study of Norah Hashim Msuya<sup>283</sup>, focusing on traditional ‘juju oath’<sup>284</sup> and human trafficking, lays out the concrete abuse of a traditional practice, creating a basis for major human rights violations. Emphasizing that such a practice needs to be understood in the context of African traditional beliefs, beyond an exotic ritual, Msuya points out that people who are born into and live under the influence of a traditional

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<sup>282</sup> Quijano, Anibal, “Colonialidad del poder, Globalización y Democracia”, *Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León*, vol. 4, n 7 - 8, 2001 – 2002

<sup>283</sup> Hashim Msuya, Norah, “Traditional “juju oath” and human trafficking in Nigeria: A human rights perspective”, *De Jure*, vol.52 n.1, 2019, p. 138-162

<sup>284</sup> Juju is a spiritual belief system in Nigeria as well as some other parts in Africa, which is used as of the powerful means to control human trafficking victims. It reaches into the depths of their psychological vulnerability, combined with other push/pull factors mentioned above which render women and children vulnerable to being trafficked. Traditional oaths are part of a supernatural ritual, which plays an important role in west African customary practices. Despite the widespread practice of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, the traditional customs, laws and practices have a strong hold on communities. Victims of trafficking are subject to a popular traditional oath ceremony which is also applicable in many circumstances in Nigeria, including weddings, conflict situations, crime, etc. Swearing the oath prior to leaving the country is viewed within the context of the traditional justice system as a pact with the gods. If the swearer breaches the promise, it will not only offend the gods, but also break a natural law for which there will be consequences. Affirming this oath seals a contract. Some of the things which are believed to happen when the swearer does not honor the oath include, but are not limited to the following: not being able to have a child, or dying in the process of childbirth through excessive bleeding; that the swearer or her parents will die; that the family of the swearer will be destroyed; that the swearer will become insane (as per the article of Hashim Msuya, Norah, *ibid*).

culture do not need further control as these internalized beliefs have strong psychological and spiritual significance for many. Traffickers exploit tradition and use it to silence their victims.

In case of Italy, *Ms. Garba*<sup>285</sup> had to leave Nigeria for her safety and has lived in Italy for less than a year. For her, all of Europe is the same and perceived as equally safe. As long as there is a job, she would be happy to stay anywhere, including a small town such as Sutera in Sicily. She believes that one has to do everything possible to fit into the host culture, including learning the local language and following the norms. She does not want to go back to Nigeria; therefore, she would do anything to stay in Europe. While *Ms. Garba* was safe in Sutera and known within a small community, with its safety networks, the limited employment opportunities and aspiration for a better life imply that she will be moving on when her paperwork is resolved. Two hours north of Sutera, in the urban setting of Palermo, Nigerian women have a different experience and reputation. *Giulia Gianguzza*<sup>286</sup>, who has been working with asylum seekers for a number of years, expressed her frustration at witnessing basic human rights violation but being unable to tackle them. She stressed that working with Nigerian women in Palermo is a big challenge as it is a 'closed box': many women have been subject to human trafficking and are sex workers in Palermo. Having already faced a series of challenges and harassment during their journeys, living with the fear of being sent back, many women are trapped in crime circles. The fear of this entrapment, as is the case of some Nigerian women in this situation runs counter to *Ms. Garva's* desire to find a job and move from the small town. This raises a great possibility of being caught in unequal power relations and being subject to continued oppression in a new place.

Hashim Msuya's study supports the findings of this research of the role of abusive traditional practices, in this case the power of the 'juju oath', and the benefits it brings to the powerful and privileged among the newcomers, as the patriarchal and hierarchized

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<sup>286</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Ms. Gianguzza is a long-term resident, (female late 20s), author, activist and works with Arci Porco Rosso – Sportello Sans Papier

structures are reproduced and continue to dominate. It is also important to consider that such practices have been part of a traditional justice system where they have played a crucial role in the governance of communities, and are still being practiced in rural and peripheral areas.

In the meantime, there are ongoing discussions about what constitutes human rights abuses and persecution in regards to a systemic (state) approach as well as the arguments around traditional practices and cultural relativity. Sharon Stanton Russell argues<sup>287</sup> that such discussions on traditional and cultural practices arise particularly in gender-related cases, providing examples of women being subject to female genital mutilation, not having access to education under the Taliban regime or people being persecuted by law due to their sexual orientation. She highlights that “gender-based factors have, on a case-by-case basis, been recognized as grounds for granting asylum and refugee status to individuals, but there remains no international consensus or standard for doing so”.<sup>288</sup> On the same line concerning human rights abuses and international protection coverage, Jenna Shearer Demir, in her 2003 study<sup>289</sup> on the protection of trafficked women, argues that the 1951 Convention falls short in addressing the well-founded fear of women and girls in providing international protection as methods of oppression have changed to target victims based on gender. She adds that “as survivors of trafficking, women and girls who have been prostituted by force form membership of a particular social group’ and advocates that ‘with this classification, a trafficked woman should be entitled to entry into refugee determination proceedings”.

Vulnerability is a natural phase in displacement. As vulnerability was defined as a crucial phase in a change process, the reaction to vulnerability determines the interaction with one’s surrounding in displacement and during the co-construction of communities. Given that most societies are heteronomous, it is inevitable that any interaction in a new

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<sup>287</sup> Stanton Russel Sharon, “Refugees: Risks and Challenges Worldwide”, *Migration Information Source*, November 2002 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-risks-and-challenges-worldwide>

<sup>288</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>289</sup> *Shearer Demir, Jennifer*, “The trafficking of women for sexual exploitation: a gender-based and well-founded fear of persecution”, *UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 80, 2003, p. 25-26.

environment would begin cautiously, holding on to rooted stands on culture, heritage and often invented or at least reconstructed identities. As heteronomous nation-states tend to solidify and promote culture, heritage and identity in line with the interest of the center, a similar approach by newcomers has various forms of reaction. One of the common reactions is withdrawal, and regrouping along familiar ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural lines. Such re-creation of heteronomous structures, regardless of their size play into the strategy and narrative of the center; perpetuating and prolonging vulnerability in the peripheries through categorization, otherization, victimization, and depoliticization. Consequently, protracted displacement becomes protracted vulnerability, with victimization a systemic approach to vulnerability, often racialized and sexualized as pointed out by Sousa Santos and discussed in Part 1, Chapter 1.

The people of the peripheries are systematically conditioned by the norms and cultural narratives of the ruling elite's dominant core values, including the elites from their own culture, in turn subject to the remnants of colonialism. Nandy<sup>290</sup> points out that "colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all", a commonly observed phenomenon in the form of cultural imperialism. The concept of modern society and modernity, often embodied in western countries, goes beyond a geographical notion, entering into the psyche of the people in the peripheries, in support of a hierarchically organized world. The strength of the belief that it is imperative to fit into the existing structures and the fear of being left out, without alternatives, is what feeds heteronomous structures and the coloniality of power. Consequently, the colonized minds and the commodified approach to relations become a shared culture in the peripheries as a state of mind, at the service of the ruling elite.

Engaging in a process of social transformation requires parties to reject the pull to align themselves with the center and its core cultural values of hierarchy and patriarchy. This

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<sup>290</sup> Nandy, *art.cit.* p. 170



presents a threat and discomfort to the center. A genuine interest in egalitarian societies and the agency to engage in a dialogue on equal terms is a crucial step towards more democratic structures but requires a substantial change in redefining and redesigning alternative connections to places and people. Such a process involves revisiting historical privileges, decolonizing minds as well as distancing oneself from internalized heteronomy, a task that is necessary for both long-term residents and newcomers. With forced displacement having a triggering affect, the vital connection between the common spaces, forcibly displaced persons and the presence of multiple narratives in a new equation helps to overcome fear and prejudice that separate communities in struggle. This is an important step toward mobilizing vulnerability and working toward more autonomy.

Regardless of their durability and size, the examples of people attempting to create an alternative world has inspired social change movements during recent decades. In spite of strong opposition and pressure from nation-state structures and mainstream norms of the surrounding society, spaces like: the camps in Calais (France); Balleró neighborhood in Palermo; Ex-moi Olympic village in Turin (Italy); Marinaleda (Spain); Ovacik (Turkey); and, squats in Thessaloniki and Athens (Greece), have created a powerful sense of community and solidarity across national, religious, linguistic boundaries both for newcomers and long-term residents. These are not exclusive, but are some examples in recent times in the region where coloniality of power and colonized minds have been challenged, and where people genuinely work to create alternatives. The mayor of Marinaleda, Sanchez Gordillo<sup>291</sup>, responding to a question of continuity and significance of such examples, highlighted that sooner or later the capitalist system as we know it will come to an end. Trying out small but meaningful experiences will allow us to anticipate the future. It is not enough merely to discuss democracy, it should be lived and practiced. Sanchez Gordillo pointed out that indignation with the current violent system is essential but not enough. While indignation gives an impulse, rebellion is an important tool for our conscious and dignity. Understanding the root-causes of problems and being in solidarity

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<sup>291</sup> Sanchez Gordillo Juan Manuel. *La Utopia se Conquista*. Andalusia: Letrame Edotial, 2017

through direct democracy brings people in struggle together in exploring the possibilities for another world.

#### **1.4. Demythifying integration and imagining beyond**

The motivations and experiences of displaced persons change over space and time in response to shifting circumstances. With the prediction that between 25 million and one billion people will have been subject to displacement by 2050<sup>292</sup> due to climate change, coupled with conflicts, economic downturns, disasters, etc., the policies of today do not address sufficiently the urgency of the issue. Despite extensive studies and resource allocations by nation-states, current often militaristic responses to displacement, have shown a lack of understanding and/or genuine interest in approaching population movements realistically. Efforts to stop people crossing borders; containing newcomers in camps or detention centers for unforeseen periods; deportations; pushing migrants into situations where their only option is an irregular status; and, forcing them into the peripheries to live in undignified and humiliating conditions: all are common practices today. Those who managed to survive all the hurdles set in front of them enter in the process of integration, which remains high in the agenda of Europe and international institutions.

Maintaining its heteronomous essence, the term integration is used interchangeably with assimilation as per the ideology of individual nation-states, and continues to be redefined among practitioners and academics alike. Meanwhile, fear of the unknown by conservative elements in both newcomers and long-term resident communities continue to perpetuate further divisions, as they tighten their hold onto their ethnic and religious identities.

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<sup>292</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Migration and Climate Change*, Geneva, IOM Migration Research Series. n 31, 2008, p. 1t2

*Ms. Angelidou* (an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common in Theesaloniki) believes that focusing on terminology does not benefit current efforts, and considers it time wasted on semantics. She pointed out that it is essential the manner in which the issue is addressed, and how creative the organizations and communities can be when tackling it. Therefore, the concept of integration is acceptable to use, which is a concept that is familiar to all. *Mr. Kamperis*<sup>293</sup> (activist and a local NGO worker in Kilkis), on the other hand, explained that they distanced themselves from the concept of integration and they focus on inclusion, which is more accommodating for all groups involved.

There exists as diverse a conceptualization of inclusion as integration, and there are various dimensions, summarized by Kovacs<sup>294</sup> as:

- a goal where disparities between the host and refugee communities are minimized;
- a prerequisite for legal status; a condition for citizenship;
- a process of a set of experiences;
- security measures;
- a top down (nation-state level) and distant notion from local realities.

All the above-mentioned dimensions work on the assumption that newcomers move towards a set of norms, primarily the dominant cultural norms of the center, often internalized by pre-existing groups. The recognition of a dialectical process between newcomers and long-term residents was noted among the local initiatives studied both in Palermo and Thessaloniki, however, they still represent small pockets of egalitarian initiatives, requiring adaptation of newcomers to local mainstream norms outside of these bubbles. Melinda Mc Pherson's claim confirms that although it might have progressive elements, integration retains the conservative roots of assimilation and multiculturalism as it is essentially "concerned with the adaptation by outsiders to local norms"<sup>295</sup>.

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<sup>293</sup> The interview was carried out in Kilkis, March 2019. Mr. Kamperis is a long-term resident (male, early 30s), activist and works with a local NGO, Omnes, which has worked at the Idomeni border crossing as well as the housing program in Kilkis.

<sup>294</sup> Kovacs Christina, "A critical approach to the production of academic knowledge on refugee integration in the global north", Refugee Studies Centre, Working Paper Series No. 109, 2015, p.12

<sup>295</sup> Mc Pherson Melinda, "I Integrate, Therefore I Am: Contesting the Normalizing discourse of Integrationism through Conversations with Refugee Women", quoted in Kovacs, *art.cit.*, p. 14

Castoriadis insists on the need to be fully aware of the condition of ‘self-institution’ – by which one creates one’s own laws – within a democratic society, with the perception of laws not given, but explicitly and reflectively created by its inhabitants<sup>296</sup>. According to Castoriadis’ argument, societies that believe in heteronomy do not seek autonomy, and in a nation-state, the entire formal education system is structured within these parameters, socializing individuals in a manner to prevent them questioning the status-quo. One of the most central political institutions in such societies is also a religious one, embedded in the nation-state, preventing its citizens from imagining alternatives outside of these parameters. Consequently, fitting in and remaining in these parameters becomes the norm that all are expected to accommodate. Accordingly, there is a tendency to not treating integration as a means to an end, but an end itself, which distracts from the constant need to revisit the issues around inequality, hierarchies and patriarchy in communities across the board. Gary Younge<sup>297</sup> argues that integration is a *fetishized* concept among international and national entities, sidelining the fundamental concerns of inequalities faced by communities as a whole, without differentiation between the newcomers and long-term residents.

Gerard Delanty<sup>298</sup>, in his analysis of social integration and Europeanization, questions the assumption that only the nation-state is able to provide the necessary cultural resources for social integration, as well as the arguments of the defenders of nation-state about social integration being fragile with a weak democratic legitimacy without cultural cohesion. He points out that culture is the site for new conflicts over identity politics and integration, leading to increased opportunities for contentious action as well as emphasizing the necessity for cultural plurality as opposed to obsessions on cohesion and integration. Recognizing the role of multiple identities and narratives meeting at a common space in the co-construction of communities after displacement constitutes a

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<sup>296</sup> Straume, *art.cit.*, p.3

<sup>297</sup> Younge Gary, “Please Stop Fetishizing Integration. Equality is what we really need”, *The Guardian*, 19 September 2005.

<sup>298</sup> Delanty Gerard, “Social integration and Europeanization: The Myth of Cultural Cohesion”, *Yearbook of European Studies*. Vol. 14, 2000, p. 221-238

foundation for a genuine dialogue and imagining alternatives, referred as a 'zone of contestation'<sup>299</sup> by Delanty.

The conception of alternatives by individuals and a community needs to be conscious of its co-construction process autonomously, away from historic dominant Eurocentric perspectives and coloniality of power. Imagining what lies beyond that which is presented requires a process of demythification of this fetishized concept of integration, in order to open the door for possibilities out of the set parameters. Castoriadis' notion of 'radical imaginary' sheds light on this process. Ultimately, the struggle of the displaced becomes more than finding a place in a society but creating one, in solidarity.

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<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, p. 232

## SECTION 2 – Meta integration: co-constructing for autonomy

Integration efforts, as a necessity for nation-states, achieve co-existence to a certain degree in the interest of the center in order to maintain status-quo and historical power relations. Today, the discourse on integration processes often indicates that it is not one sided, requiring efforts from both newcomers and long-term inhabitants, within the parameters of a nation-state. However, the possibility of shaping the future of communities and imagining alternatives require political presence as Abdelmalek Sayad affirms<sup>300</sup>. ‘The right to have rights’ concept of Arendt needs to be translated into everyday life through actual political engagement of all inhabitants, which only can take place through a process of dialogue in a direct democracy.

A genuine process of dialogue on social transformation is not in the interest of nation-states in the current circumstances, given the significant role and meaning of integration for nation-states, regardless of its implications. The need to carve a space for more democratic communities with respect for human dignity and the environment becomes a matter of survival, beyond the concept of nation-states and their integration policies.

Acknowledgement of the changing nature of connections among peoples and places; a shift from territorial to relational<sup>301</sup>, and a constant regeneration of communities as a permanent phenomenon, constitute the basis for a transformative process. In this permanency, it would not be realistic to imagine a governance of peripheries by a centralized system with its new set of integration policies, reproducing its own power relations and privileges. The concept of a state structure regardless of its ideological stand would have to have control over people, inevitably restricting freedoms, determining the conditions of belonging, in line with the interest of those in control. Subsequently, new narratives need to emerge from people’s lived experiences, independently from the

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<sup>300</sup> Caloz-Tschopp Marie-Claire, “Abdelmalek Sayad et Hannah Arendt. Un dialogue souterrain autour des sans-Etat, des migrants au XIXe, XXe- XXIe siècle”, in Association des Amis d’Abdelmalek Sayad, *Actualité de la pensée d’Abdelmalek Sayad : actes du colloque international*, Casablanca, Le Fennec, 2010, p. 267 – 284

<sup>301</sup> Cultural Base Project, “Rethinking Research and Policy Agendas on Cultural Heritage and European Identities”, *Cultural Base*, 2017

impositions of nation-states. In order to imagine beyond known practices regarding integration, it is essential to be able to visualize a situation that is relevant to the present conditions of communities in the peripheries of power according to new parameters of co-existence. Given the critique of integration in the context of the nation-state, and in relation to the center and peripheries, new communities must go beyond the heteronomous structures of the center and aspire for autonomy.

Meta-integration is an adopted concept that goes beyond integration as a necessary step in imagining alternatives. In this regard, meta-integration should be seen as a method rather than an end point with a definite form or a specific recipe. Its essence is based on multiplicity, diversity and heterogeneity, born out of 'chaos' using Castoriadis' terms. The chaos that the world faces today entails widespread inequalities, climate change, violent conflicts and scarce resources; searching for alternatives is urgent. Meta-integration is a process of dialogue on not-fitting-in; between distinct worlds, dysfunctions, disharmonies, disturbed situations and fears of the other. It is an attempt to get on a track of co-constructing new lives. Its point of departure is ambiguity, uncertainty and precarity as well as reclaiming dignity while acknowledging the struggle of displaced people in the peripheries.

Due to the complexity of their conditions and changing nature of communities and the fact that it emerges from various ambiguous and precarious situations, meta-integration does not have a fixed definition. By introducing this concept<sup>302</sup>, this research underlines the importance of such a process without absolutism concerning a point of arrival, but as an existentialist necessity for social transformation. It is a process of transforming relations between peoples, places and their stories in relation to the environment. It refers to the stories of displacement and the displaced; the commons as essential meeting places and the process of commoning<sup>303</sup>; and people of the peripheries, often the displaced who

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<sup>302</sup> The elements of meta-integration mentioned in this section; peoples, places and their stories, have been part of the author's work for the last decade in his role with the Council of Europe, bringing together diverse elements of selected CoE conventions and community-based actions, further reflecting on the work around displacement and governance.

<sup>303</sup> Commoning is the relationships between the commons and communities, beyond the single interest in the extraction of resources, focusing on the social reproduction of relations toward autonomy as a necessity to be organized for alternatives.

engage in struggle for social transformation. Thus, meta-integration is a dialogical action between these elements, and is a process that brings people closer to the co-construction of lives after displacement.

The concept of meta-integration emerged from the need to describe a process of transformation going beyond structural impositions, and the need to engage in a dialogue process in redefining and redesigning relationships following forced displacement. Aware of changing conditions in each specific time and place, the process of meta-integration suggests that an ideal vision needs to be imagined collectively by all members of the community in order to shift from vulnerability and resilience to resistance and political action. Inspiring examples in Italy, Greece, Spain, France and Turkey all confirm that becoming dynamic actors in processes of socio-political construction is crucial in restoring human dignity and rights.

The term meta-integration was inspired by Henri Lefebvre's concept of metaphilosophy where he makes a critique of philosophy and the conditions it imposes on creativity. In Lefebvre's work, metaphilosophy is conceived as a transformation of philosophy, turning the resources of theory into a practice, for a radical change where their validity is justified with the practice. Using the term praxis, Lefebvre emphasizes the need to turning the theory into practice, which supports the dialogical relations laid out in a meta-integration process. Lefebvre, in his book, *Qu'est ce que penser?* defines 'Meta' as going beyond, "superseding, overcoming, a chance to attempt, act, whether successful or not, but as a necessity that consists in a transition or transgression of the real towards some-thing other, towards a possible than may turn-out to be impossible"<sup>304</sup>. Paulo Freire's reflection on praxis, born out of the analysis of everyday life in the peripheries clearly states the importance of a dynamic dialogue in social action as 'theory without practice would be

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Akbulut Bengi, "Les communs comme stratégie de décroissance", *Nouveaux Cahiers du Socialisme*, n. 21, Winter 2019, p. 4

<sup>304</sup> Lefebvre Henri, *Meta Philosophy*, London and New York: Verso, 2016, p. 330



mere abstract thinking, just as practice without theory would be reduced to naive action<sup>305</sup>.

In this capacity, dialogue that supports transformative processes<sup>306</sup> should leave behind preconditioned expectations or impositions by any specific group, emerging from the gaps in the systems and approaches of the international humanitarian system and nation-states. Lefebvre refers to it as “pseudo-nothingness of residue<sup>307</sup>, like seeds between building stones”. Lefebvre’s emphasis on ‘residue’<sup>308</sup> is an important aspect in meta-integration as well. Having gone through the phases of displacement<sup>309</sup>, residual elements are people who are the changemakers among the displaced, ‘organic intellectuals’ of each group as described by Antonio Gramsci. In the course of co-constructing lives after displacement, these residual elements play a pivotal role and need to meet up and mutually recognize one another. This is where the importance of the commons and commoning come forward, where people organize and begin to mobilize their vulnerability in a collective manner.

In a co-construction process, displaced people from geographic peripheries and peripheries of power need to put aside the established value systems emanating from the center and engage in genuine dialogue and action. This action is not about ignoring or undermining the values of the persons and communities, but delinking<sup>310</sup> from the core values of the center; a process of decolonizing minds. The right to practice one’s cultural activities and enjoy traditional life also means the right not to participate and/or change

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<sup>305</sup> Araújo Freire Ana Maria, Vittoria Paolo, “Dialogue on Paulo Freire”, *Interamerican Journal of Education for Democracy*, vol.1 n. 1, 2007, p. 97

<sup>306</sup> Please see diagram 5, which visualizes the potential shifts in position.

<sup>307</sup> Pseudo-nothingness of residue, according to Castoriadis, is consciousness, the residue of everything that has been, residue of residues, would thus be in large part reminiscence, recognition, and this right through to the hope for resurgence and novelty.

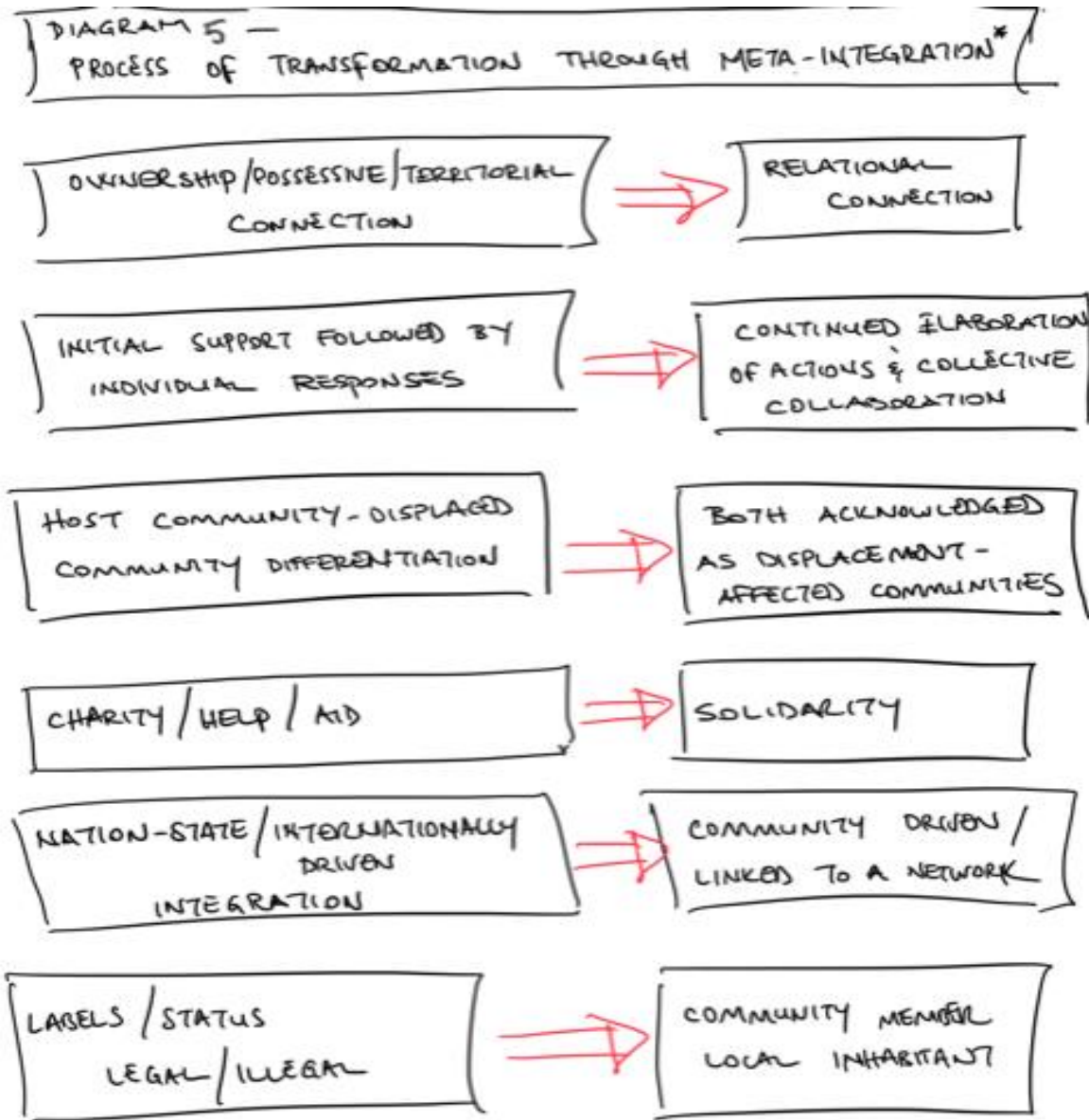
<sup>308</sup> Castoriadis Cornelius. *Political and Social Writings. Volume 3, 1961-1979: Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 319

<sup>309</sup> As per the anatomy of displacement introduced in Part 1 - Chapter 1

<sup>310</sup> Delinking is concept introduced by Samir Amin who emphasizes the need for underdeveloped countries to adopt new market strategies and values different from northern developed countries. Delinking, he explains, does not mean "autarky but refusal to bow to the dominant logic of the world capitalist system". Delinking implies a transfer of political hegemony to new "centers". Delinking is a form of cutting oneself off," a kind of active anti-globalization which is in dialectical relationship with globalization itself".

Zhang Yong-hong, "On Samir Amin's Strategy of "Delinking" and "Socialist Transition", *International Journal of Business and Social Research (IJBSR)*, vol..3, n.11, 2013, p. 101-107

as the makers of their identity and heritage. The changing face of Europe has to come to terms with how to adapt to these transformations, revisiting historic dominant Eurocentric perspectives.



SOURCE: HAKAN SUCERAR DEMIR  
2019

In a search for alternatives, the discussion shifts from describing, analyzing, and exposing, to creating a new set of relations and forms, which requires both the agency and the willingness to engage in a process of co-creation, away from possessive historically bound dominant narratives. It further considers a more harmonious and respectful relationship with the environment, not separating it from human existence. Meta-integration, in this sense, is considered a project of rediscovering commonalities between peoples, respecting the environment and coming to a mutual understanding in redesigning relationships, and rejecting the coloniality of power.

## **2.1. Communities and displacement**

In light of increasing displacement, rapidly changing demographics in urban geographic and sociologic peripheries and living with precarious conditions, the connection to places and people has gained new meaning. This new meaning is more relational and less permanent, linked to the practices and needs in the daily lives of these communities where each actor invests in their cultural reproductions and symbolic systems, diverging from the dominant cultural narratives of their places of origin as well as in their present location. This search for a new narrative and forming a cultural fusion of peripheries prepares the ground for a process of dialogue to redefine and redesign relationships within an expanded definition of displacement, offering many narratives as opposed to being forcibly shaped into a dominant narrative of displacement and displaced communities.

Observations and interviews carried out in Greece and Italy during this research revealed that the presence of diverse groups, including migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, represent examples of co-existence, not integration, with solid boundaries demarcating the parallel lives of newcomers and long-term residents. The interactions between these groups, long-term residents and the authorities take place in the realm of economy (markets and service industry), education (children's participation in the formal education system), and culture (cultural events, festivals, gastronomy, etc.), which are

meeting points of exchange but not common spaces for socio-political action with collective interest. Whilst efforts to integrate these groups into the mainstream culture, and integration are seen as a vital necessity for survival, small communities tend to emerge with their internal dynamics, systems of operations, creating small isolated socio-political compounds paying attention to live harmoniously within local norms. Ultimately, these networks of compounds, not only based in one single country but across many places in Europe, play a crucial role in facilitating the journeys of newcomers, their installation in these communities, maintaining the continuity of their presence with familiar socio-cultural norms.

The presence of these groups inevitably provides a diverse and multicultural outlook in urban settings, feeding into discussions of diversity, however, with limited or no representation and power in the political sphere. For the newcomers, being content with the right to stay and engage in economic life is of benefit to the relationship between the center and peripheries; this can be seen as a survival mechanism within the parameters of the current system (although this is possibly temporary, enduring until the current crisis situation is overcome). The lack of common spaces, time, orchestrated mass consumerism, the efforts of depoliticization of people through media, lack of democracy at schools and work places with a great loss of the significance and power of unions among working people, all have had an impact on the everyday life of people in the peripheries, preventing them from finding opportunities to engage in genuine dialogue or aspire for a better collective future.

In this context, the idea of community has various implications which differ according to their settings; 'community' is used to describe the commonalities between individuals; elements that bring them together. In his analysis of the concept from various perspectives, Delanty lists<sup>311</sup> the defining components of community as: solidarity (a feeling of collectivity); trust; and, autonomy and is careful not to limit it to cultural

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<sup>311</sup> Delanty Gerard, "Reinventing Community and Citizenship in the Global Era: A Critique of the Communitarian Concept of Community" in Christodoulidis Emiliios (ed.), *Communitarianism and Citizenship*, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2016.

consensus or a symbolic order. With the consideration of community regeneration through constant mobility, the idea of community will need to adapt to changing cultural and social challenges. In the absence of such flexibility and adaptability, a common ground for alternatives cannot be imagined, constrained in the rooted belief in totality, proximity and place.

The French concept of community carries a negative connotation, important to note, as it has long been subject to discussions concerning integration. The term *communautarisme* has a specific meaning in the French political terminology, where any 'community-based' divergence from the unity of the nation-state (often associated with the Muslim minorities and immigrants from ex-colonies as well as their descendants) presupposes a threat to cohesive totality of the French state. Such a position, in its current conceptualization, is unable to address the discourses on community and show much needed flexibility to social and cultural changes that develop with population movements. Jacques Barou, in his research "Integration of immigrants in France: a historical perspective", concludes that Muslims living in France tend to absorb the secular lifestyles, and 78% wanted to adopt national customs rather than being distinct. Barou concludes that most of the immigrants, in line with the French attitude, refuse *le communautarisme*, and do not support immigrants' withdrawal into ethnic communities where solidarity is limited to the own group<sup>312</sup>.

### **2.1.1. Peoples of geographic peripheries and peripheries of power**

The concept and terminology of 'a center and the peripheries', were utilized by Şerif Mardin in early 1950s in his analysis of nomadic and settled groups of the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1970s, Emmanuel Wallerstein used the concepts to describe global inequalities between nations in his development of world system theory.

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<sup>312</sup> Barou Jacques, "Integration of immigrants in France: a historical perspective", *Identities: Global studies in culture and power*, vol.21, n. 6, 2014, p. 642-657

In 1974, Samir Amin, laying out his model of the workings of the international system, analyzed the differences in the dynamic of accumulation at the center and at the periphery in relation to development and underdevelopment. In his analysis of development in African countries, he pointed out that in the present capitalist system, self-reliance, “a self-centered system”, was inhibited where resources were transferred from the periphery to the center through a process of unequal exchange. In return, benefits of labor at the periphery were lesser than of labor at the center, as cheap labor of the periphery produced and provided raw material and services to a center where wealth is accumulated, and value of labor was higher. As such relationships have been observed across the globe in the following decades, his skepticism of emerging development schemes and policies continued, including the criticism of deregulation, corporate ruling, extreme privatization and structural adjustments through international financial institutions. Although there have been occasional attempts to break with the system in a move toward self-reliance, such as Tanzania, Cuba, etc. or smaller scale local initiatives in Europe, such attempts were not allowed by the forces of the global capital accumulation, described by Amin as the Triad; the USA, Europe, and Japan, closely working with the elites of countries in the Global South. Amin provided a framework for the analysis of international development studies and the relationship between the Global North and the Global South.

Considering the organic linkage between the development processes (through colonial and post-colonial periods, which set the global development framework today) and population movements, the concepts of a center and periphery are important to better understand as they are constantly reproduced under the present economic system on various scales at local, nation-state, regional and international levels. Consequently, the term periphery as presently employed refers to both a geographical area as well as the relation to power, privilege and authority.

Displacement, both within and across national borders is increasing, generating insecurities, and putting more people into precarious environments. The UN predicts that 66% of the world’s population will live in urban areas by the year 2050, with three million

persons moving to cities on a weekly basis<sup>313</sup>. Almost three quarters of the European population lived in an urban area in 2015 and the pace of change in Europe is projected to rise to just over 80% by 2050<sup>314</sup>. As urban centers are congested and increasing gentrification is experienced across the board, regardless of their places of origin, people often end up in the peripheries of urban areas. These are also the areas where an emerging class, the *precariat*<sup>315</sup>, meets. Simultaneously, Europe is facing a growing concern regarding abandoned rural areas and villages where small scale traditional agricultural practices are disappearing. The lack of population in these areas is directly affecting care for the environment and landscape, resulting with wild fires (in Greece), erosions and landslides (in Italy) as well as changing the nature of the small scale European local economies.

A similar logic of wealth accumulation at the center experienced as more resources, both financial and human, are directed toward central urban areas, while urban and rural peripheries are left with the majority of the population and limited resources. Such unsustainable urbanization marches ahead at the cost of reduced quality of life and fewer investments in the peripheries, and is closely linked with the concept of the peripheries of power. The issue of who can afford to live in the center versus the peripheries should not be ignored. Standing's work<sup>316</sup> on precariousness becomes a useful tool to look into demographics and conditions of the people inhabiting the urban peripheries; the working money-poor, atavists, immigrants and refugees, educated progressives, the Roma, all facing uncertainties and insecurities in their daily lives. These are the ideal circumstances to prevent people from engaging in democratic political processes, pushing them to the peripheries of power. The people of the peripheries who lack time, energy, space and resources to organize, eventually become vulnerable, subject to manipulation of identity

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<sup>313</sup> International Organization for Migration, "World Migration Report 2015", IOM, 2015, p. 1-15

<sup>314</sup> Eurostat, "Urban Europe — statistics on cities, towns and suburbs", 2016 edition, p. 7-14

<sup>315</sup> Precariat is an emerging social class under precarious conditions of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. Guy Standing, in his book, *The Precariat: New Dangerous Class*, refers to a diverse group of people including working money poor, atavists, immigrants and refugees, educated progressives, and the Roma.

<sup>316</sup> Standing Guy, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London and New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011

politics and populist rhetoric which has the tendency to divert blame for conditions, often singling out migrants and refugees.

At times of vulnerability, the power of organizing and collective action is crucial. One of the interviewers described how the Greek population had become very individualistic in recent decades, a trend observed in all aspects of Greek society. However, at times of crisis they have great empathy and the capacity to support each other and adjust. The austerity measures that placed the population under pressure brought this agency to light once again, and organized neighborhoods have played an important role for support and political action. The refugee/migrant influx which began in 2015 added to this stress, encouraging communities to reconsider their position and adapt to changing conditions, particularly in big cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki. While facing a number of challenges at national and European levels, local alternative initiatives and acts of solidarity have played a fundamental role in a number of geographic peripheries and peripheries of power to reorganize, educate, resist and develop political action for a social transformation process. These are the places where they embrace refugees and migrants and welcome them into their political action.

### - **The Power of Solidarity**

An observation from Thessaloniki offers a different perspective to understanding vulnerability and integration in the peripheries. The individuals who received asylum status<sup>317</sup> from the Greek government in 2019 were asked to leave their temporary/emergency accommodation, and find their own housing, as they had been provided access to funds through a newly introduced integration strategy. While there are many opinions about how to integrate newcomers into society, *Ms. Angelidou* and *Mr. Kamperis* highlighted the fact that the effect of this was to break down social networks and support systems. Separating them in the name of integration into Greek society would

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<sup>317</sup> 600 persons received their asylum status in 2019 and first 200 persons were asked/encouraged to leave social housing and be independent in March 2019 when the author visited Greece and carried out interviews.



mean starting all over again; 'displacement in displacement' for many. For this very reason many, particularly the most vulnerable, prefer to stay in camps or accommodation with worse conditions, as social ties are vitally important to them. There is also a common understanding among many humanitarian workers and officials that most of the newcomers do not plan to stay in Greece and will continue their journey; therefore they prefer to maintain a support system as it is more beneficial to them in the long run, rather than face isolation if they move into a neighborhood where they have no contacts.

Another observation is the occupied buildings of Ex MOI (former Olympic village) in the peripheries of Turin where the poor housing conditions would not be preferred decent housing for many. Although many of the inhabitants obtain regular permits to live and work in Italy, they have difficulty leaving, as the site provides a social links to sources of income and access to jobs. In addition, the interviewees mentioned that many young African men in Italy are unable to afford housing. However, there is also a strong feeling of solidarity and possibly security among people who have gone through similar struggles. Despite of all their differences and conflicts, they understand each other's' situation. Surviving on daily and seasonal work, traveling within Italy and other European countries, they consider Ex MOI their home, somewhere to come back to where they do not have to pay rent, but can share a meal, and find solidarity among fellow migrants and refugees as well as local activists. Despite having gradually lost its self-management approach after occupation in 2013, and not being a preferred personal choice to live for many, Ex MOI is still a common space of solidarity.

Forced displacement is not an individual matter or a choice, as it is has often been framed. Focusing on the restrictions imposed by asylum processes, Hillary Goodfriend<sup>318</sup> argues that migrants are subject to a global class war; beyond the right to seek asylum, they are denied their human dignity, and she underlines the importance of the collective power in solidarity in order to restore dignity and claim a more egalitarian world.

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<sup>318</sup> Goodfriend Hillary, "Migrants on the Front Lines of Global Class War ", *Jacobin Magazine*, 25.09.2019

### 2.1.2. Peripheral places - the commons and commoning

Common spaces and shared experiences in the peripheries (urban and rural) establish the basis for socio-political action, focusing on the community as a whole with a genuine critique of daily life and practices. Such efforts require a step toward equal opportunities, aspiration for autonomy and self-reliance in a new place with enhanced understanding of the nature of the relationships of power, privilege and authority, which essentially shapes the parameters of durable solutions and (re) construction of displacement-affected-communities.

The transformed relationship between newcomers and elderly long-term residents of Sutera is important to note as the prejudice against Muslim refugees has significantly changed in this small, part-abandoned Italian village. According to *Valentina Pellegrini*<sup>319</sup>, a process of re-humanization of Muslims, often negatively driven by media imagery, changed when they begin to live together in the same town, organizing festivities together, working together and trying to understand diverse cultural norms and customs. The SPRAR<sup>320</sup> program has contributed to this change among the mainstream society. Although most newcomers do not remain in the town and continue their movement, the possibility of transforming set ideas is promising as common space and interest allows such interactions to take place. Based on the argument of Akgönül<sup>321</sup>, with the otherness of proximity, dominant groups are the main predators of those whom they know well; therefore, the author questions the depth and durability of such relations in Sutera. The established 'host-guest' relation with the understanding that newcomers will stay for a short period of time and will not engage in the local politics might have an influence on this positive aspect.

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<sup>319</sup> The interview was carried out in Sutera, May 2019. Ms. Pellegrini (female, early 30s) is an NGO worker for Girasole who has been working with newcomers under the SPRAR program.

<sup>320</sup> SPRAR - Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (The Italian Asylum Seekers and Refugees Protection System) consists of a network of Local Authorities, mostly Municipalities, and their consortia and provides services for international asylum seekers, refugees and those granted humanitarian and subsidiary protection.

<sup>321</sup> Akgönül, *art.cit.*, (Islamophobia, Muslimophobia: ....), p. 7

In places such as Sutera (Italy) or Kilkis (Greece) where the population is small, mostly elderly, and socio-economic life has stagnated, the arrival of newcomers is noticeable and has a significant impact on the life of the community. There is strong antagonism between cultural protectionists and pragmatists regarding the future of their towns and the role of newcomers. In both approaches, protectionist and pragmatist, 'otherization' and a calculated relationship is often present. Dehumanization of the 'other', *pseudospeciation*, as Erik Erickson describes, comes with a dominant group feeling that "they are of some special kind (tribe or nation, class or caste, family, occupation, or type), whose insignia they will wear with vanity and conviction, and defend (along with the economic claims they have staked out for their kind) against the foreign, the inimical, the not-so-human kinds"<sup>322</sup>.

While initial response from the dominant culture is to push the newcomers to the peripheries of power in small towns, in larger cities like Palermo and Thessaloniki they tend to locate newcomers in urban peripheries, at times intentionally and unintentionally creating ghettos. There are also many examples of large groups of migrants and refugees inhabiting districts with the historic center of towns throughout Italy, which essentially has changed the stereotypical outlook and public image of these places. The historic centers, which traditionally represent the cultural heritage and identity of Italy, become the home for newcomers, presented with an ironic situation, as the long-term residents left these areas as the economic challenge of rehabilitating their buildings was too great. Given their deteriorating conditions, houses in historic centers were offered to migrants and refugees with affordable rents, although gentrification often displaces both newcomers and low-income long-term residents as soon as owners find the finances for rehabilitation.

Social centers both in Italy (*Centri Sociali*) and Greece (*STEKIs*) have played an important role in the creation of shared common spaces. While these have existed for decades, numbers have increased and these places have become more essential since 2009, particularly in Greece, out of the need to show solidarity to those suffering under austerity

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<sup>322</sup> Erikson Erik, "Pseudospeciation in the nuclear age", *Political Psychology*, v. 6, n. 2, p. 213 – 217

measures. Although they are not always run by progressive groups, such places have provided local communities with a place to gather, develop support systems and, in many neighborhoods, instigate local political action. The concept of 'Cafeneo'<sup>323</sup> seems to be main attraction point in many neighborhoods in Athens and Thessaloniki, characterized by the need for alternative gathering spots.

The interviews carried out during this research indicate that in most cases displacement becomes a permanent phenomenon. The concept of a community in this context takes a transversal form with multiple affiliations, identities and narratives, beyond traditionally known borders and definitions. Going to a safe and accessible common space, regardless of the duration of stay, is a fundamental step generating feelings of comfort, allowing people to engage in genuine dialogue with others. Stories of displacement are a powerful means for connecting people, acknowledging their commonalities, challenges, and building a sense of empowerment and solidarity. The argument of Jean-Luc Nancy and Siraj Izhar<sup>324</sup> that people do not need to become a *common being*, but find meaning *being in common*, fits rather well in the context of displacement as argued in this thesis.

For example, a meeting place created in one of the most diverse neighborhoods of Palermo; Ballaro', offers such an environment where everyone is welcomed. This local initiative, primarily working with the most marginalized groups in Palermo, is part of a larger network, which provides referral services to those who are repetitively denied and excluded from the current asylum system in Italy. With an already complicated system of multiple procedures for processing asylum seekers the restrictions that were introduced by the Italian government in late 2018 have caused further vulnerabilities, pushing a significant number of asylum seekers out of the humanitarian protection system in Italy. *The Arci Porco Rosso*<sup>325</sup>, working with people that are excluded from all regular

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<sup>323</sup> Neighborhood cafes that provide a platform for community members to gather and discuss. Often, they are very affordable and main purpose is a space for dialogue.

<sup>324</sup> Izhar Siraj, "Recovering Community: Remembering the Jungle at Jules Ferry" *Public Seminar - in the spirit of The New School for Social Research, informing debate about the pressing issues of our times*, May 2017. [http://amplife.org/blog/recovering\\_community\\_1](http://amplife.org/blog/recovering_community_1)

<sup>325</sup> Porco Rosso is a film directed by Hayao Miyazaki where most of the story revolves around an Italian World War I ex-fighter ace, living as a freelance bounty hunter chasing "air pirates" in the Adriatic Sea. However, an unusual curse has transforms him into an anthropomorphic pig. Once called Marco Pagot, he is now known to the world as "Porco Rosso", Italian for "Red Pig". Porco

procedures, pays particular attention to the delicate balance between local and national authorities as well as local dynamics and displaced people to find a safe environment with dignity for persons in need of assistance. While most of the organization's efforts concern working with asylum seekers on obtaining legal documents to reside and work in the country, it is interesting to note that "a large number of people are pushed to an illegal existence in Italy and Europe" according to *Mr. Melluso*, founder of *Arci Porco Rosso* and member of the municipal council, setting them up for further social problems in years to come. "Denying or blocking a legal and regular entry to the country is a gift to the smugglers," he adds.

In this regard, the commons refer to a physical, social, cultural, economic and intellectual place for the struggle for rights. Thus, access and the right to use local resources, access education and benefit from the dignity of a united labor force as well as the power of direct democracy are fundamental to 'being in common' and eventually co-constructing a new community. In his article "The Newcomers' Right to the Common Space: The case of Athens during the refugee crisis"<sup>326</sup> Tsavdaroglou introduces the analysis of several scholars and emphasizes that conceptualization of the commons involves three things at the same time: a common pool of resource; community; and, commoning. Examining the emerging spatial commoning practices of migrants and refugees, Tsavdaroglou highlights the importance of the common space and refers to the commoning process as the access to "adequate housing, which potentially lays the ground for the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to work, health, social security, privacy, transportation, sexual orientation or education".

Bengi Akbulut<sup>327</sup>, further adds to the discussion on the expanded boundaries of the commons, including urban space, knowledge, social entitlement, and cultural and

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makes statements of his being anti-fascist, quipping during one scene that "I'd much rather be a pig than a fascist". (as per [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porco\\_Rosso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porco_Rosso)). The term and the image were adopted by a local group of local activists in Palermo who created a space to fight against structural injustices.

<sup>326</sup> Tsavdaroglou Charalampos, "The Newcomers' Right to the Common Space: The case of Athens during the refugee crisis", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, v. 17, n. 2, 2018, p. 376-401

<sup>327</sup> Akbulut, *art.cit.*, p. 4

intellectual wealth. She elaborates on the dialectical presence of social relations, networks and practices, including struggles and collective action that also constitute the commons, highlighting commons as forms of *non-commodified wealth* used by all. In this regard, commoning is considered as relationships between the commons and communities, beyond the single interest in the extraction of resources, focusing on the social reproduction of relations toward autonomy as a necessity to be organized for alternatives.

As regards occupations and squat housing, for many asylum seekers and migrants in Europe today, these meet a need that is beyond mere housing; they create a space for collective sharing and action. These common spaces adopt the principles of self-organization, direct democracy and co-habitation with a non-hierarchical view<sup>328</sup>. These acts of solidarity help the displaced to define their existence by mobilizing their vulnerability as highlighted by Judith Butler<sup>329</sup>, and overcoming the sense of victimization.

The interviews conducted in the northern Mediterranean region<sup>330</sup> within the context of this research have revealed that there are numerous creative initiatives going on at a community level that present effective and dignified solutions, however, they are often self-contained and lack international solidarity, at times at the expense of being aware how powerful and crucial is their work. It was also noted that such alternative initiatives are often perceived as a threat to nation-states, and silenced as their authority and power is challenged, particularly in centralized state structures. Siraj Izhar<sup>331</sup> eloquently talks about the struggle for rights in displacement, referring to thousands of displaced people in Calais, France in 2016. Recalling Jean-Luc Nancy's<sup>332</sup> description of community as 'a state of being in common', he points out that the Calais experience was "a workable conception of community beyond borders". Through civil society action, Calais became a

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<sup>328</sup> Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26, Athens, 2016, <https://en.squat.net/tag/notara-26/>

<sup>329</sup> Butler, Gambetti and Sabsay, *op.cit.*

<sup>330</sup> Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey.

<sup>331</sup> Izhar, *art.cit.*, [http://amplife.org/blog/recovering\\_community\\_1](http://amplife.org/blog/recovering_community_1)

<sup>332</sup> Nancy Jean-Luc, *La Communauté désœuvrée*, Paris, Bourgois, 1990, *quoted in* Izhar Sirah, "Recovering Community: Remembering the Jungle at Jules Ferry" *Public Seminar - In the spirit of The New School for Social Research, informing debate about the pressing issues of our times*, May 2017

political project of solidarity, “a community that despite its size, diversity and destitution, never fragmented or sunk into communal strife”. According to Izhar, it was this broader political action that was the target of the French and British states.

In Spain, an Andalusian city of Huelva (District 5) is considered one of the economically poorest regions in Spain and Europe, particularly after the financial crisis of 2008. Its diverse population, living mostly in social housing with limited resources in the area, has developed a great sense of solidarity. Their direct democracy model has allowed them to develop the integral plan of District 5, which is a collective labor of all inhabitants that was developed through a 2-year community dialogue process. With a cooperative approach and introduction of self-management, an autonomous school structure was established which reflects the spirit of solidarity of the local inhabitants and presents a good example of the transformation of vulnerability into resistance and political action. While statistically defined as money-poor, local community members do not perceive themselves as poor, highlighting the rich culture and heritage that binds them together.

Discussions that took place in 2017, during a research visit for this thesis, highlighted the importance of direct democracy in public life in District 5. They are an empowering element of the local inhabitants’ direct involvement in decision-making processes concerning their needs and actions. The integral plan of District 5 and community efforts to develop this plan provides a good example in terms of its methodology, as each action reflected in this plan has been agreed upon by community members; not based on voting (majority rule), but following extensive dialogue between inhabitants, for the collective wellbeing of the community. While the plan resulted in an agreed-upon strategy and foreseen actions, the process of preparation is considered an important action and education in direct democracy, involving community members in the district. This approach gives power to the community to negotiate with possible funding sources to meet their real needs, managing their own plans and actions, as opposed to adopting a reactionary approach responding to calls from donors, regional and central governments.

A shared space where people can gather is crucial in order to engage in dialogue, exchange stories and develop support systems. Considering that most of the displaced are directed toward urban areas, the commons become essential spots for many. In the case of Greece, in recent years, a number of parks and abandoned buildings have been occupied by asylum seekers and migrants, with the support of local groups, where they found temporary shelter and other basic needs. Tsavdaroglou, through his studies ‘right to urban common space’ and refugees, as well as occupied urban areas and self-management practices in these areas, argues that such places have become powerful centers for non-formal education on self-management and political action for the inhabitants. As he follows these groups further in Europe, he believed<sup>333</sup> that people who spent time in occupied buildings and experienced such an approach to governance and political action pass through a transformative process, where they become part of active political struggles in their next destinations. He further adds that when people are separated through ‘effective’ integration policies, they lose this sense of solidarity and stay away from such political processes, as they feel alienated and are removed from political action.

In a dynamic process of community regeneration, multiple identities and narratives come forward as distinctive elements in shaping new communities. The commons are the platforms for collective action in urban peripheries (*banlieues, quartiers difficiles, suburbs, afueras, periferias, varoşlar, perichoras*) and abandoned villages. During the course of this research, through literature review and a number of visits to abandoned villages in Italy, Greece and Spain as well as urban peripheries in Italy and Greece, confirmed that while such places are where displaced people end up (even temporarily), organized political action among local groups is not widespread. It is practiced in small pockets where struggles have taken place historically with substantial theoretical and practical components, including labor movements, against austerity measures, university occupations, movements for the homeless, and local development initiatives. In many

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<sup>333</sup> The information is based on the interview carried out with Mr. Tsavdaroglou in Thessaloniki in March 2019 as per his observations during his research. However, follow up communication with him indicated that no specific article has been written by him on this topic as of June 2020.



places, these political actions have also received the support of long-term residents, positively affecting their relations with the newcomers. Particularly, communities that experienced displacement previously, including emigration and a previous influx of migrants and refugees, seem to understand and cope with the situation better. It was interesting to note that these communities both in Greece and Italy tend to blame the policies of their governments' and the EU more than the migrants and refugees. Having faced significant economic difficulties in the last decade or so, the concerns of long-term residents are very much concerned with survival and living a decent life with dignity, which many understand is not challenged by the arrival of migrants and refugees.

In the context of this research, numerous local alternative responses to the displaced were visited in order to understand perceptions on displacement, integration and the role of organic intellectuals in co-constructing new communities. These examples of lived experiences of common spaces in geographic peripheries and peripheries of power include; urban settings; rural settings; refugee camps; or, camp-like settings.

### Urban settings

In Italy, the ex-Olympic village in Turin<sup>334</sup> Italy. In 2018, it was home to 1,200 people, but the buildings were occupied in 2013 by local activists and displaced people, and were initially run using the principles of self-management. The place, known as Ex MOI, later became a target of government and efforts to evacuate the buildings; this resulted in the inhabitants leaving in the summer of 2019. Having been a common space for many, the Ex MOI is located in the periphery of Turin where mostly displaced young men from western Africa lived together with long term residents of the area.

As one of the main entry points to Italy, Sicily has been also home to a number of creative alternatives. Palermo is very active with its local initiatives, particularly in the city center,

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<sup>334</sup> Visited in November 2018

in the neighborhood Ballaró<sup>335</sup>. A network of local activists, together with newcomers actively engage in creating common spaces and a sense of solidarity. In the center of the touristic itinerary of Palermo, this area hosts significant historic spots, including the Ballaró market which is the meeting place for many groups. As opposed to being in a geographic periphery, more than 100 different groups inhabit this area. This neighborhood is in the heart of the city but is a good example of a place in the periphery of power, and most inhabitants are concerned with their daily survival and meeting basic needs.

Forli<sup>336</sup>, in the central region of Italy, has a particular dissonant heritage, as it is the hometown of Mussolini, known as 'la città del Duce'. As a relatively mid-sized city, and not being known for tourism, Forli has been battling with its uncomfortable past and image today. With the creation of common spaces and bringing together newcomers (comprising 20% of population) and long-term residents allowed multiple narratives to emerge, contributing to the efforts to redefine the image of the town today. The stories of women's resistance during the WWII as well as stories of perceptions of newcomers over the last decade show the potential role of newcomers in reconsidering relations with an enriched perspective of this urban setting, realizing that the new face of the town could have a new narrative shared by all, through a process of commoning.

In Thessaloniki, Greece<sup>337</sup> there are a series of spaces for solidarity. The response to the massive resurgence of displacement has brought several alternative local initiatives to the light. Small, self-organized groups, several of which self-identify as anarchist, took action in the absence of local, national and international entities, addressing the basic needs of newcomers. Having already dealt with the issues of precarity following austerity measures, local responses in urban settings have shown transformative results for all involved. In the case of Athens, experiences of City Plaza and occupied buildings in the *Exarcheia* neighborhood offer various models of response while *STEKIs* (neighborhood

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<sup>335</sup> Visited in November 2019

<sup>336</sup> Visited in April 2017

<sup>337</sup> Visited in March 2019

cafes) offer a common space for dialogue and action. The social movements that emerge from these local initiatives provide a setting for both long-term residents and newcomers to struggle together for a common cause in solidarity, including class, gender, ecology, and race. Such action brings newcomers, organic intellectuals and long-term residents together under these solidarity movements.

In Marseille France<sup>338</sup>, solidarity movements have been shaped by resident cooperatives, particularly in the northern district of Marseille. Initiatives such as Hotel du Nord have been trying to create common spaces where residents can gather for collective action. As there has been deliberate exclusion of neighborhoods from public services (e.g. limited public transportation, libraries, social services), such local initiatives increase the visibility, calling attention to the needs of communities and encouraging them to take an active role in their communities.

At Huelva, Spain<sup>339</sup>, there is a long-standing tradition of solidarity between people who have been dealing with precarious conditions and creating common spaces for education and community development using the principles of direct democracy. Particularly Huelva's District 5 and the process of developing its plan are good examples of direct democracy on a local scale for people living with precarity. The organic process of developing a plan involved all residents and encouraged them to take active part in a two-year long dialogue session, constructing the plan together taking into consideration all of their needs.

### Rural settings

Rural and semi-rural settings in the Mediterranean face significant depopulation, with an increase in emigration among the younger generation due to lack of access to resources, education and employment. In recent years, repopulation of these places by newcomers

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<sup>338</sup> Visited in March 2019.

<sup>339</sup> Visited in April 2018.

has been extensively discussed; however, the emphasis on receiving certain groups based on their country of origin has generated concerns, particularly among long-term residents. In some cases, the lack of job opportunities has also affected newcomers' plans to stay for a considerable period of time. The push factors that caused emigration from these rural areas in the first place have remained, and newcomers continue to leave for destinations with more resources. On the other hand, disappearing traditional agricultural practices and maintenance of landscape have been concerning for many of these rural areas, creating risks for major hazards, including landslides and wildfires. One of the proposals to address this issue has been linked to welcoming refugees and migrants into rural areas.

In Italy, a government program has been put in place (SPRAR) to host refugees and immigrants, which also assisted with repopulating rural settings. Such a system has led to a number of constructive local integration programs in Italy, including the well-known town of Riace in Calabria. Sutura<sup>340</sup>, located in western Sicily, has also been part of the SPRAR system, hosting migrants and refugees. Following years of emigration, approximately 70% of the houses are empty, while the birth rate is low. Despite its fascinating landscape and its location on a pilgrimage route, Sutura is a difficult place to reach with poor public transportation. In recent years, it has also become known for its participation in the SPRAR system, having had a positive experience with refugees and migrants. There is a significant concern among the largely elderly population that the town will be completely abandoned in the near future as the population decreases, since there are few economic opportunities to attract or keep young people in the town.

Fontecchio<sup>341</sup> is a unique town in the region of Abruzzo, Italy. Affected by increased depopulation due to inadequate economic and educational resources, an earthquake in 2009 caused further displacement, leaving most houses empty. With approximately 350

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<sup>340</sup> Visited in May 2019 and will be further elaborated in Part 2 - Section 2.

<sup>341</sup> Visited in October 2017.

residents today, Fontecchio has been creating a common space; '*Casa e Bottega*'<sup>342</sup> brings together newcomers and long-term residents. Further, with various cooperative models using agricultural practices and tourism opportunities, the town has made considerable effort to repopulate the area, also considering whether to welcome refugee and migrant populations.

Kilkis, Greece<sup>343</sup>, close to the Idomeni border with North Macedonia also has been facing depopulation, sharing the same trend as Italian towns. With large areas of agricultural land not being used effectively, Kilkis received the attention of a goldmining company, which generated a reaction by local community members. A group of local activists began to organize local community members against the extraction of natural resources, leaving the area environmentally destitute. A common space that began with this activism gained another dimension during the austerity measures and eventually during the refugee and migrant influx, where a significant local initiative provided local and national authorities with direction and offered alternatives to address the issues around displacement and development.

St Milian (La Rioja region), Spain<sup>344</sup> is also one of the semi-abandoned towns in Spain that faces depopulation. Being home to a world heritage site and known as the cradle of Spanish language, St Milian has attempted to find alternative ways to repopulate the area while at the same time facing resistance from the local population. The challenge with small rural populations is often linked to the elderly people who have fear of losing their culture, and oppose changing demographics, particularly if newcomers are from the Global South.

The dilemma of needing cheap labor, but not wanting to live together with the cheap labor force, has both historical roots and modern echoes. The examples in visited rural settings

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<sup>342</sup> Casa e Bottega is a community-based initiative in Fontecchio, Italy based on the ethical and social use of heritage resources and commons in order to repopulate and revitalize the town following an earthquake of 2009 in the region. It represents an interesting community attempt in constructing lives following displacement. <http://www.fontecchio.gov.it/il-progetto-casabottega/>

<sup>343</sup> Visited in March 2019.

<sup>344</sup> Visited in May 2017.

in Spain, Italy and Greece as well as observations in France and Turkey, where there is significant racist discourse with interest in the use of cheap labor force, has brought this dilemma to light in rural communities; people struggle with the need to find ways for their towns to survive and their views of their community as exclusive. Considering all the many challenges regarding the lack of resources and accessibility, rural settings offer alternative means for co-constructing communities following displacement, as opposed to experiences of intense urbanization seen today. However, such processes should be considered within the process of meta-integration, co-constructing a community with an act of commoning, therefore moving away from a possessive and territorial approach to embrace the commons.

### Refugee camps or camp-like settings

Syndos, a peripheral neighborhood of Thessaloniki, is a camp-like setting with 600 people in the area<sup>345</sup>, who are waiting for their asylum requests to be processed. Receiving assistance from the EU/UNHCR through the Greek authorities, most of the residents of this camp-like setting were passive recipients of aid, at times working in nearby businesses as daily workers. Through her work with a local organization, *Ms. Benelou* (an employee of a local organization in Thessaloniki), has become frustrated with the government's approach to the displaced as well as the dissatisfaction of asylum seekers and migrants. She drew attention to the fact that Greece is an agricultural country and suggested that the need for work and housing could be matched with the need for the agricultural labor. According to *Ms. Benelou*, as a half million people have left Greece due to austerity measures, such an approach could both satisfy needs and regularize asylum seekers.

The island of Lesbos<sup>346</sup> has been one of the main entry points in Europe for asylum seekers. While Lesbos was supposed to be a transitional spot, it has become a large

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<sup>345</sup> Visited in March 2019.

<sup>346</sup> Visited in August 2017.

refugee camp with large numbers of migrants and refugees spending months on the island, waiting for their asylum process to be clarified. Against the backdrop of the formal responses to the arrival of migrants and refugees by the government of Greece, the EU and international organizations, it has been the local responses by the local communities that has been one of the main inspirations of this research. While many formal refugee camps such as *Moria*, *Karatepe* and *Pikpa* were set up at a later stage and exceeded their capacities multiple times, the response of the local communities with no assistance at the beginning of major influx with no choice is the essence of the shift of a possessive and territorial point in the relationships. *Mr. Tyrikos* described the shared experiences of the arrival of thousands in desperate situations, and the entire island becoming a refugee camp, chaotic but self-organized, with the fundamental aim of honoring human dignity and needs, without philosophizing the situation.

While research for this thesis did not include camps in Greece and Italy, previous experiences with refugee camps or camp-like situations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo provide further insight to the relationship between camps and the concept of the common space and commoning. Primarily dependent on aid programs and restricted in the camp areas, asylum seekers and refugees are often located in geographic peripheries away from urban settings with limited access to resources. Limited to the services provided by the camp authorities, supposedly for a short period of time, the displaced persons rarely have the physical or mental space to take decisions about basic daily concerns.

Theoretically, refugee camps are set up by the receiving countries, and are primarily conceived of as temporary spaces for the provision of basic protection and provide for the needs of forcibly displaced persons. UNHCR, with its guidelines and partner organizations provides assistance to the countries at their request. Depending on the nature of this request, the international community may be involved in all aspects of such refugee camps: from their construction (including the selection of the site, types of accommodation such as tents or containers, etc.); the dissemination of food; and, non-

food items through specialized partner agencies, inter alia the World Food Program, UNICEF (education), World Health Organization (health) as well as numerous international NGOs such Doctors without Borders, Save the Children and Danish Refugee Council.

Considering that a large number of refugees are found in the Global South and that resources are limited in many countries, such camps are often funded through international funds provided by major donor countries. While guidelines and minimum standards are set by UNHCR, the conditions in camps depend on the available funds as well as the receiving countries' capacity and national policies to grant specific rights to refugees and asylum seekers. The parameters vary between limited freedom of movement in remote refugee camps primarily dependent on the distribution and services, and right to work (rare but it does exist), freedom of movement and access to local resources. The temporary nature of camps is closely tied to the need to contain refugees in a specific area, cover their basic needs and stop the destabilization of local structures.

However, prolonged refugee situations render all of these approaches void, as refugees constantly seek alternatives within and outside of the camps. Regarding durable solutions, once refugee status and the options associated with it have been identified on an individual basis, family reunifications and resettlement are often coordinated by UNHCR and ICRC with the relevant offices of the resettlement countries. Repatriation is often overseen by IOM and local integration is administered by national governments. The refugee camps, although they genuinely try to offer a safe space for those fleeing violent conflict, are also places of desperation, vulnerability, dependency and resilience. As much as an everyday life of a refugee varies depends on where they landed, the overarching aspiration across the board is to seek a safe and dignified life where individuals have access to resources and preferably become active members of a community.



The camps in Greece and Italy were technically set up for protection and are ideally transitional points. However, there are many examples of temporary camps becoming permanent, similar to actual towns or urban suburbs, such as *Kakuma* and *Dadaab* in Kenya, *Zaatari* in Jordan, or Palestinian refugee camps on The West Bank, where approaches to the commons are different. The *Moria* camp in Lesbos, a temporary transit point, has been operational for almost five years and is currently at three times its capacity, and faces some major challenges.

As opposed to formal camp settings that are managed by an authority and provide strict rules and regulations, camp-like, self-managed settings seem to develop more organic platforms that give the inhabitants a creative outlet in a more participatory and inclusive environment. It is these autonomous settings that bring about a process of constructing together and sense of solidarity, regardless of the lack of resources.

Europe, although it formally does not allow such traditional camp settings to become permanent, has always had self-organized camp-like settings in its peripheries, composed of its own citizens as well as newcomers, primarily inhabited by Roma communities<sup>347</sup>. This historical battle of Europe with integration, along with the dignified struggle for cultural survival of the Roma communities places an important spotlight on the relations of oppressions in Europe and their implications today.

As the refugee/Internally Displaced People camps are originally designed as a humanitarian response, they do not look ahead to displacement-related problems in the long run, and are unable to address the complex needs of future displacement. The development of effective and democratic local governance models – linked to community life with the goals of sustainable development in mind – are a more viable way to deal with the future impact of displacement, particularly in the peripheries.

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<sup>347</sup> 30 million people live in camp-like/slums conditions in Europe, according to a Deutsche Welle report in October 2014 by Waslat Hasrat-Nazimi. <https://www.dw.com/en/inside-europes-slums/a-18011677>

The tendency to gravitate towards urban centers and the need for more democratic governance models should be balanced with the need to increase the quality of life in semi-rural and rural areas, as a viable option with the changing nature of labor market and available technology today. Abandoned villages in Italy, Greece, and Spain visited during this research show potential of receiving newcomers and restructuring a revitalizing community life through new structures. A shift in mindset may open the door to alternative approaches, and encourage a break with the colonized minds that are attracted to urban centers. Such a shift from heteronomy to autonomy creates opportunities for change, mobilizing those very same vulnerabilities of the displaced people in geographic peripheries to take social action and create more democratic governance models. The conclusions of the 2018 IDMC report support the idea that the involvement and leadership of displaced people in community life, including planning and services, is essential. When responsible states work in close cooperation and in partnership with local governments, communities and the international community, such partnership can prevail over the current paternalistic and hierarchical relations.

### **2.1.3. Stories of the displaced and displacement (changemakers)**

Multiple stories of displacement and the displaced reveal the strength, struggles for a dignified life that is the history of people in movement. The narrative of displaced people, segregated from mainstream society, labeled as vulnerable, unqualified, poor and in need of protection, perpetuates a paternalistic state approach, disempowers communities, and feeds into right-wing, populist and anti-migrant/refugee rhetoric. In this regard, having a platform to share multiple stories gives a voice to the displaced and the opportunity to balance these arguments, and represent their viewpoints culturally, socially and politically. Changing demographics in Europe – and elsewhere – demands reconsideration of social norms, recalibration of what common sense constitutes in the new equation, and engagement in dialogue on equal terms in order to determine a new set of social contracts.

The stories of the displaced emerge, considering vulnerability as a natural human condition that can be mobilized; an opportunity to take a step toward positive social change fully aware of any hierarchical and patriarchal tendencies. In a process of displacement, vulnerability can be mobilized if support systems exist to underline self-reliance and solidarity. The displaced persons do not have to be channeled into existing heteronomous structures, and find themselves in the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid with the present system. The struggles of peoples across the world for dignity and equality, which inspire many movements today, sheds light on the ways of dealing with displacement using alternative paths. Regardless of their size, these struggles are not a matter of the past, but take place in spite of all the challenges and oppositions faced across the world. These isolated but significant efforts in the Mediterranean region contribute to the stories of displacement and the displaced, continuing to pave a way for future actions of solidarity.

The stories of displacement and the displaced told by changemakers in the field reveal a diverse range of provocative feelings and states of mind. As most of the interviewees have been working with the refugee/migrant populations in the northern Mediterranean countries in recent years, questions on co-construction of lives after displacement were often answered by pessimistic scenarios. However, when displacement is seen as an integral part of a community life, closely related to local development processes with autonomous tendencies, the outlook positive was more positive, and many opportunities were recounted. *Teresa Viola*, who has volunteered with Ex MOI for many years, expressed her frustration with the government who forced hundreds of people out onto the streets without any prospects, dismantling something that had been working. Replacing Ex MOI with a project without consulting the people concerned only adds to the problem. According to *Ms. Viola*, Ex MOI gave a home, hope and sense of security to many. Whilst running the second-hand cloth section of Ex MOI, she heard the hundreds of stories of these young African men, seeking a better life and engaging in the occupation of the buildings together with local activists.

It should be underlined that it is crucial to be flexible when working with diverse groups and varying conditions, each have limitations that may paralyze the process if people become dogmatic. During displacement, the parameters set by the nation-state and the need to fit-in to these established norms, have taken this flexibility away and with this, killed creativity. Speaking of the possibilities and future scenarios of displacement, INGO worker in Plaermo, *Mr. Pandiscia*<sup>348</sup> noted that irrespective of all the talk about rights and equality, the country of origin and passport matters as there is quite a difference between Global North and Global South. He added that historical relations between the countries of Global North and South will continue to dominate as those from the Global North will have easy entry to south while those from the Global South will continue to face difficulties, such as visas and strict border controls.

Another interviewee from Thessaloniki's viewpoint furthered this argument, as out of 600 people residing in Syndos, only 10% were granted asylum in Greece. The rest will most probably be sent back to Turkey<sup>349</sup>, as their stay is not legally viable. Inevitably, they will try to cross the borders again and the cycle will continue. Regarding those whose requests were accepted, they leave their accommodation and continue with their lives, heading towards event more ambiguity and anxiety.

An example from Marseille looks into integration and people's presence from a different perspective. *Ms. Chabani*<sup>350</sup> has been working with people who have been in Marseille for less than five years (as after five years people are supposed take care of themselves like other citizens). She described integration as two-fold; one is the government approach, which requires that a newcomer becomes French first and foremost; the other is the local communities' approach where people feel solidarity and support, however, this is limited to one's kinship, and not mixing with others. She stated that in either case, newcomers must choose a side, and in both circumstances they must distance themselves

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<sup>348</sup> The interview was carried out in Palermo, May 2019. Mr. Pandiscia works with an INGO (Male, early 30s), specialized in working with newcomers, particularly unaccompanied minors.

<sup>349</sup> Please see further information on the EU-Turkey agreement in Part 1 - Section 2 under institutional approach.

<sup>350</sup> The interview was carried out in Marseille, March 2019. Ms Chabani (female, late 40s), is an activist, NGO worker and a long-term resident who works with immigrant communities in the northern district of Marseille.

from others in order to integrate into a community, which essentially perpetuates exclusivity and racist elements in society.

The interviews also indicated that social movements are good platforms for inclusion; places where people are brought together through genuine concern for other and/or because they have been affected by discriminatory and xenophobic actions. Both long-term residents and newcomers join in their struggle for a common cause in solidarity; regardless of class, gender, ecology, race, etc. However, as these actions are politically charged, they take place in relatively small leftist circles, and are seen as marginal by mainstream society, and are, therefore, often sidelined. The challenge of motivating people to come together in neighborhoods to undertake joint action is widespread in community-based actions; one example is the 'pocket park' initiative in Thessaloniki, an action to reclaim a public space or use of an abandoned field in a neighborhood. Although it is driven by persons known to the local community, the inhabitants have been often suspicious, not trusting the process, and, therefore, they keep their distance. Overcoming obstacles in local communities and ensuring joint action, requires a substantial amount of effort as well as highly creative strategies. In this example, community meals in the streets of the neighborhood were a crucial step in bringing people together to talk about the community, discussing who is currently present in the neighborhood and deciding on how to work with the current inhabitants. It is also seen as an alternative to the right-wing conservative media feeding into xenophobic and Islamophobic narratives that most people are exposed to in their homes through mass media, allowing them to form their own opinions about migrants and refugees.

While the newcomers may not have the time and the interest to focus on local politics, it can be argued that it is not in the interest of nation states and authorities to create such spaces or in some cases even allow these places to be created. Therefore, these common spaces need to be conceived at local levels and require the progressive elements of long-term residents to cooperate in equal terms, in solidarity, in order to change the mainstream, often negative, narrative regarding displaced persons. On the

other hand, the strong views of a long-term resident of Palermo of African origin who has worked with displaced persons in Italy for over 25 years cannot be ignored. He argues that, mostly referring to displaced persons from the global south in his experience, people do not have a clear idea of where to stop. Their priorities are financial, so they take any opportunity to improve their economic situation. Although many migrant/refugee community members attend social and cultural events, when the topic concerns the rights of domestic workers, carers, violence against women, etc., even if it directly concerns them, very few are present. He concludes that the people are not interested in the political process; their political views are distinctly different, and they are focused on improving their individual wellbeing. His conclusion, however, takes a different angle, as he recalls and praises the people of the *Mediterranea*<sup>351</sup> who he truly believes work with sincere intentions to save lives in the Mediterranean Sea. He considers the efforts a good example of people coming together for a common good, and demonstrating that change can happen.

The stories of changemakers indicate that individual escapes and efforts to seek a solution under the present system is, across the board, a dominant and internalized phenomenon. As *Mr. Koffi* (a long-term resident of Palermo with the country of origin Ivory Coast) said change cannot happen individually, it has to happen as a whole, adding that “Africa will not be developed alone, the Europeans got a lot from Africa, and if Europe is a place for democracy and liberty, let people move and learn about democracy and different ways of living. Immigration allows this exchange to happen, and makes people on all sides see that they need each other”.

In almost all cases of displacement, the individuals’ main concerns are daily survival and their next steps. Among many, the story of *Mr. Jadoon*, who has been in Italy over 12 years with legal residency is a good example. His wife and children are in Pakistan, but

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<sup>351</sup> *Mediterranea* is a solidarity platform made up of different of civil society initiatives as well as heterogeneous organizations and individuals in Italy in order to honor human dignity and rights; witness and document the central Mediterranean crossings, and save lives at risk in the sea. The associations at the heart of this project are ARCI and Ya Basta Bologna, NGOs like Sea-Watch, the online magazine “I Diavoli”, social enterprises like Moltivolti from Palermo, consider the action as moral and civil disobedience against the nationalist and xenophobic public discourse. <https://mediterraneaescue.org/en/>

each year he spends most of the year in Sicily, selling jewelry in the streets of Palermo. He shares a small apartment in Ballaró neighborhood with a number of other men in a similar situation. The housing conditions for immigrant street vendors is relatively basic as their goal is to spend as little as possible in order to save money that they send back to their families.

*Mr. Jadoon* spends 12-14 hours a day walking around cafés and tourist attractions where encouraging people to buy his products. The street vendors in Palermo seem to have clearly marked territories, and most are from the Indian subcontinent, including those with small carts and those who walk through the city. Only those with a legal status can have a stable stand, others must move in order to not get caught. Although *Mr. Jadoon* is legal, he prefers to be mobile as his experience shows that he has more chance of selling his products. Periodically he spends a day or two fixing some of his products or preparing them to sell. With few breaks throughout the day, he goes to his apartment only to sleep and get ready for the next day. The highlight of his day is to speak with his family and he feels very happy that it is much cheaper to talk now than before. He spends his winter months in Pakistan with his family where he buys and prepares jewelry to bring to Italy.

Despite the fact that *Mr. Jadoon* seems to be comfortable with his work environment and knows many people, the treatment he receives from potential customers is not always friendly. He does not seem to be very bothered by this attitude and he explains that many of the people he knows receive similar treatment. His social interactions are limited to a small circle of people driven by survival concerns either through selling goods. After 12 years back and forth between Sicily and Pakistan, he does not feel part of Palermo and would like to move to England with his family. Consequently, all his plans and daily actions are focused on saving money in order to survive and reunite with his family in a new place. It is important to note that having followed all the procedural requirements of the Italian government, *Mr. Jadoon* is aware that even if he manages to bring his family to Palermo, his children will be stuck in similar socio-economic circle and need to focus all of their energy on everyday survival.

Inevitably, the great majority of people avoid politically charged actions such as self-management, particularly those who are concerned about their legal status or afraid of being targeted by authorities. However, the common spaces (the political landscape<sup>352</sup>) and the narratives that define these spaces generate dynamics where organic intellectuals emerge. Organic intellectuals play a crucial role in facilitating groups to come together, engage in dialogue, raise consciousness about their rights and position in society, resist oppressive practices and take constructive political action. Consequently, as much as the commons are necessary platforms for resistance and political actions, organic intellectuals are key in facilitating this process, steering groups to establish new norms.

Such a challenging process forces newcomers and long-term residents to question their rooted belief systems, hierarchies, patriarchy, traditional practices (at times discriminatory and oppressive), heritage, identity, class, race, gender relations as well as relationship to the environment. As they all play a crucial role in the processes of social transformation, discussions go beyond the notion of integration, shifting from heteronomy to autonomy, a crucial component of meta-integration.

Developments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have led to an ever-increasing loss of the commons, rights, decreasing access and control of resources, and increasing inequalities leaving no option but to work on alternative ways of organizing society and relations; the shift from heteronomy to autonomy. Among many others, Marinaleda<sup>353</sup>, Spain, even if it is not known as a village that works with refugees and migrants directly, has been a remarkable example of the struggle of daily workers, *jornaleros*, for their right to land and direct democracy. The story of the commons and commoning in Marinaleda offers a model of the possibility of another world today, which will be further discussed in Part II.

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<sup>352</sup> Political landscape, as noted in this thesis, does not refer to being in politics and seeking a power position but rather having power and exercising it as a community. Therefore, Jacques Ranciere's definition of political is more suited as political is not based on institutions or on material interests, as are most political sociologies and, it forms the basis for what we think is an interesting alternative to most current accounts.

Baiocchi Gianpaolo, Connor Brian T, "Politics as interruption: Ranciere's community of equals and governmentality". *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 117, n. 1, 2013, p. 90

<sup>353</sup> Visited in April 2018



## 2.2. Organic intellectuals

Recalling the conceptualization of integration earlier in this thesis in terms of the relationship between the center and peripheries, as well as the impositions to fit in the norms of the center, *hegemony* surfaces as a key issue. Antonio Gramsci<sup>354</sup>, through his comprehensive work on the influence of power relations on the production of various forms of inequality, points to the role of intellectuals in exercising subaltern functions of social hegemony and political power. Applying Gramsci's theory to the context of the non-profit industrial complex of the international humanitarian system, the educated class, as described by Shrestha, with their understanding of the language of development following neoliberal policies, and as the selected intellectuals of the center, serve as a buffer zone between the center and the peripheries (See Part 1 - Chapter 1 for an in-depth discussion of this theory). The problem with this scenario, as although it benefits the center, it excludes almost 85% of the world's population and subjectifies them; paternalistically persuading them to be content with their position in society.

One of the points made by an interviewee<sup>355</sup> on population movement was quite striking; she believes that industrialized countries with colonialist and expansionist histories needed a labor force in the 1950s and 1960s to recover from the losses of the labor force during the WWII. She reiterated that "periodically these more industrialized countries need people and they see refugees and migrants as resource to maintain their economy". She added that she is not, however, convinced that they are interested in sharing political power with refugees and migrants. These countries benefit from these crises and may deliberately make their journeys and asylum processes difficult, so by the time migrants and refugees arrive at their final destination they are put into a vulnerable category and meant to be satisfied with what they find; basic shelter, food and jobs, and not ask for more. "This is a reminder of where they should belong in the society", an ironic statement which lays out an internalized feeling in regards to underprivileged newcomers.

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<sup>354</sup> Crehan Kate, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*, Pluto Press, London, 2002, p. 210

<sup>355</sup> The interview was carried out in Athens, April 2019. Ms. Isidou (female - mid 40s) is a local community member in Exarcheia, Athens.

Accordingly, the current assistance policies in Greece do not encourage self-reliance but have been perpetuating a culture of dependency, making conditions inconvenient so people eventually give up and leave.

Vulnerability, characterized by inequality and lack of rights in a new place, is a key dimension where displaced persons face difficulties in articulating new ways of operating in their environment where they live. It is highly challenging to face up to hegemonic elements and engage in a political struggle. However, Gramsci's work on organic intellectuals inspires a path that is aligned with the arguments made in this thesis, which ultimately feeds into a paradigm shift in political thought and practice. It is particularly relevant as this research has observed the attempts of this shift driven by individuals; changemakers and organic intellectuals who have been working toward constructing alternatives.

It is essential to note that the exercise of power of the center through persuasion, via its educated class, is a more favorable form today than relying on force. However, such an option is not dismissed as it is often witnessed in border crossings as well as treatment of migrants and refugees in camps and camp-like situations in the peripheries. Staff of the international organizations on the ground express frustrations but these either do not reach beyond a certain level in the organizational hierarchy so as to not disturb the status-quo or ironically come to surface as a confession approaching retirement age, after their financial status has been secured. This is the dilemma of the educated classes, as one of the interviewees working with an international organization put it.

While the non-profit industrial complex is constantly professionalizing, it continues to mimic a corporate top down structure. A significant amount of time and energy is allocated to fundraising, primarily through donor-recipient relations with foundations, the corporate world and nation states as well as multilateral donor agencies. The time spent for administrative matters in these hierarchical entities prevent individuals from genuinely investing in creating spaces for organic community participation and collective power.

Caught between the impositions and the expectations of loyalty to the values of the center, and the desire to support social transformation processes through their experience with displaced persons, there is a group of intellectuals that aspire for another world, trying to find their place in this equation. The colonized minds of these individuals prevent them crossing a thin line separating rhetoric, from practicing their brilliant theories on the ground, together with people in struggle. To do so would represent a threat to their relationship with power, privilege and authority, which are the very notions that must be critically questioned in a process of a social transformation.

Such individuals inevitably are not only the product of the educated class of the center and the buffer zone, but organically emerge from displaced communities across the board, regardless of whether they are newcomers or long-term residents. The essential role of these individuals as changemakers, bringing diverse groups together regardless of their position, has resulted in some remarkable outcomes, but often only in isolated cases. The examples of Lesvos, Kilikis, Thessaloniki, Sutera and Palermo show that these changemakers emerge, and are the products of local conditions, needs and aspirations. The volunteers and staff of Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo as well as in Kilikis have gone above and beyond their work to provide local responses to newcomers. Together with the local community members, they have combined the concerns of local development with their response to influx of newcomers. Gramsci notes that 'every social group born in the original ground of an essential function in the world of economic production creates together with itself, at the same time, in an organic way, one or more layers of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields'<sup>356</sup>. In the context of forced displacement, in addition to the evident physical displacement, a virtual displacement of organic intellectuals also takes place and their new conditions causes them to come forward as changemakers taking an active role in leading groups to see things in a new way, helping them to redefine their values. Among other impressive examples, the efforts and leading

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<sup>356</sup> Gramsci Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London, Elecbook, 1999, p.134

roles of long-term residents in Lesvos<sup>357</sup> received the Council of Europe's 2016 Raoul Wallenberg Prize<sup>358</sup> for outstanding achievements in providing frontline assistance to thousands of refugees irrespective of their origin and religion. While acknowledgment by a human rights organization was welcomed, their efforts were an organic reaction to an unusual situation affecting their everyday lives. An interview conducted with long-term resident *Mr. Tyrikos*<sup>359</sup> laid bare the frustrating power relations between local and international entities, and long-term residents and newcomers as the professionalized humanitarian actors gradually entered the picture and sidelined the solidarity efforts being made by volunteers.

Gramsci emphasizes that all relations involve power, and it was the task of intellectuals to work towards transforming this power in a more egalitarian manner, paying careful attention to the specificities of local histories, trying to better understand fragmented narratives. Gramsci's particular interest in the presence of multiple, simultaneous narratives, and not excluding those of the marginalized social groups whose voices are not heard or represented, *the subaltern*<sup>360</sup>, is consistent with the concept of meta-integration introduced in this thesis.

Gramsci describes organic intellectuals as those with fundamental and structural ties to particular classes. The emergence of organic intellectuals takes place with a class becoming a self-conscious entity, and through a transformative process of moving from being *a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself*<sup>361</sup>. The position of the traditional intellectuals, and their relationship to the communities, particularly with those of the Global South has long been an indication of the coloniality of power, whether intentional or not. The perpetuation of this relationship is embodied in specialized international agencies,

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<sup>357</sup> Led by a local priest, a business owner and folklorist, as well as local activists and community members (Father Efstratios, Tyrikos-Ergas George, Efstathiou-Selacha Katerina, Efstathiou-Selacha Eleni).

<sup>358</sup> Starting in 2014, The Council of Europe Raoul Wallenberg Prize, at the initiative of the Swedish Government and the Hungarian Parliament, is awarded every two years in order to reward extraordinary humanitarian achievements by a single individual, a group of individuals or an organization. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/raoul-wallenberg-prize>

<sup>359</sup> The Interview was carried out in Lesvos, August 2017. Mr. Tyrikos (male-late 30s) is a long-term resident in Lesvos, folklorist, local business owner who has worked with migrant / refugee influx with NGO "Agkalia" since 2015

<sup>360</sup> The term subaltern was coined by A. Gramsci to identify the social groups excluded and displaced from the socio-economic institutions of society in order to deny their political voices.

<sup>361</sup> Crehan, *op.cit.*, p. 128-156

reproducing hierarchical relations in their operational practices, and leaving limited space for organic intellectuals to emerge or be active.

Consequently, while the importance and role of traditional intellectuals for any social group remain, it is critical that they should not become the instruments of the center in order to rationalize and justify their power, privilege and authority. Gramsci's consideration of organic intellectuals attempts to overcome the elitist character of the traditional dominant thought. In this traditional concept, thinking is left to the group of the 'intellectuals', made up of high-ranking officers or educated class. 'Workers', made up of lower rank staff and manual laborers, are instead meant to carry out the work conceptualized by intellectuals. This is clearly reflected in present day relations of 'white vs blue collar' work and constant reproduction of hierarchy. Conceiving of the division of labor on these lines is neither a natural nor is it a spontaneous cultural act as it has ideological and pedagogical roots. The efforts to shift power from the elites of the center toward the peripheries requires that various layers of society are simultaneously involved and organize themselves through their organic intellectuals, so they can maintain a necessary distance from the interests of the ruling elites. Organic intellectuals represent different interests to traditional intellectuals in these social layers, as members of civil society, including constructors, farmers, artists, artisans, community workers, teachers, mayors, shop owners, daily workers, housewives and husbands, do not require formal training. Organic intellectuals, in this sense, depend on the very social layer that generates them, and from the politics that reflects the needs of everyday life of their communities.

Gramsci argues that if civil society is to be transformed, we need to enable a radical transformation of society at large. In this regard, civil society must be conceived with all its members; present and able to share their narratives, not only to be included in a process and their views heard, but with the power to construct together and represent themselves. The subaltern's relative powerlessness needs to be overcome through a process of transformation, which Gramsci argues, can be led by organic intellectuals.

However, this should not be a field for only intellectuals, academics, politicians, consultants and professionalized development workers, but the joint work of the people from all segments of the communities, finding a common space to exhibit their capability to influence and change. Gramsci's point on 'everyone being an intellectual but not everyone in society having the function of intellectual'<sup>362</sup> brings a different dimension to these power relations.

Kate Crehan<sup>363</sup> raises the issue of the subaltern, stating that regardless of their awareness of local realities of power, "those trapped within subaltern culture remain incapable of grasping the larger landscapes of oppression in which they are located". Reflecting on the topic, she explains that as subalternity is closely linked to the culture of domination and perpetuates that domination, overcoming it would require that we go beyond subalternity; a major challenge. According to Gramsci, Crehan argues, "subaltern people may well be capable of seeing the little valley they inhabit very clearly, but they remain incapable of seeing beyond their valley walls and understanding how their little world fits into the greater one beyond it"<sup>364</sup>, pointing out that Gramsci's argument on the inability of subaltern people to produce coherent narratives of the world they live in would challenge the existing hegemonic narrative in an effective way.

While the concept of organic intellectuals and their emergence is seen as one of the key points of this thesis, the same cannot be said for Gramsci's view on subaltern cultures' inability to produce effective, genuinely transformative, political movements. As forced displacement plays a trigger role for the social transformation process, subaltern groups move from their parochial state of mind, with access to information through advanced technology, engaging in different relations to transformative political processes<sup>365</sup>. The possibility of instant information flow has produced models of self-organized movements,

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<sup>362</sup> Humphrys Elizabeth. "Rethinking Gramsci's Organic Intellectuals". *16<sup>th</sup> Congress Conference: Alternative Futures and Popular Protest*, 18-20 April 2011, p. 3

<sup>363</sup> Crehan, *op.cit.*, p. 205

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*, p. 104

<sup>365</sup> Crehan stresses that Gramsci's work was focused on the Italian context (with reference to peasants and peasant society in early 1900s) and did not necessarily intend to apply to a generic society in other places or times.

not only in a specific geographic area, but across the globe, putting pressure on national governments and international institutions to react against human right violations. Multiple narratives challenge the understanding of the world seen as “the reality”, and offer alternative worldviews, possibilities and strategies for struggle.

In addition, the precariat in the peripheries, with its heterogenous configuration, has the potential to perceive and address the challenges that are typically seen as a burden for the subaltern culture. Ongoing community regeneration in geographic peripheries involve rich and diverse groups of individuals, offering an intellectually fertile environment for organic intellectuals to emerge. However, shared experiences in common spaces are needed as the displaced *Mr. Čup* explained in an interview in Kosovo, for change to take place. In the absence of common spaces, organic intellectuals disappear in the chaos, as *Mr. Kamperis* (activist and a local NGO worker in Kilkis) had experienced through his work in refugee camps in Greece.

In the process of meta-integration, the essential linkage between the common space, peoples and their stories in relation to the environment is emphasized as a constant process of dialogue within and between communities, where these individuals play an organic and pivotal role. Such a scenario should not assume that all the members would happily coexist, and all problems easily resolved. There are fields of struggle in all aspects of these relations, and radically different world views are expressed. Indeed, they all need to be expressed and heard, which constitutes the essence of the presence of multiple narratives, regardless of how disturbing and painful they might be for some. Anna Yu Karpova, Natalyia Mesheheryakova and Aliona Chudinova, in their joint article<sup>366</sup> make reference to the work of Bamyeh, who argues that the social role of organic intellectuals intensifies at the crossroads of innovations and traditions where there is a delicate balance to be maintained. This in turn calls for specific abilities in order to create an

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<sup>366</sup> Karpova Anna Yu, Mesheheryakova Natalyia N. and Chudinova Aliona I., “The political role of intellectuals”. *SHS Web of Conferences*, vol. 28, 2016, p. 1-8

inclusive and welcoming space for all. This point is particularly valid in cases of Italy and Greece where newcomers arrive with a strong sense of traditional values.

As organic intellectuals emerge in each group, their sustained presence and work is not an easy task but requires a support system as it is a long process in difficult environments with complex dynamics. *Mr. Melluso* (Arci Porco Rosso) in Palermo indicated that it is important for the public recognize their work with displaced persons with a sense of solidarity, so they understand that it is done for the public interest. It is this recognition that sustains most people to carry on their work. *Mr. Melluso*, who called the sense of solidarity the oxygen in his efforts, emphasized the need to include many persons to avoid 'old style one-man-show' approach, so others are ready to step in and lead as necessary.

Organic intellectuals are the residual elements of forced displacement, who emerge in a praxis, formulating and spreading organic ideologies<sup>367</sup> as social agents, and are able to communicate and manage conflicting values, at times using their privileges and authority in relations to their affiliations. In their role of facilitating the transformation of the ideological terrain, organic intellectuals should be challenging Eurocentric narratives and actions publicly and create common spaces for the voices of the subaltern to be heard and to organize. As there would be no immediate and complete replacement of the previously dominant worldview, the co-construction of communities after displacement would have the existing ideological elements from diverse backgrounds and worldviews, presenting opposition and a number of conflicting situations, particularly by those unwilling to abandon the concept of nation-state.

It takes time to rebuild social structures and the constant regeneration of hierarchies will continue as an obstacle in any attempts made to organize or act. Grassroots co-operation, therefore, cannot be done in isolation, but in networks of solidarity among similar initiatives in order not replicate hierarchical structures. *Mr. Kamperis*, dealing with

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<sup>367</sup> Organic ideology is a common world view that feeds into a hegemonic system allowing a fundamental class to exercise a political, intellectual, and moral role of leadership, according to Gramsci.



the fatigue of working with displaced people and local communities, emphasizes that for organic intellectuals, isolation is the biggest problem.

Ultimately the question becomes how to move from an emergency state of mind (crisis, precarity, displacement) to a state of transition (critique, resistance, occupation), and then to one of alternative existence (solidarity networks, different social formations, alternative economies). These are the organic steps of meta-integration, part of the process of social transformation.

### **2.3. Shift from territorial to relational/from reliance to resistance and political action**

The experiences in the case studies of this thesis, as well as practices in the Mediterranean region observed over a long-time span of professional work, have demonstrated that a shift in perceptions and connections to places, people and the environment at both a theoretical and practical level is a process of dialogue. There has also been a change in the 'posture'<sup>368</sup> of the peoples who are part of this process. Official dialogue between respective authorities (national, local institutions or competent international organizations) and people of concern is often facilitated through experts, who seeks to make necessary adjustments to a pre-approved program. In this context participation is seen as a fundamental step in an ethical process, however, the solutions suggested by the people of concern are easily disregarded as 'unreasonable' or 'unrealistic'. For instance, working with the Roma communities is only viable when the partner organizations and communities are aligned with the preconceived concepts, definitions and methodologies of the donor. Accordingly, using this example, any position adopted by a Roma representative, or a refugee representative in a camp setting, has to be well-calculated and adjusted. The value of dialogue that is subject to such unbalanced power relations is significantly reduced due to the privileged position of one of the parties, rather than a process in which two people find value and truth in the other individual's

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<sup>368</sup> Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of Indignation*, refers to a coherent and ethical posture as a necessity in order to avoid reproducing the colonizer's predatory presence.

opinion.<sup>369</sup> Consequently, a dialogue that takes place between experts and officials who represent a donor entity that often has a specific agenda, and a community, is embedded in social inequality, a form of persuasion between the teacher and pupil, in a pedagogical sense, establishing a friendly relationship to fit the heteronomous structure<sup>370</sup>.

In contrast, the concept of dialogue in meta-integration goes beyond a rooted hierarchical and patriarchal relationship, by seeking to establish a more balanced power where community rights are prioritized. This phenomenon was observed in Marinaleda during dialogue with the state particularly for the development of the Integral Plan for District 5 in Huelva, Spain; an excellent example of extended dialogue among community members based on real needs.

Paolo Freire's approach to dialogue, going beyond an encounter between two subjects, instead it examines meaning and knowledge and focuses on praxis. Action and reflection in political engagement leads to social transformation, which is in line with the process of meta-integration in relation to the role of organic intellectuals. In this regard, Gadotti argues that dialogue has a clear political connotation, therefore, the aim is to affect social relations, an act toward social self-determination. Mc Laren<sup>371</sup> points out the exploitative aspect of dialogue when the powerful are both the narrators and the voice of the affected people, and has influence on the contexts and circumstances in which dialogue takes place. Referring to the paternalistic posture of the privileged and powerful, Bell Hooks' quote that there is "no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you speak about yourself<sup>372</sup>" provides a strong illustration of the nature of power relations between the center and the peripheries today.

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<sup>369</sup> Van Rossem Kristof, "What is a Socratic Dialogue", *Filosofie Jrg.*, vol 16, n.1, 2006, p. 48-51

<sup>370</sup> Gadotti Moacir, *Pedagogy of Praxis: A Dialectical Philosophy of Education*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. xi

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, p. xiv

<sup>372</sup> Hooks bell, *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics* quoted in Freire Paulo, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publisher, 2004, p. xxi

Macedo<sup>373</sup>, bringing up the issue of how issues of class and privilege are invisible during dialogue, exposes the irony of efforts made to empower marginalized groups, minorities, migrants and refugees which contrasts with the challenge of self-perception as equals in dialogue and political engagement. This is where the possessive and territorial connection to place, culture and heritage emerges to play its part in power relations.

The attachment of people in the peripheries to a specific interpretation of history and its use by the center draws the parameters of interaction between long-term residents and newcomers. While they may not necessarily benefit from the privileges of the center, the internalized belief in the trickle down economy and cultural impositions maintain the norms of the center as a socio-political altar, an illusionary sense of security, for many of the long-term residents in the peripheries. The dialogue which takes place during a meta-integration process sets out to shift this from the center to the people in the peripheries of power as per their shared commonalities and presumed aspirations. Diversity and a difference in opinions are brought to light through multiple stories and may generate conflict, but this is considered to be an essential part of this dialogue. Thus, the organic intellectuals facilitate praxis, a process of dialogue consistent with Freire's definition, that narrows the distance<sup>374</sup> between communities. Bonello, in his work on grassroots democracy<sup>375</sup>, indicates that "the process of political and cultural socialization takes place replacing possessive individualism with a capacity to integrate individual needs into collective social purposes". It is essential that this shift from territorial to relational connection takes place with a consciousness of the cultural logic of the ruling elite, which only works for the privileged few, but continues to colonize minds, presenting the norms of the center as the ideal and promoting a monoculture through its capitalist persuasion.

A consideration of population movements in connection with social movements, which today are flourishing across the globe, is an important prerequisite for change. The point

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<sup>373</sup> Freire Paulo, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publisher, 2004, p. xxi

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxiii

<sup>375</sup> Benello C. George, *From the Ground Up: Essays on Grassroots and Workplace Democracy*, Boston, MA, South End Press, 1992, p. 52

made by interviewee *Mr. Tsavdaroglou* from Thessaloniki is crucial to note as “the newcomers find common cause with long-term residents in struggle through social movements”. Here social movements are considered a commoning process involving all inhabitants. Recalling the enhanced definition of displacement and understanding of an *anatomy of displacement*, as explained in Chapter 1, both long-term residents (who might be economically and socially displaced, and, therefore, engage in a social movements) and newcomers (who are physically displaced and are on the move seeking a better life), are out of their comfort zone, searching for alternatives. This is a crucial link which should be explored further as it provides a common ground; envisaging both aspects of these movements and how they influence each other as an opportunity to create momentum. It is only when outside of their comfort zone that people think about the struggle for alternative futures and open up a space for collective agency.

At a time when social movements and population movements are on the increase, different possibilities can be conceived and this is when organic intellectuals play a vital role in facilitating change. On the other hand, the point made by de Haas<sup>376</sup>, building on Portes’ argument, is key; he states that larger processes of social transformation may drive migration but migration’s role in affecting the rooted structures of society is negligible. He adds that such a situation might be different if displacement takes place at a massive scale or drastic takeover of local populations occur through military force, something that has been witnessed extensively in recent times.

Increased instability throughout the globe has marked the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as more people are pushed to the peripheries and grassroots social movements are emerging in various areas of the world<sup>377</sup>. Samir Amin in his analysis in “Capitalism in the Age of Globalization” indicates that “peoples peripheralized by capitalist world expansion, and who seemed for a long time to accept their fate, have over the past 50 years ceased accepting it, and they will refuse to do so more and more in the future”<sup>378</sup>.

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<sup>376</sup> De Haas Hein, “Migration Theory, Quo Vadis?” *International Migration Institute*, Working papers 100, 2014, p. 19

<sup>377</sup> Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Hong Kong, Italy, France, Spain, Chili.

<sup>378</sup> Biney Ama, “Samir Amin: A titan of radical thought” *Pambazetc.uka News*, 8 September 2011

This raised awareness and refusal to accept such hierarchies of power and privilege as their fate, brings people of the peripheries together and may create the opportunity to focus on their commonalities and common struggles for change. The crucial importance of refugee self-reliance and the natural linkage to development have been essential elements in the discussions of scholars and professional in recent years, yet international organizations and governments face numerous obstacles in implementing such concepts.

The preconceived hierarchical divisions in society, manifest in class structure and the categorization of the vulnerable, prescribe the role of the latter as labor needed to maintain the present system. Indeed, many current pro-migrant and refugee arguments tend to have an economic basis, demonstrating their contribution to the economy to counter right-wing discourse on this issue. However, whilst such arguments may be justified they are nevertheless incomplete and fall short in addressing the problems that keep displaced people in the peripheries of power.

The process of meta-integration sees this as an opportunity to shift the concept of vulnerability from a categorical position of the weak and needy to a progressive step in a process of social transformation. Hence, it suggests that the displaced people, pushed to the both geographic peripheries and peripheries of power, may use non-hierarchical but organized approaches, to build solidarity, shape their political consciousness and use their agency, eventually offer alternative systems of governance as well as a new narrative in the democratization process.

#### **2.4. Solidarity movements toward new communities**

What brings progressive social change is not the staged heroes of the patriarchal and hierarchical systems, who are historically and primarily male commander figures, but the collective efforts of both women and men in solidarity. Regardless of the official history written by every nation-state, people's oral and written history have provided alternative views of the history of the people across the world in struggle: from the times of the

colonization of indigenous lands and slavery; to independence movements in Africa; civil rights movements in the US; the landless workers movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST) in Brazil; the Narmada movement in India; the 'Ya Basta!' Zapatista movement in Chiapas; La Via Campesina movement; occupations in many European cities; movements for autonomous regions; and, more recently: the Arab Spring; Gezi; #MeToo; Gillet Jaune; Extinction Rebellion; and, the Rojava experience<sup>379</sup> to name just a few. Irrespective of one qualifying these actions as a movement, a tactic, a practice or not, their shared spirit has been about “a radical reclaiming of the commons and attempts for direct democracy”<sup>380</sup>.

As communal spaces are gradually taken over and people are displaced through restricted access to the commons and resources, including town squares, parks, streets, forests, agricultural land as well as local natural resources, people across the world are trying to reclaim what is disappearing from the public sphere. In recent years, the concept has taken an additional dimension in many places, including, civil liberties, cultural rights, freedom of speech, right to the city with all its inhabitants as well as the protection of online data and access to the internet as the commons. These restrictions are perceived as an assault on public life and a “displacement of democratic principles and values”<sup>381</sup>, perpetuating ‘undemocratic logics of power’<sup>382</sup>, privilege and authority. Although at times they may appear to focus on a single topic, these movements are challenging the political, cultural and ideological hegemony of the status-quo, raising much broader and more important questions related to understanding social change as something beyond the standard ways the society operates and interacts, as Bookchin<sup>383</sup> pointed out. Despite all the efforts of the nation-states to downplay the impact of social movements and showing them as the act of few marginalized groups, these movements play an essential role in

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<sup>379</sup> The Rojava experience in municipalism will be further discussed in Part 2- Chapter 2.

<sup>380</sup> Klein Naomi, “Reclaiming the Commons” in Mertes Tom (ed.). *A Movement of Movements; Is Another World Really Possible?* London and New York: Verso, 2004, p. 220

<sup>381</sup> Brown Wendy, “Walled States, Waning Sovereignty” The Open University - *Center for Citizenship Identities and Governance*, Keynote lecture series, November 2009

<sup>382</sup> Sassen Saskia, quoted in Vodovnik Ziga and Grubacic Andrej, “Yes, we camp!: Democracy in the age of Occupy”, *Lex Localis – Journal of Local Self-Government*, vol. 13, n. 3, 2015, p. 539

<sup>383</sup> Bookchin Murray, quoted in Vodovnik and Grubacic, *art.cit.*, p. 539

encouraging people to critically question what they are told, bringing about the needed “ideological crisis”<sup>384</sup>.

In spite of the center’s deliberate efforts to use xenophobic rhetoric to redirect the frustration and dissatisfaction of people to migrants and refugees as well as other marginalized groups, there are attempts to delegitimize this pressure of the present system and build alternatives from the bottom-up. In the process of meta-integration, the essential linkage between the common spaces, peoples and their stories in relation to the environment is emphasized as a constant process of dialogue within and between communities. In the context of displacement, such communities are not based on the limited notion of identity anymore, but rather on a concrete relationship and common action<sup>385</sup>, as well as conditions that bring them together in the peripheries of power.

In the northern Mediterranean region, the small grassroots experiences that have been observed in the context of this research have shown a variety of approaches that put a spotlight on strategic practices common to working with displaced persons.

The first comprises groups and entities with a history of struggle such as Kilkis which have been organizing the community against a mining company, or in Palermo where there has been a struggle for decades to fight the mafia. These groups have a long-standing anarchist roots and have been involved in anti-systemic movements, for example, occupying buildings for socio-political purposes.

The second practice is the progressive municipalities, both urban and rural, that are dealing with migrant and refugee influx or have worked with the abovementioned groups as part of government sponsored programs such as the SPRAR in Italy and ESTIA in

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<sup>384</sup> Gramsci argued that the intellectual hegemony of the status-quo needed to be defeated and posed the question of how to bring about necessary ideological crisis, a process by which the great masses become detached from the traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe.

<sup>385</sup> Vodovnik Ziga and Grubacic Andrej, “Yes, we camp!: Democracy in the age of Occupy”, *Lex Localis – Journal of Local Self-Government*, vol. 13, n. 3, 2015, p. 547

Greece. The Italian towns of Riace, Naro, Sutura along with another 615 municipalities have been part of such a trend.

The third practice is local NGOs and associations born out of necessity, bringing community members and volunteers together to work with refugees and migrants.

While the second and third group of these practices are primarily dependent on external funds (the government and international), the first group has historically had an autonomous nature, which in recent years has embraced the displaced persons. The squat Asilo Occupato, the Ex MOI in Turin, the occupied farm of Mondeggi and the Refugee Village for Freedom or City Palace can be viewed as exilic spaces<sup>386</sup>, and are often seen as anarchic and outcasts, but Vodovnik and Grubacic<sup>387</sup> argue that they have been enabling new democratic practices. Ex MOI resident *Salomon Ayensu*<sup>388</sup> explained that they are on their own, and have to make their own decisions. Although he has legal residence, he and many others cannot find jobs in the area. Most of them work as seasonal workers in Italy, Spain and southern France, trying to save as much as they can as during the winter months it is hard to find jobs. He emphasized that even if most of them go from one job to another, they all come back, because Ex MOI is a safe home where they always find a place to stay and they do not have to explain themselves. According to *Mr Ayensu*, it is not easy to find decent and affordable house for single African men, so most come back where they feel welcomed. There is an unspoken but well understood solidarity among people in Ex MOI.

What is shown by mainstream media as a public disturbance, with blocking traffic and demonstrations in city centers, indeed is a challenge to the authority and power of the center, exhibiting the presence of discontent. It is important to note that these

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<sup>386</sup> Exilic spaces can be defined as those areas of social and economic life in which people attempt to escape from capitalist relations and processes, whether territorially or by attempting to build structures and practices that are autonomous of capitalist accumulation and social control. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816816628562>

<sup>387</sup> Vodovnik and Grubacic, art.cit., p. 550

<sup>388</sup> The interview was carried out in Turin, November 2018.



autonomous attempts also consider economic aspects, conscious of self-reliance and the need for alternative economies to sustain their struggle. Contadinazioni-Fuori Mercato, Sicily is one such movement, born out of the needs of a ghetto of seasonal workers in Campobello di Mazara. Working primarily with African seasonal workers, the initiative has a collective mind, not only focusing on creating a bubble of good practice, but takes contradictions into account. Their work turns the negative experience of the displaced, into opportunities for change for long-term residents and newcomers alike through imagination and creativity. *Mr. Pandiscia* referring to Contadinazioni-Fuori Mercato explains that their alternative solutions work, despite falling outside of traditional institutional approaches, and are empowering and inspiring. Such solutions are not only more dignified and suitable to the needs of the people in transition, they work.

Taking the everyday life struggles of precarious conditions in Sicily as a starting point, and working toward a model of new economy that is inclusive and possibly replicable in other places; these factors are a driving force for this initiative. Moltivolti<sup>389</sup> in Palermo has also developed an income generation scheme through a restaurant run by refugee and migrant community members while they raise funds for lifesaving operations in the Mediterranean as well as other community activities in Palermo. Skeptical of a number of government efforts, *Mr. Koffi* (a long-term resident of Palermo with the country of origin Ivory Coast) expresses that there is a genuine interest in human dignity and rights in the work carried out by Moltivolti and the network.

While focusing on the importance of a common space and impact of anarcho-communal experiences, this research also noted an implicit symbolism that is present among these alternative groups. It was interesting to observe a lack of racial, gender and class diversity amongst newcomers in leading roles. *Amadou Gassama*<sup>390</sup> in Palermo pointed out that even if people are helping him and his friends to integrate, there is symbolism in not seeing any persons of color, specifically people of African origin, in local organizations or

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<sup>389</sup> Moltivolti, is a social enterprise and a co-working space established in Ballaro, Palermo, affiliated with the network of Mediterranea.

any public spaces. In his community, this is rather a powerful message against integration. While constant population movements and ongoing community regeneration in a diverse demography is observed across Italy, there is validity in questioning why the diversity of this demographic is not reflected in positions of power in organizations or public offices. The presence of diverse representatives in public life has a meaning for the newcomers, offering a symbolic significance concerning opportunities and acceptance, according to *Mr. Gassama* (a newcomer to Palermo with country of origin Gambia). While this could be attributed to a lack of local knowledge of the systems, proper paperwork and language skills, an unspoken and possibly unsolicited division of labor was clearly observed.

Although exceptional cases exist, power relations in terms of gender and hierarchy was also noted, with many of the volunteers and social workers being female and men primarily assuming the leading roles. Even if the relationships between the members of these groups appeared to be egalitarian, the symbolism of male figures in leadership roles brings the issue of reproduction of hierarchy and patriarchy in these alternative structures also, even if unintentional or a default reaction. Among all the case studies of this research, only the Thessaloniki-based organization was led by women, and this organization had a subtly distinct approach to displacement. This difference consisted of the understanding that people intend to continue with their journeys, but that it was important to provide a peaceful and dignified space to catch their breath and recover. In addition, the presence of these women seemed to present positive examples for female newcomers and question their fixed positions in a safe and natural environment. It was further noted that the average age of most of the persons involved was relatively young, often without children, which also brings up the issue of sustained actions.

Another noteworthy dimension of hierarchy was the ideological vicinity to the core principles of anarchism. Both in Greece and Italy, there have been major divisions between anarchist groups and factions, as some chose to accept government and international funds to work with migrants and refugees. What appeared to be a horizontal

hierarchy, seemed to divide and categorize anarchist groups as some are considered to have sold-out to the capitalist state-driven agenda, while others are seen as ‘abandoning’ the ideals of human existence and dignity in the expense of not working with those in need. *Mr. Kamperis* pointed out that the theories need to be put into practice under real scenarios and those who accuse his group cooperating with international entities have never been in refugee camps and see people in drastic conditions. *Mr. Kamperis* and *Panagiotis Tzannetakis*<sup>391</sup> both said that anarchist movements in Greece are quite divided to the degree of paralysis, being confined in the parameters of this very ideology, isolated or marginalized from what was happening on their doorsteps.

Wallerstein, referring to anti-systemic movements in recent times,<sup>392</sup> talks about the changing nature of civil society, a distinction made in the 19th century between those in power and those who represent popular sentiment. As he emphasizes the state being controlled by small privileged group, he points out that large organizations (emerging as NGOs) have become the agents of their home state implementing the policies in the peripheries rather than being critics and representing civil society, all maintaining their close relationship to nation-states in their actions. However, Wallerstein explains that as humanity is in an “age of transition”, the social movements of today present themselves in a different fashion than those of the 20th century as they have rapidly become a global phenomenon. Accordingly, state-oriented strategies have become irrelevant. In a period of this transition, Wallerstein points out that the worst features of the old system; hierarchy, privilege and inequalities should not be replicated. His point of stopping to assume what a better society would be like and experimenting with alternative structures is valid and should not be taken for granted.

These alternative experiences, in their autonomous, diverse forms and locations, are all attempts to explore opportunities to create progressive social change. They manifest the

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<sup>391</sup> The interview was carried out in Athens, April 2019. Mr. Tzannetakis (male, late 30s) is a long-term resident, activist, works with the NGO, Human Rights 360, and affiliated with Omnes in Kilkis.

<sup>392</sup> Wallerstein Immanuel, “New Revolts against the System” in Mertes Tom (ed.). *A Movement of Movements; Is Another World Really Possible?* London and New York: Verso, 2004, p. 269

social and political changes people would like to see, often instigated by grassroots actions, using a variety of political platforms. Each attempt contributes to the next, particularly given how effective communication and use of technology is today, creating small, but effective, networks. Moving away from the nation-state as its territorial reference, a network of rural and urban local initiatives stand out as places for direct democracy. It is these local initiatives that long-term residents and newcomers of the peripheries; the displaced persons of the present system, meet, resist and generate a movement for a process of social transformation.

## **Conclusions for Chapter 2**

The integration efforts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the reconsideration of displacement as a norm and an opportunity for creating processes that lead to social transformation, is an irrational concept, particularly in light of increased individual freedoms and the interaction between diverse cultures. The privileged find themselves in a continuous battle to maintain the status-quo, characterized by hierarchical and patriarchal power relations, by exercising their authority; this is then skillfully reflected in the integration policies by nation-states, directly and indirectly requiring newcomers to fit into the existing norms of socio-economic and political relations. The rationale of national interest and national integrity is often exploited in order to position long-term residents firmly behind a static notion of society, ignoring the constant regeneration of communities, norms, narratives, and the need to battle against oppressive traditional practices.

On the other hand, the reproduction of power relations among newcomers as they often seek cultural, linguistic, and ethnic, kinship, also gives pre-existing hierarchies new legitimacy in new situations. Consequently, integration becomes a direct and indirect imposition of plutocracy and privileged groups on communities in order to maintain a system of hierarchy and patriarchy, perpetuating long-standing inequalities in a society through a pseudo-democracy and liberal socio-political and economic policies. To date such heteronomous ideologies have led to the widespread acceptance of a cultural

narrative which maintains there are no viable alternatives to the existing state of affairs and these then become the rationale for cultural and economic survival.

When co-constructing new communities following forced displacement, shifting from heteronomy and the values of the center towards a more autonomous and democratic structures becomes essential. This steady but organic change has been taking place in various corners of Europe, inspiring possibilities away from historic dominant Eurocentric perspectives and coloniality of power.

As most societies are heteronomous in their structures and train their populations to be loyal citizens to these structures, the alignment with the core culture of the center is understood as an accepted and expected societal norm. Newcomers, who represent a potential force that can divert societies from these heteronomous structures, are systematically channeled into a path of integration, dismantling the possibilities of a social transformation process. Consequently, current integration policies of nation-states, regardless of their sporadic creative elements, are impositions toward the norms of the center in order to maintain existing power relations. In reference to the main question presented in this thesis, integration policies discourage people in the peripheries from engaging in creative opportunities for social change toward more democratic structures.

Providing aid to refugees and migrants in receiving communities comes with inevitable power relations and conditions as it cannot be sustained for long periods of time. The positive and constructive efforts made to receive newcomers today is a temporary act of kindness; for sustainable action, the parameters will need to change with time and according to the resources available. Newly arrived people will gradually need to position themselves in social and political life as members of the community. The many economic and cultural spaces that have been described in the examples presented here should not be mistaken as a guarantee for integration, but as possible good intentions for co-existence. Although integration policies may have good intentions, the disruption of

existing social affiliations and support systems among the displaced persons is an implicit aspect of their outcomes.

The implementation of integration, as defined by the dominant ideology<sup>393</sup>, encompasses pro-imperialist elements and provides the conditions for overall social reproduction, perpetuating power relations that create poverty and privilege between the peripheries and the center. Definitions by organizations such as the International Organization for Migration and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs offer more balanced descriptions, emphasizing “the process of mutual adaptation between host society and displaced”, however, there is no mention of power balances, privileges and the relationship to authority of each group.

The co-construction of lives after displacement is organically linked to humanitarian and human rights work. While this thesis does not focus on the humanitarian aid aspect of displacement, it considers that developments in the field are closely linked, particularly in relation to increasing consensus among humanitarian actors regarding the localization of aid. Under the present humanitarian system, although there is a significant amount of emphasis on capacity development, the investment on local capacities has been quite limited, perpetuating a culture of dependency on international NGOs (INGOs) and intergovernmental (IGOs) agencies.

The effectiveness and efficiency of local communities in Italy and Greece in their provision of a first-response indicates the importance of a central role in providing a response to displacement as well as reconstruction or recovery efforts. Therefore, local communities and civil society organizations should be treated as partners, not sub-contractors. This is essential if displacement-related efforts are to be linked to sustainable local development, in turn closely linked to democratic decision-making mechanisms at a local level. This

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<sup>393</sup> Social integration is the movement of minority groups such as ethnic minorities, refugees and underprivileged sections of a society into mainstream society.

linkage is essential to note in addressing the main question of this research regarding the conditions needed for co-construction of progressive dynamic governance.

Vulnerability in the process of displacement can be an opportunity to reassess existing relationships, individually and collectively, in order to redefine and re-design these relationships to create progressive social change. Displacement plays a triggering role in this process. In this context, three main elements are considered essential; the displaced people, the commons (places); and, narratives (stories of the displaced and displacement). An enhanced definition of displacement and the displaced is needed that includes large groups of people who find themselves in the peripheries of power, often politically marginalized. With vulnerability as a turning point in displacement, a sense of solidarity among those who find themselves in vulnerable conditions becomes crucial for collective political action. In this equation, recognizing that all people experience displacement in one way or the other in their lifetimes; forced displacement being an important catalyst for people to move from their comfort zone and critically question the existing norms; acknowledging the commons as crucial platforms for democratization; and respecting the presence of multiple stories, constitute the basic parameters for collective action where vulnerability can be transformed into resistance and political action.

The indignation of people who struggle for a dignified life for all, coupled with a careful critique of daily life, could constructively be channeled into more just and egalitarian communities where direct democracy can flourish. Vulnerability, with a critical analysis of the present system, could be a departure point for organized political actions as opposed to its widely perceived state of weakness. Diverse initiatives that have surfaced in recent years, responding to population movements in the Mediterranean region, could become a movement of displaced people, often perceived as vulnerable and marginalized, challenging the present status-quo, where every autonomous practice has the chance to develop its own theoretical understanding of what they have in common and link to other movements of solidarity. Autonomy in this sense should not be seen as an arrival point

but a dynamic process of regeneration of communities with changing demographics, needs, conditions and relationship to environment. Ivan Illich's choice of the term *conviviality*<sup>394</sup>, "an autonomous and creative interaction among people, and interaction between people and their environment" is appropriate as it suggests that we go beyond elite-controlled knowledge and procedures. Illich argues that control over knowledge and its power in the hands of a few alienates human beings, minimizing their ability to work towards collective wellbeing. Organic intellectuals then play a crucial role in facilitating a process of change, emerging through the regeneration of communities. This conclusion addresses one of the questions at the beginning of the research regarding the facilitation of a transformation process.

In efforts to assist asylum seekers, the legal perspective has become a predominant concern among local groups both in Greece and Italy. The issue of obtaining legal status and a being on track to citizenship was explained as important for democratic representation of groups. However, this focus, besides only addressing a few cases, also perpetuates the nation-state notion and its basic arguments of unity, homogeneity and the one nation idea, presenting a dilemma for these alternative groups in terms of their position in front of the nation-state.

The conditions created at a local level and the approach of local people involved in the process sets the tone and possibilities for change. In Thessaloniki, women created an environment that led to a mutual exchange and empowerment. In Palermo, the focus is on many levels through a network of autonomous entities; from saving lives in the Mediterranean, the coverage of basic needs, legal support, psycho-social support, education, income generation, and advocacy at community and government level. While these efforts are primarily driven by long-term residents, life in the peripheries continues, as many people try to find a way to survive day-to-day life: they may not necessarily engage in political initiatives; and, they are often the source of cheap labor for the local market. These local responses are far from an ideal scenario and are open to criticism;

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<sup>394</sup> Illich Ivan, *Tools for Conviviality*, London, Marion Boyars, 2009, p.17-18



precarity often characterizes such local efforts yet they still manage to create a common space where all inhabitants can meet, and where new ideas and organic intellectuals emerge.

The coloniality of power, imposed by the center and internalized within the colonized minds of people in the peripheries, are reflected in the new place through the reproduction of patriarchy and smaller hierarchies. As the heteronomous nature of superstructure overshadows the relations among alternative groups and their relations with their surroundings, these creative initiatives find it difficult to maintain their stamina and influence for extended periods, at times consumed between the dilemma of taking an ideological stand and the complexities surrounding displacement and the myth of durable solutions.

The experiences observed in this research have shown that the concept of durable solutions and permanency in one specific place is not a realistic option in Italy and Greece. While the dream of arriving at an ideal place is a driving force, the challenges faced on the way place people who are on the move in a continuous state of transit. The clash between conceptualizing the temporary and permanent generates contradictions between the ideal and reality, constantly reproducing itself as an existentialist crisis; vulnerability and victimization. The co-construction of communities following displacement is a political act as much as it is social, cultural and economic. It requires solidarity with multiple and diverse worldviews where climate change, environmental degradation, and socio-economic inequalities are seen as issues for everyone, therefore everyone should be able to express their views. Against all the odds, an attempt to overcome isolation and alienation and get involved with existing struggles is already a step toward social transformation. Therefore, enriched with the multiple stories of displacement and displaced persons, a common space and commoning are fundamental for the co-construction of communities and struggles.

While the notions of durable solutions and integration are analyzed, the contradictory nature of centralized integration policies at a nation-state level and the role of local communities as the main interlocutors call for a further consideration, particularly in forced and protracted displacement. The balance between urbanization, quality of life and access to resources should be reflected on, and people centered community-based solutions should be the main agenda of local governance applying high degrees of flexibility. Meta-integration, as a process of dialogue in praxis is necessary to go beyond the given parameters, particularly at a time when the nation-states approach to displacement has been ineffective and has not managed to pass bureaucratic and protectionist policies and actions.

The viability of long-term residents and newcomers in the studied areas engaging in a genuine dialogue, questioning their relationship to the center and the governance model, as well as working toward a self-instituting alternative, may offer solutions to addressing the issues around displacement with a community-based approach. In this regard, the focus should be on constructing a governance model with the inhabitants instead of working around existing structures that generate inequalities and blame scapegoats for inequalities on the peripheries, making the center unquestionable and untouchable. Increased urbanization and abandoned rural areas and villages in the northern Mediterranean region call for a different model of governance, including the governance of displacement.

As 86% of the displaced live in developing countries<sup>395</sup>, and 95% remain in neighboring countries, Europe as a destination is not facing a major refugee and migrant crisis at this point. However, Europe remains one of the preferred destinations for displaced persons and still has the time and the chance to develop alternative methods to address the issue with a relatively small numbers of newcomers. Organic intellectuals, in an extended network of solidarity, can steer a process based on direct democracy. In a such a

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<sup>395</sup> UNHCR, art.cit., (*World at War - Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2014*), p. 1-7

transformative process Yasmin Alibhai-Brown notes<sup>396</sup> that “societies, nations and communities need to take stock periodically to assess whether existing cultural and political edifices are keeping up with the people and the evolving habitat. Nothing is forever. The most progressive ideas which are right and appropriate at one historical moment can, in time, decay or become retrograde”.

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<sup>396</sup> Alibhai-Brown Yasmin, “To Craft a New Society”, *New Internationalist*, n.422, May 2009

## **PART – II**

# **Revisioning new communities and governance following forced displacement**



## CHAPTER 1 – Eroding democracies and the search for viable common ground

*The seeds of resistance are to be sought in the everyday resistance... in the joy of living and the buffoonery of ordinary people; in the dance of the ignored; in the moving of nomads; in the settling of migrants and the struggle of peasants for land; in the love between homosexuals; in the piercing of punks; ...in the smile of overworked shop-assistant... the squatters; people without documents; the illegal dwellers; adbusters and culturejammers; woman working in maquiladoras; the unemployed, precarious workers, piqueteros and cacerolazos; the activists of social centers; the pacifists in the streets; the feminist groups; the antifascist organizations; Reclaim the Streets; Food not Bombs; the No Border network; the gardening guerillas; the No-to-War and No-to NATO activists; Black Cross; the graffitists and hackers or hactivists on the internet; The Earth Liberation Front; the Animal Liberation Front; and Earth First!: Indymedia activists; the open-source code and copyleft advocates' the producers of healthy food; and the explorers of spiritual dimensions.*

*Zadnikar Darji<sup>397</sup> – Žiga Vodovnik<sup>398</sup>*

Human rights, dignity and democracy are fundamental elements for societies. They supersede any borders, in spite of national governments' efforts to set obstacles for newcomers, including physical walls and fences. While it is not universally accepted that these principles were conceptualized in a manner, that included marginalized voices<sup>399</sup>, these principles are shared commons of humanity across the board. They call for constant questioning and revisiting whether or not they are honored or offer the necessary protection for all peoples across the globe.

Discomfort with centralized systems has been a long struggle, with even nation-states themselves recognizing the challenges in governance, and seeking more decentralized and democratic structures. However, most of these approaches base their ideas on a

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<sup>397</sup> Zadnikar Darji quoted in Vodovnik, *op. cit.*, p. 8

<sup>398</sup> Vodovnik, (A Living Spirit of Revolt...), *op. cit.*, p. 9

<sup>399</sup> Mutua, *op.cit.*, p. 11-69

stable environment which includes the concept of permanency of residents. Governments try to improve their governance practices using a heteronomous approach rooted in the expectation that newcomers will fit into existing structures. Although it might be argued that there is an inevitable change with every newcomer, the continuous reproduction of unequal power relations prevents this organic process from taking place following its natural course. The possessive and territorial nature of this connection to a geographical location sets the parameters of power relations between diverse groups. Forced displacement challenges these existing norms of territorial versus relational connection to locations, questions long-standing local perceptions and responses, and recalls varying needs and practices that come with mobility. If the co-existence of communities is to be harmonious, rooted public opinion and what is deemed to be an acceptable norm must be adjusted to a new situation and relations.

Population movements are reminders of much needed dynamism for dysfunctional democracies across the globe, which require alternative visions on how to organize and govern societies. Chris Hedges argues<sup>400</sup> that what is presented and practiced as democracy today is a form of totalitarianism with cosmetic adjustments. Referring to the current political and governmental system, Hedges points out the role of the corporate world in writing laws and the courts enforcing them pushes the public into the role of audience to a democracy. Sheldon Wolin's<sup>401</sup> concept of *inverted totalitarianism* explains the irrelevance of citizens in today's democracies, as they have become very passive. They are allowed to participate in '*the carnival of elections*', vote every four or five years, and are forgotten the rest of the time under the ruling of a corporate world. Differentiating between the classical totalitarian regimes and inverted totalitarianism, Wolin stresses the domination of economics over politics in inverted totalitarianism where charismatic leaders are no longer needed, as nation-states have gradually become corporate entities. Seen as a commodity and governed by corporate rule, communities have become passive elements of a pseudo-democratic system, and are tolerated as long as they go

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<sup>400</sup> Hedges Chris, "Sheldon Wolin and Inverted Totalitarianism" *Truthdig*, 2 November 2015

<sup>401</sup> *Ibidem*

along with the illusion of participatory democracy in a heteronomous structure. Where people refuse to accept the norms and rules of the center and rebel, inverted totalitarianism reveals its face in classical forms of oppressive power through indiscriminate police or military violence, particularly against/in marginalized communities of the peripheries.

The significant rise of the far right in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has instrumentalized the socio-economic difficulties experienced particularly in southern European countries. Using their power positions either at the national or local governments as well as within political parties, predominant individuals of the right in Europe (such as Le Pen, Salvini, Orban, Erdoğan etc.) try to normalize hate speech thorough their public discourse, including the anti-migrant/refugee, xenophobic, racist, Islamophobic, or Christianophobic and often anti-Semitic statements. The radical extremism that has generated violent actions in Europe in recent years also contributed to anti-migrant and refugee rhetoric, to a degree mainstreaming right wing political language at the European Union level as well. In late 2019, the attempt to introduce the concept of 'protecting our European way of life' with the appointment of an EU commissioner was changed to 'promoting our European way of life' under heavy criticism by human rights organizations as well as socialist and democratic political parties<sup>402</sup>.

While cultural heritage and identity play an essential role in how societies operate, the notion of the heritage and identities of Europe versus in Europe call for serious questioning, as it has been a very sensitive topic the in recent post-war era in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Increasing the right-wing extremist presence at the European and national parliaments shows a gradual trend and desire in introducing anti-migrant and refugee policies. The irony is that such policies against newcomers tend to ignore available data such as the example of a 2001 report of the UN Population Division

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<sup>402</sup> Euronews, "EU Commission incoming chief changes title for migration portfolio after controversy", <https://www.euronews.com/2019/11/13/eu-commission-incoming-chief-changes-title-for-migration-portfolio-after-controversy> 13 November 2019



“Replacement Migration: Is it a solution to declining and ageing populations?”<sup>403</sup> The report offered various scenarios, suggesting that some 80 million migrants would be needed in the EU by 2050 in order to maintain the size of the potential working population. In addition to significant numbers of newcomers in European cities today, with a possible scenario of a large number of newcomers arriving Europe within the next 20-30-years, heritage, culture and identities present in Europe will need to enter a process of meta-integration to try to establish relational connections to places and people. This process does not undermine the history and heritage of Europe, but rather encourages expression through a more critical response to the past. As Delanty explains “such acts of signification are re-shaping public space and give local communities new ways of expressing their histories”<sup>404</sup>.

In light of rapid change and increased ambiguities in population movement today, the concept of ‘values and way of life’ as identified through a specific land mass is very much linked to the hegemonic power and interest of the center to control the borders and its resources. Protecting or promoting ‘a way of life’, regardless of its political connotations, with the purpose of creating regional and national unity, is an existentialist insult to the multiplicity of peoples, their stories and struggles. For thousands of displaced persons, promoting a European way of life does not correspond with their needs and rights. This is true in particular for displaced people from francophone African countries, who face constant evacuations and exclusion in Paris and its surrounding neighborhoods. This was the case with the waves of evacuation of hundreds of people in 2019 in St. Denis and La Port de la Chapelle<sup>405</sup>, and continuing maltreatment in 2020 throughout the COVID

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<sup>403</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Replacement Migration: Is it a solution to declining and ageing populations?” *United Nations Publications*, 2001

<sup>404</sup> Delanty Gerard, “Public Space and the Tasks of Cultural Heritage Today: Between Remembrance and Regeneration”, *Council of Europe*, 2018, p. 4

<sup>405</sup> Carretero Leslie, “Évacuation du campement de Saint-Denis : des dizaines de migrants restent sans abri, selon les associations”, InfoMigrants, 25 January 2019 <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/14770/evacuation-du-campement-de-saint-denis-des-dizaines-de-migrants-restent-sans-abri-selon-les-associations>

Actu.fr, “Camps de migrants à Paris et Saint-Denis: l'évacuation de 1 000 personnes est terminée”, 7 November 2019 [https://actu.fr/faits-divers/camps-migrants-paris-saint-denis-levacuation-1-000-personnes-est-terminee\\_29225809.html](https://actu.fr/faits-divers/camps-migrants-paris-saint-denis-levacuation-1-000-personnes-est-terminee_29225809.html)

pandemic<sup>406</sup>. A fundamental contradiction between theory on human rights and its implementation is exhibited in this context.

The first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have also been marked by social movements across the world, gradually defining the ways societies will interact in the coming decades. They include but are not limited to those in: Chile; Bolivia; Venezuela; Tunisia; Hong Kong; Lebanon; Iraq; Iran; France; Italy; Greece; Spain; and Turkey, have indicated a great desire for social change where the majority of the people in the peripheries of power demand more equality, justice and a high quality of life with dignity. The institutions that are supposed to guarantee these rights have inadequately addressing the concerns that affect everyday life for the majority of people across the world, repetitively asking communities to be resilient in front of the challenges faced<sup>407</sup>. Many of the social movements across the globe today are inspiring and have been sustained over long periods, often despite the harsh responses by security forces and right-wing societal elements. Vodovnik points out that these are essential experiments for more democratic structures to which societies aspire<sup>408</sup>. Therefore, presumed failures of these actions should not be sidelined, but actually should be observed as crucial building blocks for what is to be constructed. Fully 85% of the world population is subject to unequal income distribution, have limited or no access to local resources, and seek more democratic rights and a livable environment.

Eroding democracies, coupled with increasing inequalities, climate change and violent conflicts, bring about the question of governance in light of current relations of power, privilege and authority. While nation-states struggle with top-down policies in their bureaucratic complexities, local governments and social movements have made notable efforts that work toward protecting human rights and dignity and welcome displaced

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<sup>406</sup> Mouillard Sylvain, "A Saint-Denis, 'on est comme des morts-vivants'", Reportage in Liberation, 7 June 2020 [https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/06/07/a-saint-denis-on-est-comme-des-morts-vivants\\_1790569?fbclid=IwAR2Djp8Kh0kFvRM-MVJLV\\_22yudGbWA4hVXz9HjBf816gmh9\\_7a-ZBDnslQ](https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/06/07/a-saint-denis-on-est-comme-des-morts-vivants_1790569?fbclid=IwAR2Djp8Kh0kFvRM-MVJLV_22yudGbWA4hVXz9HjBf816gmh9_7a-ZBDnslQ)

<sup>407</sup> Martin Emanuel, "Opinion: Yellow Vests are a symptom of France's dysfunctional democracy", *Geopolitical Intelligence Services*, 14 December 2018

<sup>408</sup> Vodovnik, *art.cit.* (Yes, we camp!...), p. 537-557

persons into communities with a solidarity-based approach. These efforts question the current state of affairs, are cognizant of the presence of power relations, and bring up the question “in whose hands will power reside; in those of the state, with its centralized authority, or in those of the people at the local level?”<sup>409</sup>

Governance, a concept of managing public affairs, has often been affiliated with a position of authority and power. Although it has taken many different forms over the centuries with societies trying to organize themselves, what is considered modern governance today has a heteronomous nature across the globe as a dominant form. The history of nation-states over the last two hundred years, more specifically with industrialization, has put a great emphasis on borders and the development of economies inside these borders, with ever increasing extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of the environment as well as peoples who inhabit these territories. This untenable approach to the commodification of resources and relationships, including the one with the natural world, has had detrimental effects on the quality of life, habitat and social relations. Serge Latouche, in his description of the growth society, explains that the societies in their development processes consider the production of commodities (extraction of resources), necessities (overproduction of goods), and emissions (pollution and destruction of natural life<sup>410</sup>) as a rightful way of exercising their freedom. Paul Crutzen<sup>411</sup>, argues that standard economics and current governance models [of resources] are deliberately ignoring the destructive impact of human activity that is altering the earth’s ecosystem. This overpowering and interfering relation of humans with nature has an increasing influence on population movements, with high levels of displacement due to climate change foreseen over the coming decades. In this new era of Anthropocene<sup>412</sup> Crutzen describes the commodification of natural life as no longer possible due to emerging ecological crisis,

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<sup>409</sup> Bookchin Debbie. “The future we deserve” in La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu, *Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 13

<sup>410</sup> Latouche Serge, “Nos enfants nous accuseront-ils?”, *Revue du MAUSS*, vol.2, n. 42, 2013, p. 281-299

<sup>411</sup> Paul Jozef Crutzen is a Dutch, Nobel Prize-winning, atmospheric chemist. He is known for work on climate change research and for popularizing the term Anthropocene to describe a proposed new era when human actions have a drastic effect on the earth.

<sup>412</sup> Anthropocene is in the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

including climate change, ozone-layer depletion, rising sea levels, and extinction of species.

François Gemenne<sup>413</sup> draws attention to the vital importance of socio-political change influenced by transformation of earth, and emphasizes the undeniable necessity of an integrated approach to environment and human mobility. He reminds us that what is called geo-politics today is essentially human's adjustments to the changes that take place in the environment. Gemenne warns that climate change will lead to increasing extreme climate events, drought due to decreasing rainfall, and sea level rise at the same period in various parts of the world and will trigger further displacement. He argues that a four degree change in temperature will force people to move from inhabitable places to more habitable places, undermining national borders regardless of all the challenges posed. Gemenne stresses that responsibilities and relations do not stop at geographic and generational borders; therefore, there is a need to look at human existence and relations in an anthropocenic way. He argues that as there has been a decline in international efforts and the ability to address the issue, this reinforces the need to conceive of local struggles and link them to global movements and ensure the survival of human kind in the 21st century, with greater interest and connection to what is happening in other places. The World Bank report of 2017<sup>414</sup> stresses that forced displacement is increasingly an urban crisis and needs an integrated humanitarian and development approach in towns and cities to better serve all residents. A World Bank task team, led by Baemluer and Baare<sup>415</sup> explains that approaching forced displacement by supporting the community as a whole (therefore, not separating host from displaced) helps to shape the overall policy dialogue.

It is ironic that people are attracted to urban areas seeking opportunities and resources, as it is well documented that these movements often result in alienation and isolation with

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<sup>413</sup> Gemenne François, "Changement global et migrations environnementales", *Conference notes*, 5 October 2019

<sup>414</sup> World Bank Group, *op.cit.*, p. 187

<sup>415</sup> The World Bank, *Cities of Refuge in the Middle East - Bringing an Urban Lens to the Forced Displacement Challenge*, Policy Note, September 2017, p. 5

a decrease in quality of life in the peripheries, within relatively small living areas and limited public spaces. Beyond the attraction of urban areas, it is important to note that a third of world's urban population lives in small or medium-sized towns and 45% of the global population lives in rural areas; therefore, any revisioning of governance needs to consider people in small towns and rural areas<sup>416</sup> as well as large urban settings.

Considering the aspiration of the movements for more democracy as well as the desire of people on the move for more autonomy and dignity, the new governance models will need to be conceived on a smaller scale and locally based, where all inhabitants can have the opportunity to be directly involved in a democratic process, away from parochial tendencies in well-connected global networks.

The relationships of power between the center and the peripheries have been a determining distinction in the processes of localization and local governance. On one side, the solutions sought by the ultimate authority and power of the nation-state and its heteronomous structure remain unquestioned; therefore, any alternatives fall under the umbrella of decentralization, which nevertheless remains a top-down approach. On the other side; in the peripheries considerable grassroots actions take place at local levels, with autonomous tendencies that prioritize the will of the people and focus on more democratic actions, challenging a traditional top-down nation-state approach. While nation states are the ultimate decision makers in asylum policies, the effective role of local communities and local governments in responding to the refugee and migrant influx have exhibited positive examples, raising crucial questions regarding centralized policies and practices on human rights, human dignity and democracy. Though decentralized cooperation, both remote and cross frontier, has been practiced since the 1950s<sup>417</sup> through municipal twinning and citizen diplomacy, the term has been used more

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<sup>416</sup> Boulton Jean, Amich Vidal Mercè, Laura Bergés, "Municipalism in small towns and areas" in *La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu, Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 68-75

<sup>417</sup> Nganje Fritz, "Decentralized Cooperation and the New Development Cooperation Agenda: What Role for the UN?", United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, November 2015, p.3

extensively since the 1980s, currently referring to development cooperation and international municipal relations<sup>418</sup>.

Networks among municipalities in Europe have been on the increase, developing cooperation and solidarity on a number of issues, particularly in light of the migrant/refugee influx over the last five years. The contradictory approaches to newcomers between some of the states and municipalities within the same countries have created political turmoil, pressing these solidarity networks to expand their work. In a number of cases, these networks have managed to incorporate the efforts of small-scale alternative political actions at local levels. While some operate within the context of existing institutional frameworks, others seek and defend urban and rural movements, including: occupations; autonomous municipalities; city gardens; popular education; and, politics in neighborhoods, all based on the idea of collective self-management.

In the context of displacement, a shared concept has been the collective work around the commons, building on the social relations of all inhabitants, envisioning dignified alternatives in spite of all socio-economic and political difficulties faced. Anna Rowland<sup>419</sup>, looking into the formation of political communities in shared spaces and times through negotiation among displaced people, recalls Hannah Arendt's argument on dignity, posing the question on "how to realize dignity and human belonging in tangible political terms in a world where rights and liberties are attached to citizenship"<sup>420</sup>.

By exploring efforts to create alternative local governance, including those that are based on self-management as a viable step forward in the process of construction of communities, this chapter analyses a number of initiatives. Seeking possible ways forward on the nexus between displacement and governance, the essential questions of what to do and how to do it are posed. While the concept of self-management does not

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<sup>418</sup> Hafteck Pierre, "An Introduction to Decentralized Cooperation: Definitions, Origins and Conceptual Mapping", *Public Admin. Dev.*, n. 23, 2003, p. 333-345

<sup>419</sup> Rowlands Anna, "Hannah Arendt: On Displacement and Political Judgement", *Refugee Hosts*, 1 February 2017

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*, <https://refugeehosts.org/2017/02/01/hannah-arendt-on-displacement-and-political-judgement/>

precondition a final point of arrival, some of the experiences described in the following section offer possibilities to imagine the outlines of a desired society, addressing the question of what to do. Accordingly, some of the attempts for alternatives within local initiatives and governance in the Mediterranean region are analyzed as a paradox of autonomy versus heteronomy in relation to the center and peripheries of power, exploring 'how' alternatives could be put into practice.

## SECTION 1 – Reformist efforts in local governance

The deceptive appearance of the democratic system today has become a system of manipulation to obtain power by the plutocracy in order to rule. While the representative democracy in nation-states is based on settled societies with controlled social norms and economic relations within specific borders and political practices, the conditions associated with forced displacement challenge these long-standing established power structures. Both through internal and cross border displacement, the concept of permanency and abiding with the rules in any one place has become impractical with constant community regeneration and pluralized societies<sup>421</sup>.

The engagement of newcomers and their descendants in socio-political life, assuming responsibilities together with the long-term residents, is crucial for community wellbeing. Evidence gathered over the past decade has shown that local governments are more effective and efficient in responding to the needs of migrants and refugees as they are able to develop community-oriented and place-based programs and policies<sup>422</sup> based on real needs of the communities.

Among the numerous initiatives and networks that have been experimenting with alternative governance models at local levels, some have been working at the regional- and global-scale while some have stayed within their local or national borders. These lived experiences explored diverse possibilities in various geographic, cultural and socioeconomic contexts, testing viable solutions to complexities faced in their development processes. Despite the numbers of people on the move being relatively small on a global scale (4%), the stress put on certain regions (6 countries for 50% of displaced persons globally as demonstrated in Diagram 6) generates social, economic and political challenges that spill into neighboring regions as well.

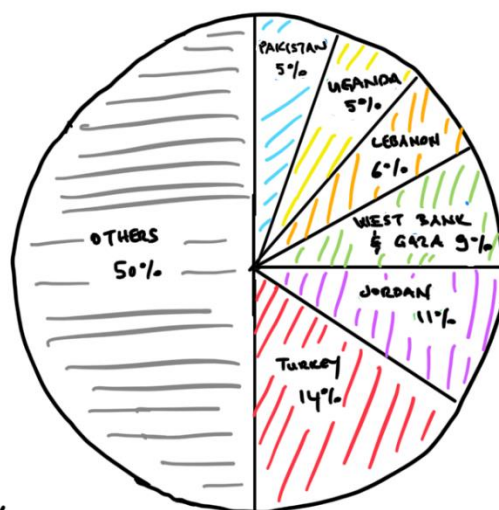
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<sup>421</sup> Plural societies is a term used by Fredrik Barth and further used by Gerard Delanty as pluralized societies in his analysis of conceptualizing the plurality of Europe. Delanty Gerard, "Public Space and the Tasks of Cultural Heritage ...", *art.cit.*, p. 3

<sup>422</sup> Ray Brian, "The role of cities in immigrant integration", Migration Policy Institute, October 2003



DIAGRAM 6 -  
HALF OF THE WORLD'S  
REFUGEE POPULATION  
RESIDES IN ONLY  
SIX COUNTRIES



SOURCE: UNHCR, UNRWA  
AND WORLD BANK

In the northern Mediterranean region, the refugee/migrant influx coupled with the financial downturn, austerity measures, and increased income inequality over the last decade, has led to some communities experiencing a sense of discomfort with their nation-state's policies; communities have found themselves in dire conditions and felt at times abandoned by the central authorities leading to an interest in generating local solutions. In light of these developments and responses to displacement, revising an alternative governance requires that a critical questioning of such rooted perceptions and flexibility to shift as this will play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and new norms.

### 1.1. The need for a shift in rooted perceptions and public opinion

Perceptions determine responses; these are often shaped through the reproduction of hierarchical and patriarchal relations, a rooted belief in borders and their protection, socio-politically constructed legality and regularity as well as colonial history and coloniality. A shift would bring all these notions into question and open a door for new imaginaries of a socio-political transformation. In conceiving alternatives in governance in relation to

<sup>423</sup><https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/newly-released-data-show-refugee-numbers-record-levels>

forced displacement, there is a need for emancipation from rooted perceptions, which are imposed by coloniality of power (driven by the center) and conditioned by colonized minds (internalized in the peripheries). In the context of displacement, rooted perceptions consider borders and border controls, integration, nation-state and heteronomous structures as norms in an unchangeable reality, preventing the possibility of revising alternative governance models.

The concept of borders is a good example to reflect upon. Border control is a solid concept that underlies most of the political debates and work regarding displacement today, and is not questioned by mainstream society as it is considered a norm. Considering nation-states' relatively short history across the globe, borders are a new phenomenon, causing a significant amount of human suffering. Hayter argues that sooner or later border controls will be abandoned as it will not make sense to control movement in the foreseen future<sup>424</sup>. With the current figures<sup>425</sup> of foreseen displacement due to climate change and environmental disasters as well as violent conflicts, such a prediction is not a far-fetched concept. According to Hayter, the introduction of free movement in the EU did not lead to mass migration from the poor areas to richer areas, as few people would uproot themselves and leave their families, friends and connections unless forced to.

Freedom of movement without border controls, according to Hayter, even if it might create some discomfort and chaos at the beginning, would eventually regulate itself, and the substantial resources spent on border control could then be allocated to communities. Hayter's conclusion is worthy of note as circular migration and mobility between the places of origin and current places of residence [for those with legal documents] are already a frequent occurrence. *Mr. Gannoum* from Thessaloniki explained that once asylum seekers obtain their travel documents, they go back to see their houses in Syria and remain connected to both places. He emphasized that as much as they would like to establish legal residency in Europe, their connection to the place of origin is important as

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<sup>424</sup> Hayter Teresa, "The New common Sense", *New Internationalist*, n. 350, October 2002, p. 15

<sup>425</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2018*, Geneva, UNHCR, 2019, p. 2-3

many would like to maintain this freedom of movement and access to resources in both places. While Hayter's point on the irrelevance of borders may seem unrealistic, Gemene's observation that extreme events are increasingly triggering forced displacement may not leave much room for discussion on this issue.

Whether freedom of movement without border controls could become the new common-sense solution, as suggested by Hayter, is a discussion that should take place in a meta-integration process, particularly in the context of economics of alterity. Alterity, or otherness, is a central notion of philosophy and social sciences, particularly in social anthropology and human geography. Saskia Cousin points out how people, groups or territories are considered as being 'other' or 'different', while avoiding any essentialization. Cousin adds that the notion of an alterity economy looks at relations between identity and alterity on different levels: the governance of alterity, its market and its political economy on the one hand; interpersonal, community or private relations on the other. In regards to diverse communities, it is also essential to note that the alterity economy encompasses the question of how a community forges its otherness, its domestic economy<sup>426</sup>. While such thinking presents significant discomfort to current capitalist relations and the norms of the center, it promises many possibilities for those in the peripheries in conceiving alternatives that employ autonomous perspectives. It is the presence of diverse political and ideological stands that are represented in the multiplicity and the temporary nature of displacement that will need to redefine and redesign new norms and relations of power.

As Samir Amin states<sup>427</sup>, subversion is the driving force of social transformation, and politics cannot be reduced to the application of principles that are defined once and for all. In this regard, the heteronomous structure and norms of the center will need to be challenged, paying particular attention that similar relations of oppression are not reproduced with exclusionary policies and practices based on race, class, geographic

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<sup>426</sup> Cousin Saskia, "Economics of alterity, tourism and hospitality" Council of Europe notes, St Denis, 2019. The explanation is provided by Cousin in the context of the workshop, organized by the Council of Europe.

<sup>427</sup> Amin Samir, *The World We Wish to See*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2008, p. 60

origin as observed in subtle asylum policies in Europe and beyond. A new form of common sense will need to emerge from the conditions of everyday life of communities, one that recognizes the presence of all inhabitants and their respective stories. The multiplicity of ideas and diversity they represent constitute different world views and 'ways of life' which need to be conflictual, allowing all subversions to find their place, without being forced to a 'consensus', driven by a specific group of power and privilege.

In shifting rooted perceptions and shaping new public opinion, communities should be able to think and act without a paternalistic and charity-based approach towards newcomers, but with a shared interest in constructing a future together, possibly with the ideal of an organized political community. In case of camp or camp-like situations, with the idea of temporary stays, such an approach may seem unrealistic. Finding the direct transferability of the principles of community development and organization to refugee camps problematic, Hyndman has argued that a refugee camp is not a community<sup>428</sup>. However, as displacement in displacement has become a common practice, the permanence of constant movement has yet to be properly acknowledged in addressing communities. While seeking permanence in community organization and development, it is the temporary meetings of people and relations that constitute solidarity, even if they may not end up permanently in the same physical community. An organized political community then has more of a global nature and may offer possibilities of larger scale socio-political transformation, going beyond Hyndman's conceptualization of a community in a formal refugee camp setting. A non-institutional concept of a camp (such as Calais), which is often autonomous and self-managed with self-imposed solidarity due to the lack of resources, may offer a different concept of community today.

While diversity in viewpoints and approaches is perceived as an asset, possible confrontations should not necessarily exclude potential contributions. As much as grassroots efforts present genuine alternatives, many entities of the non-profit industrial complex have exhibited notable progress and sustained their programs over long periods

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<sup>428</sup> Hyndman Jennifer, "Refugee self-management and the question of governance", *Refuge*, vol. 16, n. 2, 1997, p. 16-22

due to preferential access to resources. While from the organizational and operational points of view they offer a different outlook and may lack the connection to the real problems on the ground, their significant resources and efforts deserve recognition. Having set solid frameworks, building on the extensive experiences and lessons learned in local governance, they demonstrate the power of networks to connect local initiatives. Most of these programs conceive of their work within a framework of 'integration of refugees and migrants' in line with the interest of national governments, as they need to meet the requirements of donor-recipient relationships. Therefore, their impact or possible perpetuation of public opinion on displacement is closely linked to the power of the center and the interest of the corporate world that tends to favor profit-making to protect and promote human rights and dignity.

## **1.2. Efforts for progressive change in local governance**

Local and municipality-based solutions to democratic governance have become an important part of intergovernmental work in the last few decades where local governance is perceived as a platform allowing communities to reclaim the public sphere to exercise democratic rights. Even if the local/community-based approaches have proven to be more effective and efficient, the decision-making power at a local level is conducted through the decentralization processes, ensuring continued control of the nation-state. Within this context, considerable attention has been given to displacement, particularly in the reception and integration of newcomers.

The conceptualization of a new governance model needs to consider the necessary conditions for direct democracy so as to ensure that all inhabitants can act together 'to chart a rational future' as Bookchin explained in his notion of municipalism. The dominant feeling of constant insecurity and the precarious conditions of everyday life among large groups in the peripheries are the determining points for this revisioning. The Mediterranean region has developed specific characteristics and response to displacement as part of its vivid history based on constant struggles and population

movements over centuries, at times feeling closer to the ‘other’ across the border than those in the same country. In this process, a number of governance alternatives have been explored both within the context of the nation-state or local levels, feeding into various examples in the region today.

### **1.2.1. A framework and treaty on local governance**

Regarding the efforts on strengthening local governance and networks, there has been substantial amount of work done in the pan-European context. The European Charter of Local Self-Government is the only document of its kind that recognizes “the local authorities as one of the main foundations of any democratic regime<sup>429</sup>” in an international treaty. The Charter, considering local democracies as a common heritage in Europe, promotes “the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs as one of the democratic principles that are shared by all 47 Member States of the Council of Europe<sup>430</sup>”. The charter further acknowledges that such a right can be most directly exercised at local level, in spite of the diverse structures, laws and historical experiences in different states. With particular attention to avoid a concentration of power, the Charter emphasizes “the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment<sup>431</sup>.”

While the Charter lays out the basic elements and rights of local governments, the top down nature of the ratification process of such a treaty by nation states determines the parameters of the relations within a heteronomous structure. In spite of most treaties and conventions entailing progressive elements based on basic human rights, democracy and rule of law, the very nature of the nation-state structure imposes limitations in

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<sup>429</sup> Council of Europe, “European Charter of Local Self-Government - European Treaty Series (ETS) No.122”, Council of Europe, 1985, p. 1

<sup>430</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>431</sup> *Ibidem*

implementation regarding the autonomy of local governments. For example, centralized resource allocation and earmarked funds have a great impact on decision making at a local level. The will of the people at a specific local government may not be received well at the central level, contradicting with the policies at the central level of a specific government. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the CoE also recognizes the shortfall of the charter in this regard, as “an increasing trend toward the recentralization of functions is observed among member states<sup>432</sup>”. In case of the recent refugee and migrant influx, Riace, Palermo, Italy and Grande Synthe as well as Paris, France exhibit clear examples of a contradiction between central and local governments. The mayors of these towns have shown great effort in welcoming migrants and refugees, trying to include them into the everyday life of town with dignity even if they have received pressure from their respective central governments. Further, the states that were affected by the economic crisis have introduced strict controls on local authority budgets and expenditure<sup>433</sup>, having a significant impact on their multi-year financial plans. Particularly for these countries that have faced austerity measures in recent years, including Spain, Italy and Greece, a series of regulations were imposed by central authorities, seeking prior approval for expenditures. In Turkey, the removal of elected local administrations and appointment of trustees by central authorities have both become widespread practices, especially after 2016.

The gradual development of local democracy has been an essential part of modern European politics since 1950s, and was essentially codified in the Charter in an institutional framework in 1985, promoting “the autonomy of communities, the execution of tasks on the level closer to the citizens in every possible measure, the recognition of a domain of personal intervention in communities, the obligation to consult them, the free exercise of local elective mandates, a sufficient financial endowment, the right to the creation of community groups and legal measures to defend the exercise of autonomic

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<sup>432</sup> Kiefer Andreas, "The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – 1988-2018: 30th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government – taking stock of its core provisions" in *Yearbook on Federalism 2018 Federalism, Subsidiarity and Regions in Europe*, Tübingen, European Centre for Research on Federalism, 2018, p. 4

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

competences, etc.<sup>434</sup> The charter was supported by a number of relevant legal instruments and political declarations, including the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Affairs on a Local level, the European Charter of Regional Minority Languages, the European Urban Charter, the European Charter on Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life and the European Landscape Convention. As all these instruments have been influential in the development of democracy in Europe, the importance of local and regional autonomy has been highlighted repetitively in the documents. The Charter further emphasizes that “in light of globalization and diversity, in a period of economic and financial crisis, national governments cannot face the complexity of problems alone”, and encourages the transfer of competences and tasks to the cities and regions. However, the nature of intergovernmental organizations and their organic linkage to nation states, in spite of all the efforts to address the issues in a democratic manner, maintain their top-down approach and impose measures which are adapted to the particular circumstances.

In addressing the issues around displacement, the concept of integration appears a dominant phenomenon across the board in all documents and programs introduced by international organizations and member states. It must be noted, however, that messages of solidarity and autonomy in local governance are mentioned in a number of recommendations<sup>435</sup> of the Congress for the last decade, however, the centralized decision-making power and absence of clear policies regarding migrant and refugee influx in recent times has restricted local and regional governments’ ability to respond to asylum seekers’ needs.

Responses to the migrant and refugee influx in recent years in Europe often give importance to addressing the reception and integration of newcomers using a multi-level

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<sup>434</sup> Kiefer Andreas, “Municipalities and regions in the Council of Europe: local and regional democracy in action after 1957”, Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/1680718ac9>

<sup>435</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation 115 (2002) on “the participation of foreign residents in local public life: consultative bodies”; Recommendation 153 (2004) on “A pact for the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin in Europe’s towns, cities and regions”; Recommendation 252 (2008) on “Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policies”; Recommendation 261 (2009) on “Intercultural cities”; Recommendation 262 (2009) on “Equality and diversity in local authority employment and service provision”; Recommendation 304 (2011) on “Meeting the challenge of inter-faith and intercultural tensions at local level” and Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies.



governance approach<sup>436</sup>. While the coordination between involved actors is vital, the style of such approaches often remains top-down, easily manipulated by nation state interests. In addition, the concepts of an early integration model, which implies immediate insertion in local communities as soon as possible (e.g. camp situations) as well as long-term integration programs following the determination of status, constitute the main points of the resolutions and recommendations produced by the Congress of the CoE.

The Charter, having been signed and ratified by the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe<sup>437</sup>, establishes a solid platform for a further dialogue regarding the role of local and regional authorities in democracies in Europe. However, as implementation takes place under the auspices of the central governments that often hold the national interest and border integrity above anything and anyone, in the case of conflicts of responsibility or complaints, national authorities do not hesitate to use excessive supervision of local government. Described as a “dangerous tendency towards legislative nationalism”<sup>438</sup> by Jagland, the former Secretary General of the CoE, it also shows that the Charter is referred to by nation states as convenient, and open to interpretation.

Although most of the integration resolutions and recommendations by the Congress focus on basic services, including housing, health and education services, cultural activities as well as access to labor market, participation of the forcibly displaced in decision-making processes remains a taboo across Europe with the exception of a few progressive examples. The Municipal Immigration Council of Barcelona allows migrants to be involved in local social, cultural and political life, while Switzerland has granted non-nationals the right to vote in the local elections as well as eligibility to stand at communal elections in certain cantons including Jura, Vaud, Fribourg and Neuchâtel. Even if the decisions of these cantons have the criteria of duration of the residency, it offers newcomers the

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<sup>436</sup> Irgil Ezgi, “Multi-level Governance as an Alternative: The Municipality of Barcelona and the Ciutat Refugi Plan”, *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, vol. 3, n.1. 2016, p. 1-21

<sup>437</sup> The list of the countries ratified the Charter can be found at [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/122/signatures?p\\_auth=oX4NyaXQ](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/122/signatures?p_auth=oX4NyaXQ)

<sup>438</sup> Jagland Thorbjørn, “State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: A Security Imperative for Europe”, *Council of Europe*, 2016, p. 4

opportunity to engage in political life<sup>439</sup>. In Italy, the Council of Foreign and Stateless Citizens of the Province as well as Neighborhood Councils of Foreign Citizens in Bologna provide platforms for newcomers to voice their views without voting rights. *Mr. Melluso* (Arci Porco Rosso) from Palermo mentioned the presence of a Council of Migrants at the municipal level, however, they also pointed out that this does not cover those in the process of asylum application or those whose status is illegal. The right to participate in the affairs of a local authority<sup>440</sup> has only been ratified by nineteen countries despite the efforts of Congress, showing Member States' reluctance to delegate certain powers to the local authorities.

The New Urban Agenda, unanimously adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), offers a comprehensive vision for cities and municipalities. Overseen by UN-Habitat and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (particularly Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities), the New Urban Agenda aims 'to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their fundamental freedoms, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law<sup>441</sup>'. They contain principles of "leave no one behind<sup>442</sup>", "ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies<sup>443</sup>", and "ensure environmental sustainability<sup>444</sup>"; proposing an urban paradigm shift with different ways of planning, financing, developing and governing cities and human settlements. While the adoption of

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<sup>439</sup> Illes György, Renstrom Yoomi, "From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration", Council of Europe - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Report CG32(2017)07 Final, 2017, p. 29

<sup>440</sup> Council of Europe, "Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority" Council of Europe, CETS No. 207", 2009

<sup>441</sup> United Nations Habitat III Secretariat, *New Urban Agenda*, New York, United Nations, 2017, p. 5

<sup>442</sup> Leave no one behind refers to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including the eradication of extreme poverty, by ensuring equal rights and opportunities, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and integration in the urban space, by enhancing livability, education, food security and nutrition, health and well-being, including by ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, by promoting safety and eliminating discrimination and all forms of violence, by ensuring public participation providing safe and equal access for all, and by providing equal access for all to physical and social infrastructure and basic services, as well as adequate and affordable housing.

<sup>443</sup> Ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies refers to leveraging the agglomeration benefits of well-planned urbanization, including high productivity, competitiveness and innovation, by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all, by ensuring the creation of decent jobs and equal access for all to economic and productive resources and opportunities and by preventing land speculation, promoting secure land tenure and managing urban shrinking, where appropriate.

<sup>444</sup> Ensure environmental sustainability refers to promoting clean energy and sustainable use of land and resources in urban development, by protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, including adopting healthy lifestyles in harmony with nature, by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, by building urban resilience, by reducing disaster risks and by mitigating and adapting to climate change.

“sustainable, people-centered, age and gender responsive and integrated approaches to urban and territorial development<sup>445</sup>” was underlined, the leading role of national governments with the contributions of local governments and civil society was specifically emphasized. The comprehensive nature of the document and the extensive participatory methodology of its production is exemplary; however, the nation-state authority on the decision-making process maintains the long-standing hierarchical and paternalistic nature of relations, resembling familiar and symbolic similarities with the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

*We, Heads of State and Government, Ministers and High Representatives, have gathered at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) from 17 to 20 October 2016 in Quito, with the participation of subnational and local governments, parliamentarians, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector, professionals and practitioners, the scientific and academic community, and other relevant stakeholders, to adopt a New Urban Agenda<sup>446</sup> [emphasis added]*

Both documents, the European Charter of Local Self-Government (CoE) and the New Urban Agenda (UN Habitat), among many others, provide a comprehensive outlook and a framework, as well as an agenda for local governance and the role of local citizens in addressing problems. In their development and implementation of the actions, the messages provide insight into key considerations. These core documents are the basis for the work of many regional networks that have attempted to bring alternative views to bear on the role of local governments and initiatives.

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<sup>445</sup> United Nations Habitat III Secretariat, *op.cit*, p.8

<sup>446</sup> United Nations Habitat III Secretariat, *op.cit*, p. 3

### 1.2.2. Networks in operation

Displacement, as a dynamic and total social process, is linked to broader issues connected to diverse groups intersecting and connecting in a specific space, and creating what Ma Mung describes as “migratory worlds<sup>447</sup>”. In this regard, Marcel Mauss’ reference to social life as being continuously dynamic, and the concept of total social fact as grasping “a perpetual state of becoming” and “the fleeting moment<sup>448</sup>” is worth noting. Mauss argues that any individual layer of social movement does not represent the entirety of social fact, but only when one looks at all of the overlapping social layers together is one able to see the total social fact in that fleeting moment. In the context of people on the move, the face-to-face connections among people at the local level, even in their temporariness, are in a constant state of becoming another relationship. These relationships therefore, need to be considered in their totality, including their contradictions<sup>449</sup>.

With all the challenges faced, local level responses to displacement have become an essential part of global and regional networks, even if the legal aspects of arrival to and departure from a place are regulated by nation-states. Primarily focusing on urbanization, these networks seek governance solutions at local levels as an increasing number of the persons are moving toward urban settings.

Based on the idea of the effectiveness and efficiency of governance at a local level as per the vicinity to citizens, a number of initiatives have flourished within the last few decades, including Eurocities (1986), United Cities and Local Governments (2004), The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (2004), Intercultural cities

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<sup>447</sup> Ma Mung, *art.cit.*, p. 352-368

<sup>448</sup> Kasuga, Naokim, “Total Social Fact: Structuring, Partially Connecting, and Reassembling”, *Revue du MAUSS*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010, p. 101-110 <https://www.cairn.info/revue-du-mauss-2010-2-page-101.htm>

<sup>449</sup> Mauss claims that by considering the whole together, we have been able to perceive the essential, the movement of everything, the live dimension, the fleeting moment when society or rather men become aware of the common feelings they have for themselves and others. This concrete observation of social life gives us the means of discovering new facts that we are just beginning to glimpse. Nothing, in our opinion, is more urgent and fruitful than this study of social facts” Quoted in Hart Keith, “Marcel Mauss: In Pursuit of the Whole” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 49, n.2, 2007, p. 1-13 <http://www.revuedumauss.com.fr/media/KeithHart.pdf>

(2008), The Global Mayoral Forum (2013), Strong Cities (2015). While these programs have been either originated in Europe or included Europe in their operations, they all have been initiated by various intergovernmental organizations, acknowledging the importance of democracy at a local level, and extending their missions and visions to local governance, increasingly focusing on issues around migrants and refugee integration.

Founded in 1986 by the cities of Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam, today Eurocities network brings together over 140 local governments, trying to influence European Institutions concerning issues that affect the everyday lives of people in Europe. Eurocities advocates the importance of local governments in addressing challenges at local levels in the equation of multi governance structures in Europe. Among many of the themes regarding urban issues dealt with as part of Eurocities, the Solidarity Cities initiative was proposed in 2016 to promote the need for local political leadership in order to address the challenges of the migrant and refugee influx. Encouraging close cooperation in solidarity among local governments across Europe, Solidarity Cities focus on effective reception and integration of refugees and migrants. The idea of Solidarity Cities, which emerged out of a necessity following the 2015 refugee and migrant influx in Greece, is driven by the mayors of participating cities. As a major destination of many migrants and refugees, urban settings face great challenges in receiving and integrating newcomers. Local governments have tried to find creative and sustainable solutions to ensure their smooth arrival and harmonious co-existence, not a simple task as they have to abide by the national policies and allocate needed funds. While Eurocities present creative solutions through the exchange of experiences and strategies, its close linkage to EU funds and potential implications of donor-recipient relations cannot be ignored.

The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) has a more global scope today, despite having its early 1900s European origins. Based on a century of municipal movements, the UCLG draws logical linkages between local, national and international actions to address global challenges with effective local actions. The UCLG advocates democratic self-government and cooperation between local governments within a wider

international community. Their efforts, in line with the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework, focus on developing necessary capacities in a network of local governments to address these global challenges at local levels. With the recognition of the right to city and presence of increasing newcomers to urban areas, in the area of migrants and refugees, the UCLG links its work with the Global Compact on Migration.

The UCLG brings together a diverse scale of actors in addressing migration and refugee issues at the local context through a number of initiatives, including the Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development, the Policy Council on the Right to the City, and the Mediterranean Cities Migration Project. As it plays a significant role in linking multiple governance actors, it is essential to note that the UCLG also inescapably reproduces hierarchical relations with the members of international humanitarian system, including the IOM, UNDP / UNITAR, ICMPD, UN Habitat.

The non-profit industrial complex, given its organic links to the center as well as a substantial amount of resources at its disposal, gives the impression that the expected aims and outcomes of the current system is the same as grassroots, people-oriented and bottom-up actions. While they may utilize the same terminology and concepts, arguably facilitating the adoption of a common language in the humanitarian field, nevertheless the ideological construction of the organizations dominates their actions and is influenced by the norms of the center and the nation-state. Despite the argument made by *Ms. Angelidou* (an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common in Theesaloniki) that a focus on terminology such as 'integration' is pointless, working toward a specific objective without questioning the framework in which it operates presents a danger, perpetuating the relations of power and privilege.

While the contradictions between human-rights driven missions of international organizations and their allegiances to members states should be critically questioned, Pecoud's analysis of a fragmented international migration governance provides an

example to this dilemma. Pecoud<sup>450</sup> notes that IOM tends to align itself with the countries of destination and their political agendas with a strong emphasis on border controls, regular and legal migration activities. In this regard, Pecoud stresses that IOM (as an example of a non-profit industrial complex) has a quasi-commercial approach to humanitarian issues, working with the people of concern on behalf of the nation-states. At the same time, it is worth underlining that IOM has become one of the organizations that provides extensive and reliable data on migration through its independent experts and publications. While Pecoud's example focuses on IOM, the organization is not singled out as a unique case, but is critiqued as a product of the international humanitarian system regardless of periodic positive results they publish.

The Strong Cities Network was launched by the United Nations in 2015 and led by Institute for Strategic Dialogue. It is a global network of mayors, policy-makers and practitioners that focuses on sharing knowledge and expertise in order to prevent violent extremism. Considering the multidimensionality and complexity of issues that cities must deal with, this network (with more than 130 cities) is specifically concerned about social cohesion and community resilience and organizes regional and international events to build on capacities.

UNESCO is another UN entity that launched an initiative in 2004 to establish a network of cities to improve policies to fight racism, xenophobia discrimination and exclusion. The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICRAR), operating on a global scale offers a 'ten-point plan of action'<sup>451</sup> to fight against racism and social exclusion. With the objective of involving interested cities in a common struggle against racism, practical policies are suggested to city authorities to address issues around racism and discrimination. Over 120 municipalities are involved in their respective regional coalitions, exchanging experiences and building on capacity. In the context of the migrant and refugee influx in Europe, discriminatory policies and actions as well as increased

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<sup>450</sup> Pecoud Antoine, "Une Gouvernance Internationale Fragmentée : Le Rôle de L'IOM", in *Migeurope Atlas des Migrants en Europe*. Paris, Armand Colin, 2017, p. 122-123

<sup>451</sup> UNESCO, *The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities*, Paris, UNESCO, 2005, p. 1-20

xenophobia strongly re-emerged in many places, making the fight against racism an increasingly important issue.

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) program is an initiative that was developed by the Council of Europe, focusing on policy reviews and strategy development with intercultural standpoints. Emphasizing that diversity can be an advantage for cities if managed carefully and respectfully, the ICC works with a network of 136 cities across Europe and beyond. The program works with interested cities in developing strategies for refugee and migrant integration, advocating that the approach needs to be based on partnership, working 'with' instead of 'for' the newcomers. Across the Intercultural Cities network, work in partnership with civil society organizations, particularly with the minority associations, is encouraged<sup>452</sup>. The concept of the ICC program that every person has something to say and offer, and working with cities to create necessary policies is essential and is in line with the CoE's work across its member states. Accordingly, the ICC offers a series of tools and encourages exchange among network members. In addition, the CoE's Center of Expertise for Good Governance works with local governments with its twelve principles<sup>453</sup> to improve the quality of local governance.

The Global Mayoral Forum is an initiative of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, that is co-hosted every year on an annual basis with its partner organizations, where municipal and regional leaders on migration development and displacement gather to discuss practical and innovative solutions in addressing issues around displacement. In 2018, the Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development committed to advance the principles of both Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, in their respective municipalities, in solidarity with the networks.

In all these initiatives, the presence of an international body is a common denominator, with the approval of the national government, which presents a series of problems. These

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<sup>452</sup> Council of Europe, "Policy Brief: Refugee policies for the intercultural city", *Council of Europe*, 2017, p. 1-12

<sup>453</sup> Council of Europe, Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform "12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance", *Council of Europe*.



organizations have identified the shortcomings of the nation-state approaches, and have been trying to explore alternative approaches at local levels. The multi-governance approach often comes forward as an important aspect in these alternatives, without specifically addressing the contradictory notion of power relations and contradictions that emerge in relation to democratic processes. In spite of their efforts to promote and advocate for the importance of local governance in addressing the challenges, all these networks maintain a top-down approach, which might be an unescapable necessity under the current system. Each of these programs have developed policies, tools and sub-programs that focus on the reception and integration of migrants and refugees in the local contexts, without referring to the structural problems or explicitly questioning the notion of integration. The availability of resources allows them to produce significant and valuable tools and documents, which should be taken into consideration in working with local governance and displacement, however, they should be viewed with a critical mind as their parameters and outcomes are conditioned by the entities that commission them for the task.

### **1.2.3. Inspirational local initiatives**

Increased emphasis on the localization of aid as well as the linkage between the development and humanitarian work present promising strategies for addressing the disconnect with the reality of the situation at a community level. Such approaches represent a more realistic response to the changing dynamics of displacement and sustainable development by empowering the communities that face these issues on a daily basis. Access to resources, coupled with placing decision-making power at a local level also requires agency at local level that could be established between long-term residents and newcomers in a solidarity network. In the northern Mediterranean region, a number of attempts have been made to create local development and governance have been inspirational. While they are mostly limited to local and national borders, their impacts have been noted on an international level.

These relatively short-lived experiments were closely linked to the policies of the local and national governments of the time, which were deliberately targeted and closed down by right-wing elements, however, their influence and legacy have been inspirational and could inspire future solidarity actions.

#### - **The village institutes of Turkey**

The village institutes attempted to create local direct democracy through education in rural Turkey. In spite of periodic interference with its democracy, Turkey's experiment with village institutes between 1940 and 1946<sup>454</sup> was inspirational, observed by many other countries and constitute the basis for rare local governance practices based on direct democracy in Turkey more recently, including at Fatsa, Ovacık and Tunceli. During the late 1930s, Turkey was a young country; tailored to local conditions, the establishment of village institutes presented a strategy that reached out to rural areas across the country, combining educational needs with local development processes. Paying particular attention to bring theory and practice together in a specific cultural context in Anatolia, the village institutes were essential elements of a socio-political construction process. Aware of the conditions, needs and demographics of the 1940s as well as the ideological basis of this initiative toward a nation-state building, this doctoral thesis is primarily interested in the methodology used in a specific cultural context with limited resources that may show similarities with the displaced persons from the same or similar geographic regions.

In the establishment process of the Turkish Republic, Yücel<sup>455</sup> writes that only 25% of the rural population was literate and could relate to the concept of a new country so any work with them required a specific pedagogic approach<sup>456</sup>. While rural communities had equal rights in theory, including the right to education, freedom of speech and publish, etc., they did not have access to education<sup>457</sup> due to limited resources and educational institutions.

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<sup>454</sup> Although they were officially closed in 1954 by law, their original functions only worked until 1946.

<sup>455</sup> Hasan Ali Yücel was the Minister of National Education of Turkey between December 1938 and August 1946. He prepared the political grounds for the village institutes.

<sup>456</sup> Türen Ahmet Özgür, *Köy Enstitüleri Dosyası - Türk Rönesansı*, İstanbul, Destek Yayınları, 2018, p. 31

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36

The division between the center (the Ottoman Palace, prior to 1923) and the peripheries became more obvious in the young country, highlighting the crucial linkage between rights and actual access to resources in order to engage in democratic processes. The essence of the institutes was to be original local development processes that used its available local resources and mobilized the local communities for their common wellbeing. Tonguç<sup>458</sup>, considered the main architect of the village institutes, further explaining the purpose of this approach, underlined the use of a holistic pedagogical approach, where in addition to teachers, a number of other vocations would be trained to ensure needed capacity and human resources in a given place. The village institutes also became spaces where gender equality was practiced and women's role in society was discussed. What made this initiative special was its vicinity to the everyday life of communities that was born out of the social, economic and cultural conditions at the time and ensured the direct involvement of all community members through multidimensional programs. This approach to local development, with its holistic pedagogical component, also promoted land reform as agricultural practices were a large part of rural livelihoods. Considerable achievements were made; but raising consciousness, decreasing dependency and the notable efforts at self-sufficiency in the peripheries of power presented a threat to those at the center, including large landowners and politicians, which led to anti-village institute propaganda until their official closure in 1954. Defending the democratic values that the institutes introduced under the political pressure of his own party and the opposition party, Yücel stressed<sup>459</sup> that with such an approach to development and education, if not constructed from the bottom up, democracy would become utopic and lose its purpose.

The critical questioning and direct democracy that were promoted and practiced at the village institutes created significant disturbance for local religious leaders and land owners, who had traditionally held significant social and political power. Tonguç, in his description of the institutes, underlined that this was not merely a development project, but also a struggle against oppressive practices and a place for the emancipation of rural

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<sup>458</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, p. 125

communities. The project of Tonguç and Yücel, the organic intellectuals of their times, found space using the power of Yücel as a member of the government, and had an impact for generations to come, inspiring many future initiatives. The development of such “a movement and a mobilization for social change,” as described by Fay Kirby<sup>460</sup> during WWII, faced a number of challenges. While Turkey technically did not take part in WWII, the social, political and economic consequences were felt heavily, leading to a new political alliance with the USA under a new right-wing party following the war. The official closure of the village institutes corresponds with the cold war era, the raise of anti-communist sentiments and the international aid scheme under the Marshall Plan.

Despite the statements of self-reliance, sustainable development, democratic societies and education for all, the top-down hierarchical approach remains the dominant style in Turkey eight decades later, subject to the imposition of the center. However, the impact of the village institutes during its short period of effective implementation produced positive results. According to a Mersin University study<sup>461</sup>, among the village institute graduates, 98.1% believed that village institutes sought solutions for public education, while 98.6% agreed that the students had the agency to lead local development processes. Having focused on multilevel needs and skills of local communities using a cooperative approach, the institutes demonstrated the effectiveness and promising improvements that could also be made in terms of local economic development.

Although their format may have altered over the decades, the power relations and their implications in nation-state driven programs have remained the same. Although they promoted a bottom-up approach in rural areas, the village institutes were established through a top-down decision-making process, which was easily targeted, manipulated by political interests, which eventually led to their closure due to ideological reasons by the same entity that set them up. Belge also contends<sup>462</sup> that the nation-state origin of village

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<sup>460</sup> Kirby Fay, “The Village Institute Movement of Turkey: An Educational Mobilization for Social Change”, Columbia University, 1961.

<sup>461</sup> Kartal Sadık, “Toplum Kalkınmasında Farklı Bir Eğitim Kurumu : Köy Enstitüleri”, Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, vol. 4, n. 1, 2008, p. 34

<sup>462</sup> Belge Murat, “Köy Enstitüleri”, *Birikim on-line*, 2018, <https://www.birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/9181/koy-enstituleri>

institutes had the potential of becoming a propaganda project rather than one seeking enlightenment. Belge notes that a people-centered social transformation process was administered by the urban elite of the time, which resulted in their closure once those elites were removed from power.

The village institutes operated during the 1940s, a time where 80% of the population lived in rural areas. As the figure for inhabitants in villages and remote settlements has fallen to 7.7%<sup>463</sup> today, the approach needs to be considered in a different context, however, the principles that guided village institutes and direct democracy have influenced other initiatives both in Turkey and beyond<sup>464</sup>. These principles included equal opportunity, vocational training, participation in management, altruism, collective thinking, continuing education, integrated education, collective rewarding and direct work within the community<sup>465</sup>. The importance of this experience, regardless of its nation-state-based origin at the time, exhibit the essential role of organic intellectuals in all layers of society, attempting to make a change. The village institutes, in this capacity, created common spaces in a network based on available local resources, valuing all inhabitants and honoring human dignity to give life to a process of social transformation. The principles and organizational methods remain valid today, and could be furthered considered in addressing the needs of the displaced people in a construction process.

The implications of these principles are not unique to this specific educational and development experiment only. The '*halk evleri*' (people's houses) had a long-standing history dating back to the 1930s with periodic comebacks, and similar to the '*centri sociali*' in Italy and '*stekis*' in Greece, create common spaces at local levels.

In regards to local governance, the towns of Fatsa (in 1979-1980), Ovacik (in 2014 -2019) and Tunceli (2019-present) have demonstrated alternatives in local governance that

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<sup>463</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), "Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları, 2018" *TUIK-online*, February 2019. The World Bank sources show the rural population in 2018 as 24%. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>

<sup>464</sup> Türkoğlu Pakize, *Tonguç ve Enstitüleri*, İstanbul, İş Bankası Yayınları, 2000, p. 555-561

India, Switzerland, UNESCO, Netherlands, Germany

<sup>465</sup> Baykurt Fakir, *Unutulmaz Köy Enstitüleri*, İstanbul, Literatür Yayıncılık, 2016, p. 96-102

could be effective models to analyze. As opposed to many social municipal approaches, which work within the heteronomous mindset of the nation-state, these examples have tried to make changes in the systemic dynamics, focusing on poverty, collectivist means of production within communities, and have worked using participatory budgets. Kılavuz and Yüksel indicate that the participatory budgeting concept, which received worldwide attention in the 1990s in Porto Alegre, Brazil, was implemented in Fatsa in 1979 through neighbor assemblies, ensuring direct engagement of local communities<sup>466</sup>. The elected mayor of Fatsa has encouraged neighborhood assemblies that operated out of the municipal structure but had a direct influence on the municipal assembly<sup>467</sup>, allowing dual power and accountability between these two groups. This experience showed that private sector, with profit making as its ultimate goal, can easily sideline the will of communities, restrict access to local resources and increase costs.

In spite of its short duration, this experience has inspired other initiatives such as that at Ovacik, which presented the possibility of another model in local governance. Using the municipal land as a resource and creating an inclusive production line, Ovacik has employed local community members, included women into the workforce, offering free local transportation, seeds and agricultural machinery to local farmers while using the profit from the local business for educational scholarships. The mayor of Ovacik, emphasizing the people-centered approach, stressed that it is not realistic to insist on a homogenous society and it is imperative to pay specific attention to the sensitivities of community members<sup>468</sup>. Governance without contradictions and disagreements is not organic and healthy. It is these contradictions and dialectics that should constitute the basis of a dialogue for communities so they can express themselves in a democratic manner. Also inspired by other initiatives in Turkey (in Fatsa as per the collectivity of production and in Diyarbakir regarding the feminization of politics), as well as examples around the world, including Marinaleda<sup>469</sup> in Andalusia (autonomous and self-reliant

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<sup>466</sup> Kılavuz Fidan & Yüksel Cihan, "Yerel Yönetimler Maliyesi Çerçevesinde Toplumcu Belediyecilik : Fatsa ve Ovacık Örneği", *Serbest Yazılar -Toplum ve Demokrasi*, vol. 11, n. 23, 2017, p. 121-138

<sup>467</sup> Keles Rusen, quoted in Kılavuz, F & Yüksel, C., p. 129

<sup>468</sup> Emre Erdal, *Komunist Başkan*, İstanbul, Siyah Beyaz Yayıncılık, 2018, p. 162-163

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106

village management based on a communist model of production), such attempts at creating functioning alternative systems are within the realm of possibility. This remains true even if these local based direct democracy experiments are short-lived, as they question heteronomous impositions and imagine human rights and dignity beyond the nation-state.

The experiments in Turkey, including village institutes, people's houses, and the municipality of Fatsa have all involved organic intellectuals of their time, creating spaces for social transformation, which ultimately became the targets of the center as they challenged the heteronomy of the nation state. The work at Ovacik, which is being replicated in Tunceli but on a larger scale, receives significant support from local communities, but remains on the radar of the state while it is considered a threat. While all these experiments have operated within the parameters of the nation-state, they are examples of pragmatic, and if they are allowed to continue, sustainable community-based solutions to local livelihoods.

#### - **Municipal initiatives in France**

For people on the move, it is often either border towns or major cities that are their main destinations. While cities tend to contain ethnic, geographic, linguistic and religious communities able to host people for a while, border towns are known for their fluidity and the dynamic nature of people's movements. Local communities and municipalities, as the direct interlocutors of these interactions, adjust their everyday life to these changing dynamics, even if they create undesired situations at times. France has been a migration destination for decades and has been affected by the recent refugee/migrant influx. The majority of the newcomers illegally arriving in France are from ex-colonies, and end up either in Paris until they clarify their asylum status or in northern France, trying to make their way to the UK.

As the reception and integration policies for newcomers have varied over the decades, France has inspired a number of alternatives with its long-standing tradition of local governance and self-management, dating back to the Paris Commune. Primarily led by leftist politicians and socialist views, these local governments have been a part of a minority movement across most of France's political history, at the height of their success controlling 30% of those municipalities numbering more than 9,000 inhabitants between 1947 and 1977<sup>470</sup>. Following the 1968 agreement with Algeria, there has been a gradual increase in government policies restricting migrants and refugee rights<sup>471</sup>, limiting the mobility of the people as well as their access to resources. However, some local municipal-based responses have continued in their work, providing positive examples to the contrary.

Among many municipalities facing the influx of migrants and asylum seekers in France, as of 2016, Grande Synthe stands out as one example of a municipality that has offered newcomers a more dignified, albeit temporary, solution. Since the early 2000s, along with Calais, Grande Synthe has received over one thousand newcomers in an informal camp-like situation, the 'camp de la honte' (camp of shame). The mayor of Grande Synthe, Damien Careme, led a process of creating better conditions by setting cabins, sanitary facilities and opening municipal facilities such as the gym to the service of newcomers. Despite receiving criticism from central government, Mayor Careme mobilized local resources and cooperated with entities such as Doctors without Borders (MSF) as well as local musicians and artists to improve the conditions of people in need within a short period of time. The mayor's leadership played an important role in creating an opportunity for the local community and organizations to offer a better space for newcomers, regardless of their duration of stay and legal status. While this action was based on a humanitarian need – to improve the conditions of the people in the center of town – it was very much driven by the local authority. With the change of mayor and power dynamics

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<sup>470</sup> Chamouard Aude, "Municipal socialism in France from the interwar period to the 1970s: An innovative local experiment", *Metropolitica on-line*, April 2014

<sup>471</sup> Bracke Maud Anne, "May 1968 and Algerian Immigrants in France: Trajectories of Mobilization and Encounter" in Bhabra G. K. and Demir I. (eds), *1968 Retrospect: History, Theory, Alterity*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, p. 124



in local governance mid-2019, the pressure by the French state intensified with evacuations from the camp in the autumn of 2019.

The French state's opposition to the camp has been firm from its outset as it challenged the current immigration policy and was considered as a pull factor for others. It is important to note that the individual solutions offered by the French state tended to break down solidarity networks in such camps and camp-like situations, based as they were on the rationale of integration, leading to further isolation and marginalization, a tendency also seen in Greece and Italy.

Calais is in the same region of France, and has faced a large influx of migrants and asylum seekers, but has followed a different path than the municipality of Grande-Synthe. The fact that the informal camp settings were out of town may have allowed the authorities to ignore the problem until it received international attention. Both the French and UK governments applied continued pressure to dismantle these settlements. Dismantling of the Calais 'Jungle' the late 2016 might have temporarily solved the political problem of the French state and the UK, however, in terms of the conditions and status of the displaced people, it only affected their relative support systems, dispersing people into other areas in the region and forcing them to find other solutions.

The French Ministry of Interior issued a report regarding the claimed brutality of the security forces in Calais and (Grande Synthe) Dunkerquois<sup>472</sup>, denying the accusations by Human Rights Watch (HRW). The HRW report, based on interviews with asylum seekers and migrants as well as aid workers, stated that there had been an abuse of power by the riot police through intimidation of asylum seekers, including children, harassment of aid workers, and disruption of humanitarian assistance. It provided examples of interference with access to water and food, spraying and confiscating sleeping bags; events which were witnessed by aid workers and confirmed by the French ombudsman. Rejecting these claims, the report by the French Ministry of Interior

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<sup>472</sup> Ministère de l'Intérieur, "Action de l'Etat à Calais et dans le Dunkerquois", *Communiqués du ministre – online*, 23 October 2017

concluded that local communities welcomed the dismantling of the camp and that criminal acts, including crossing to the UK, decreased as the result of police actions. Various policies were introduced to prevent the creation of similar settlements. In 2019, unauthorized gatherings at the city center of Calais were forbidden, including distribution of meals to asylum seekers and migrants, considering it an abusive occupation and public disturbance. An Amnesty International report of early 2019 reported intimidation, harassment, violation of basic rights by security forces and the authorities<sup>473</sup> in Calais and Grande Synthe, directed to displaced persons as well as human rights defenders. Olivier Clochard argues<sup>474</sup> that precarious living areas will keep reappearing if appropriate solutions are not provided. Border cities and their surrounding areas will continue to be used as transit points and to attract migrants and asylum seekers, often becoming targets for the nation-state trying to address the issue through force. Dismantling settlements like Calais without a comprehensive follow-up plan only leads to temporary manipulation of public opinion that the use of force is an effective and acceptable solution, one which, as Clochard points out, only postpones the problem until it appears elsewhere with similar concerns.

The positive response at Grande Synthe inspired the municipality of Paris in 2016, where a project for a humanitarian camp was developed to provide basic support services<sup>475</sup>. Given their similar political and ideological views, the responses of the mayors of Grande Synthe and Paris are unsurprising. Even if the scale of the populations they have been working with differ drastically, their shared values of sustaining human dignity and creating the minimum conditions for survival have guided both municipalities. However, in 2017 the stories diverge based on local elections; demonstrating how a similar displacement situation in a similar geographic region can be addressed from very different angles based on the political and ideological stand of a specific local governance. It also stresses the temporary influence of political power, which is subject to the pressure of

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<sup>473</sup> Amnesty International, *La Solidarite prise pour cible*, London, Amnesty International Ltd., 2019, p. 17-30

<sup>474</sup> Migreurop, <http://www.migreurop.org/article2841.html>, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017

<sup>475</sup> Baumard Maryline, "Comment sera organise le camp de migrants qui ouvrira dans le nord de Paris", *Le Monde*, 6 September 2016

central government, and changes with the election process, regardless of its progressive efforts.

In case of Paris, interest in cooperation with other cities led to the signing of an agreement on a humanitarian camp that aimed to provide a more dignified temporary solution for migrants and asylum seeker. However, such attempts to regularize legal status through government entities obliges migrants to register, give fingerprints, and enter into the Dublin III process and run the risk of being sent back to their country of origin<sup>476</sup>; a dilemma that is not well received by people who have arrived through irregular channels.

This has been noted outside of France as well. In the case of Palermo, in spite of its supportive environment toward newcomers, the city authorities have avoided such practices to protect the identities of asylum seekers from the central government.

Despite local authorities' willingness to improve conditions, the periodic interference of central governments closing down these temporary settlements repetitively pushes the problem from one corner of the city to another. Over the years, as the numbers have increased, displaced persons have ended up in the northern peripheries of Paris, including areas of La Porte de la Chapelle and St. Denis that have become tent camps. The observations and discussions in these Parisian suburbs – La Port de la Chapelle, St. Denis and Cité des 4000 – in 2019<sup>477</sup>, confirmed the presence of diverse small cultural groups offering a support system to newcomers from their country of origin. While legality and obtaining proper residence and work permits remain important for many, the conditions and the way the issue is addressed do not present a promising solution under the current power relations between the center and the peripheries. Under the present system, the antagonistic relationship between the militaristic nation-state approach to the issue through pressure, and local municipal-based solution seeking seem to counterbalance each other, and in some cases are able to offer temporary solutions.

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<sup>476</sup> Carrere Violaine, "De Villes Hospitalieres", in *Migreurop Atlas des Migrants en Europe*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017, p. 156

<sup>477</sup> Visited in December 2019.

However, they do not address the very concern of constructing dignified lives with respect to democracy and human rights for all inhabitants. On the other hand, the efforts of these municipal initiatives contribute to creating a common space (as much as they might be considered chaotic), bringing the newcomers and local solidarity groups together through distribution of food and clothes, as well as other services.

The efforts of local communities in finding pragmatic but dignified solutions to their problems are overshadowed by the nation-states concern for border security, undermining the proclaimed values of human rights and dignity. Despite a long tradition of democracy, solidarity and activism in its political history, the French central government's discomfort regarding migrants and refugees peaked in late 2019 with the prime minister's announcement that he would 'take back control' of immigration<sup>478</sup>.

Similar nation-state pressure and local policy changes have been observed in both Greece and Italy. The Deputy Mayor of Athens and Mayor of Thessaloniki have cooperated with progressive groups and mobilized resources to address the needs and future aspirations of displaced persons in-line with community wellbeing. Change in central and local governments in Greece in 2019 have had a significant influence on these initiatives. Italy has had similar experiences, as some of the inspirational municipalities such as Riace and Naples have faced pressure by the central government. Although the change in the central government in 2019 decreased the pressure on local authorities working with displaced persons, the overall asylum processes remained unchanged and complicated.

With ongoing complexities in asylum processes, and changes in local and central governments, communities continue to remain on the front line, facing the consequences of centralized policies that have had a drastic impact on local communities' relationship with newcomers. For example, the genuine community-based responses to newcomers

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<sup>478</sup> France 24 news agency, "France to 'take back control' of immigration, says French PM" <https://www.france24.com/en/20191106-live-french-pm-unveils-immigration-plan-as-government-moves-to-implement-quotas> 6 November 2019

since 2015 in the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios resulted in protests and clashes between local communities and security forces in early 2020<sup>479</sup> following an announcement made by the central government that new facilities would be built for asylum seekers. Community ownership and local governance is essential for sustained actions and decision making for a common future with the newcomers. Otherwise a constant state of antagonism between people, distanced from decision making processes creates discomfort at a local level.

Such discomfort can generate resistance to centralized decision making, with its tendency to employ repressive practices in its efforts to create a unified country. The inspirational initiatives discussed earlier are not stand-alone examples in the history of the region. There has often been resistance to totalitarian regimes, either for political reasons such as the *Kapetanios*, partisan resistance (1943-49) in Greece, or for cultural survival and identity, as seen with the German speaking South Tyrolese in Italy.

### **1.3. Viability of reforms versus radical change under current circumstances**

Considering the concept of displacement and the displaced from a different perspective, as discussed in Chapter 1, and the possibility of the notion of integration becoming defetishized<sup>480</sup>, top-down and centralized reforms will not be adequate to make necessary changes.

Reformist efforts may be able to liberalize processes through the neo-liberal international system, maintaining the status-quo and current relations of power. As this is a relatively well-established system, many find comfort in it and do not consider any transformative change, seeking individual paths to improve their positions and conditions in society. Those who are in privileged positions can avoid direct contact with newcomers and see their roles as subsidiary to those who are long-term residents. This classic attitude in neo-

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<sup>479</sup> The Guardian, "Police and protesters clash on Greek islands over new migrant camps" Guardian, 25 February 2020

<sup>480</sup> Defetishizing integration refers to the ability to conceptualize possible alternatives of living together in displacement-affected communities, where the idea of fitting is not dominant anymore, and inhabitants engage in a genuine dialogue for equality.

liberal political thought is nonetheless in alignment with the interest of the center, presenting itself as showing solidarity and a good model to follow.

Regarding newcomers, Lorenzo Pedretti<sup>481</sup>, in his review of Mario Giro's book *Global Africa - La nuova realtà delle migrazioni: il volto di un continente in movimento*, looks at the case of African migrants in Italy and highlights an interesting dichotomy between a community survival strategy and a value model that is more marked by individualism. Such an issue is embodied particularly in young people where they feel a strong sense of responsibility and obligation to send remittances back to their places of origin whilst simultaneously taking risks for personal emancipation to free themselves from responsibilities in a world that lacks opportunities for social mobility and political importance. Giro's assessment confirms the point made by *Mr. Koffi* (a long-term resident of Palermo with the country of origin Ivory Coast) regarding the changing nature of African migrants in Italy, as they emancipate themselves from the obligations of their country of origins and move ahead without a specific stated objective.

In the dominant socio-political environment of Europe today, it is seen as acceptable to use institutional reforms to address structural injustice and promote change. Thus the role and responsibilities of changemakers – both long-term residents and newcomers – are shaped by individual freedoms and solutions that are embedded in these reformist attempts. While it is possible that these open the door to significant change, there is an expectation that such reforms are aligned with mainstream political power. With civil disobedience being deemed a public disturbance, Howard Zinn calls attention to the problem<sup>482</sup> where millions obey the dictates of the governments, and support military interventions or anti-migrant/refugee policies in the name of being considered good patriotic citizens.

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<sup>481</sup> Pedretti Lorenzo, "Global Africa. La nuova realtà delle migrazioni" di Mario Giro, *Pandora Rivista on-line*, 20 December 2019

<sup>482</sup> Zinn Howard, *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2002, p. 438

Trying to seek solutions to structural problems raises the question of hierarchy and domination, challenging center-periphery relations. According to Collin Ward, societies which organize themselves without authority have always existed<sup>483</sup>. Gustav Landauer builds upon this thought, adding that the state is not something that could be destroyed by a one-off revolution. Landauer states<sup>484</sup> that “the state is a social relationship [beyond the powers and authority it represents]; a certain way of people relating to one to another”, and change can take place by broadening the spheres of freedom in all aspects of social life. In established structures in Europe where relationships between newcomers and long-term residents are rooted in historical race and class relations, the effectiveness of nation-state driven reformist attempts for egalitarian societies is questionable due to the nature of the authoritative power it imposes on local communities. The degree to which it allows experimentation or imagined alternatives is closely linked to the interest of the privilege and power of the center and the buffer zone, and people of the peripheries are excluded by default.

An alternative approach would see decisions regarding newcomers would be made in the community and local development processes become an autonomous community matter, where diverse experiments could feed into the co-construction process that follows forced displacement. Castoriadis notes<sup>485</sup> that an autonomous society needs autonomous individuals and vice-versa, and in democratic societies, power is exercised by collective action through the assurance of equal participation of all present. This equal participation encourages a dialogical relation between diverse cultural and socio-political backgrounds in finding balance in a new place. Vodovnik explains<sup>486</sup> that the positions between reform and revolution is an ongoing dilemma in contemporary movements; between pragmatism and realism, particularly in autonomous and anarchist circles. The ‘organic intellectuals’ role is to ‘connect the dots’, moving away from absolutist and dogmatic conclusions in methodology. One shared position that is evident today is the importance of local

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<sup>483</sup> Vodovnik Žiga, *A Living Spirit of Revolt – The Infrapolitics of Anarchism*, Oakland, CA, PM Press, 2013, p. 8

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>485</sup> Castoriadis, *op.cit.*, p. 318

<sup>486</sup> Vodovnik, *op.cit.*, p. 200

governance and direct democracy, which has given the impetus to the movements functioning with creativity, humor, and transborder solidarity.





## SECTION 2 – Alternatives in local governance and direct democracy

In seeking alternatives in governance, the majority of academic discourse refers to rejecting the structural causes of injustice, patriarchy and hierarchy that set the parameters of power relations in society. The hierarchical method of organizing societies is also reflected in the relationship with the environment where human intervention is causing a drastic change in the natural world, triggering irreversible consequences. Considering forced displacement as an opportunity to revision governance may create a number of possibilities, particularly at the local level, where the impositions of nation-states can be minimized through the collective refusal by communities. Inevitably this refusal is an expression and a reaction against remaining passive and resilient under untenable situations of people seeking a dignified life.

The concept of collectivity today goes beyond a traditional focus on regroupings after displacement based on national identities; the idea of “genealogical continuity, based on time and place of origin” described by Emmanuel Ma Mung<sup>487</sup>, and “container societies” as it is referred to by Stephen Castles<sup>488</sup>. Regardless of origins, a process of political and cultural socialization takes place in the peripheries, replacing possessive individualism with a capacity to align individual needs into a collective socio-political vision that does not necessarily follow known identity politics. This calls for attention regarding the emergence of transnational communities and social spaces, triggered by forced displacement<sup>489</sup>. In a process of co-construction that follows displacement, even if political consciousness and engagement is hard to find, a focus on transnational communities brings up the issue of social transformation in a transnational setting. This is where rooted oppressive traditional practices can also be challenged, as it is difficult to hide behind a façade of cultural relativity as those with conservative views cannot rely on any previous familiar alliances from their places of origin. Therefore, a new type of solidarity can emerge in peripheries, in part as people seek to meet every day needs, creating a new

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<sup>487</sup> Ma Mung, *art.cit.*, p. 352-368

<sup>488</sup> Castles Stephen. “Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, n.10, 2010, p. 1565-1586

<sup>489</sup> Castles, *art.cit.*, (Towards Sociology of Forced ....), p. 27

set of norms and relations particularly among younger generations. In his book *The World We Wish to See*, Amin emphasizes that building synergies and solidarities beyond geographic and sectional boundaries is the only way to act in a globalized world and the only way to open up alternatives<sup>490</sup>. The identity-based regroupings observed in urban peripheries today suggest a sense of support and solidarity exists among newcomers. However, such “container societies<sup>491</sup>” perpetuate the continuity of hierarchical and patriarchal traditions, hindering potential transformative processes and alternatives.

In the displacement and governance nexus, neoliberal approaches to the displaced (within the context of non-profit industrial complex), intentionally and unintentionally reproduce the relations of dependency to the nation-states and the non-profit industrial complex, and prevent displaced people from engaging in autonomous and horizontal power relations. In the areas researched within the context of this thesis, both newcomers and professionals with whom they worked on a daily basis highlighted the importance and desire for autonomy and self-reliance, linking it to the dignity of people, and as a crucial step for moving out of vulnerability. The space created by Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo working with *sans papier* (the undocumented), the positive and welcoming environment created by Floxenia in Common in Thessaloniki are examples of this concept of horizontalism, which work towards building more egalitarian relationships. While it would be unrealistic to conclude that these efforts have succeeded in creating a desired level of autonomy, or have met the needs of the communities – including newcomers – it should be recognized that these two examples, together with many other local autonomous initiatives in Italy and Greece, managed to create common spaces that included newcomers in the struggle against the structural causes of injustice. These small but significant local initiatives illustrate the process of transformation that takes place in seeking alternatives. They share specific characteristics, which are to be further discovered in their continuing practice, “in the walk, and always questioning as they walk together”<sup>492</sup> with the consideration of new communities: newcomers and long-term

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<sup>490</sup> Amin, *op.cit.*, (The World We wish...), p. 112

<sup>491</sup> Castles Stephen, *art.cit.*, (Towards Sociology of...), p. 13

<sup>492</sup> An expression used by Zapatistas in Chiapas.

residents together. However, as communities are flexible and adaptable and constantly regenerating, this will always remain a dynamic and incomplete work.

While the process of displacement has its dynamics at both individual and group levels, the ability to cross borders and status of people in a new place is very much controlled by nation-states. Therefore, the primary efforts of the local initiatives in Greece and Italy aim to ensure people have the right to stay and help them to obtain the necessary legal documents. As this is a valid need, autonomy seems to be lost from the point that the displaced persons come into contact with institutions, becoming subjects of the legal system, and places the notions of legality and autonomy in an antagonistic position in the context of nation-states. Could imagined alternatives then be autonomous and legally acceptable, allowing for a new type of democracy from below, based inter alia on local governments, rural communities, workers' front, and citizens? Consequently, the goal of seeking alternatives during the process of community co-construction is not about obtaining power and influencing politics, rather it is about being political in order to transform and democratize power.

## **2.1. Toward an alternative in governance**

Following forced displacement and the initial phases of emergency and post-emergency, steps need to be taken immediately to move from vulnerability and resilience to resistance and action, new forms of which will allow displaced people to re-establish self-reliance, dignity and rights. This co-construction process is not based on the parameters and interests of current institutions, but emerges from the needs of everyday life and challenges the dominant relationships of power, privilege and authority. Thus, the co-construction of communities is political, referring to acts that challenge dominant relationships by presenting the possibility of their undoing, following Rancière's definition. This process considers all the inhabitants, working to create a space where there is direct representation of those who usually go uncared, allowing the under-represented to take

an active part in a community life as opposed to being “a part without part<sup>493</sup>” as Rancière puts it, referring to the physical presence of a specific group who are not acknowledged or are deliberately excluded from socio-political processes.

Being “a part without part” is not exclusive to forcibly displaced people, but is a common reaction to the Roma and traveler communities in Europe. Saskia Cousin’s description<sup>494</sup> of the struggles waged for the safeguarding of the Samaritan slums, a temporary space for primarily Roma community members in a northern district of Paris, provides a concrete example. Furthermore, given that they are EU citizens, it is interesting to note the denial of this specific group’s right to struggle to improve their living conditions, and preserve their human dignity and way of life. Resolving the migrant problem solely through the nation-state legal means is questionable given the treatment of Roma community members as EU citizens. Consequently, being ‘a part’ means more than physical presence in the society, and must include the right to be part of decision-making.

In the transnational and pluralistic nature that characterize peripheries today, the process of co-construction bases its platform on labor-centered and rights-based mass movements, under increasing precarious conditions and popular discontent. The fine line between work as fulfillment or alienation depends on the way in which it is organized; hierarchical versus horizontal and self-managed. In Greece and Italy, such consciousness and self-organizing regarding fundamental rights, including shelter, employment, and health care grow out of everyday life struggles. This consciousness has the potential to transform identity politics and populist anti-migrant/refugee rhetoric into more democratic and horizontal alternatives, even if it takes place in small circles and may not receive the needed acknowledgement and support.

However, this horizontality<sup>495</sup>, which has already found ground in social movements in Spain, Greece and around the world, should be examined beyond the marginalized view

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<sup>493</sup> Baiocchi, Connor, *art.cit.*, p. 89-100

<sup>494</sup> Cousin Saskia, “Le Samaritain, le bidonville qui voulait devenir un village”, *Clara*, n. 6, 2019, p. 94-115

<sup>495</sup> Sitrin Marina, “Horizontalism and Territory”, *Possible Futures*, January 2012, p. 1-8

held by communities in the peripheries, activists in social movements and the left. It is an existentialist need to create and come together in public spaces to organize collectively to build collective power autonomous from the impositions of the center. This is not about asking local and national authorities to resolve society's problems; it is a rejection of hierarchy and representation through political parties, emphasizing the need to have power to make decisions at local levels to address these needs through direct democracy.

The examples of autonomous social movements in the Mediterranean region are part of a global phenomenon; people are attempting to build direct democracy and create a space for all to represent themselves. These ideas are inspiring. Socio-political relationships find common ground in the new global movements; this is a new cultural narrative marked by horizontality – *horizontalidad*<sup>496</sup> – to use Sitrin's term.

Many neighborhood, street and workplace assemblies based on direct democracy have been adopted by these movements, welcoming displaced persons into their struggles. In Greece, the group S.Y.K.A. (the Assembly for the Circulation of Struggles) was born out of 2008 protests against the austerity measures, seeking alternatives within the left; both critically looking into party-guided movements and anti-authoritarian anarchist initiatives. In their attempts to build a new perspective to deal with the unemployment and precarity that has led to socio-economic displacement in Greece during the last decade, S.Y.K.A. adopted a horizontal organizational approach, increasingly building alliances in other countries like Turkey, Spain, and Italy. Sitrin stresses<sup>497</sup> that occupations that have taken place in recent years have a different nature than earlier movements, going beyond the nation-state concept in seeking alternatives.

Consequently, the need for people to converge on terms of equal power, exploring ways to find solutions to their problems through new relationships is the foundation for a socio-political construction following forced displacement. It is essential to recall Zibechi's point

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<sup>496</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

on the creation of temporary and horizontal spaces not only as the places of struggle, but also for organizing and resistance. In reclaiming dignity and rights for all through democratic processes, autonomous social movements are playing an increasingly crucial role in the global context, inspiring diverse attempts from South America to North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, creating public spaces for direct participation and democracy. Amin explains that democracy is a process of cultural transformation as people transform themselves through their own actions<sup>498</sup>. Thus, he points out that social movements, progressive governments and autonomous initiatives, regardless of their size, need to create spaces for a dialogical process and participation in aspects of everyday life.

While such dialogue should be viewed from the people's perspectives through multiple stories, the process will need to reflect the essence of transnational political communities, conscious of the relationships of power, privilege and authority in a historical context. With the acknowledgement of the anatomy of displacement within the context of historical relations; the root causes and impacts, as well as a foreseen increase in displacement in the coming years, the communities in the Mediterranean region seek alternatives to address their everyday concerns at the community level, and redefine their position and response to displacement and the displaced persons. In this regard, the existing examples will play a crucial role, paving the way for alternatives for local initiatives and responses. Such a process will need to make substantial changes in the relations with other groups and the environment, regarding how to organize governance at the local level.

At a time when confidence in collective solutions is very low and individualism and individual solutions dominate social relations, seeking alternatives framed by a collective mindset presents a series of challenges. Thus, it is a process that should be driven by the communities themselves through collective self-management and direct democracy, ideally on a local-scale but as part of a network, which is increasingly possible with

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<sup>498</sup> Amin, *op.cit.*, (The World We Wish...), p. 124

available technology today. If approached individually, it will lead to the continuation and perpetuation of heteronomous structures at the interest of the center.

A shift in understanding and adopting a collective mindset in what is a predominantly individualistic society has inherent contradictions. While forced displacement is discussed as a trigger in this equation, Abdelmalek Sayad introduces through the notion of “double absence<sup>499</sup>” to describe how displaced people find themselves caught between the mystification of the final destination and illusions of success through migration. Stuck between the place of origin and place of arrival; they are ‘invisible’ in either place, forced to be silent and suffer. In order to overcome this silence, a process of political and cultural socialization is essential, where possessive individualism can be transformed and new meanings and roles found with collective socio-political purposes in transnational political communities. Isabelle Rigoni argues that new meanings can be found through strengthening community identity by maintaining and reinventing collective memory. With the recognition of multidimensional identities and processes of hybridity, Rigoni examines how people struggle with multiple identities, while at the same time being caught within relation to power and subordination (e.g. gender, class race, sexual orientation) in a new place<sup>500</sup>. In her analysis of the role of ethnic media production in imagining and mobilizing new communities of belonging, Rigoni points out the growing use of information and communication technology in gaining visibility and the construction of identity and community. Using the theories of intersectionality, her emphasis on the crucial role of immigrant and minority women as facilitators and changemakers between cultures is essential to note, as it relates to the discussions made in this thesis on organic intellectuals (in Part 1 - Chapter 2) and the feminization of politics (in Part 2 Chapter 2).

While offering an inspiration for alternatives, the areas studied do not present a single alternative model, but point out some elements and conditions separately to imagine

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<sup>499</sup> Bertheleu Helene, “Abdelmalek Sayad. L’immigration ou les paradoxes de l’altérité”, *Revue Européenne Migrations Internationales*, vol. 11, n. 2, 1995, p. 189-190

<sup>500</sup> Rigoni Isabelle, “Intersectionality and mediated cultural production in a globalized post-colonial world”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 35 n. 5, 2012 p. 834-849



alternatives that could inspire a local governance model in relation to forced displacement.

### - **Collective self-management**

Collective self-management is a dialectical act of radical change, a movement of the surpassing of individualism. Lucia Bruno described it as “a radicalization of autonomous struggles, redefining and destroying the hierarchies, directed duality and division between manual and intellectual work<sup>501</sup>”. Henri Laborit considered self-management as a necessity for a new organization of society. In his work on *Ideals for self-management*, focusing on the problem of power and authority, Laborit stated that “the solution is not to control it, but to dissolve it<sup>502</sup>”. Self-management facilitates a transition period, moving from the realm of resilience, protest and resistance to social transformation for a self-managed society.

Coined by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the concept of self-management was further elaborated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Michael Bakunin<sup>503</sup>, discussing how a society made up of freely associated producers could operate. A number of experiments of societies based on this principle included the Paris Commune of 1871, the factory committees of the early stages of the 1917 Russian revolution, the collectives formed in 1936 revolutionary Spain, and Yugoslavia of the Tito period in 1950s in the continent of Europe. In fact, the term self-management was brought into the political language by the French left in the 1960s in order to express their dissatisfaction with the results of bureaucratic socialism of the Soviet Union<sup>504</sup>. Translated from the Serbo-Croat word ‘samoupravljanje’, self-management described the socio-political and economic experience of the management of companies by workers, such as Zastava in Yugoslavia.

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<sup>501</sup> Gadotti, *op.cit.*, p. 139

<sup>502</sup> Laborit Henri, *Informational Society: ideals for Self-management*. quoted in Gadotti *op.cit.*, p. 67

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid*, p.139

<sup>504</sup> Gadotti, *op.cit.*, p. 139

Similar experiences such as Mondragón Corporation<sup>505</sup> in the Basque region, Spain and occupied factories in Argentina and Brazil (movement of worker-managed factories without bosses) provide meaningful examples of alternatives worker-owned and -managed approaches. Benello, in his analysis of Mondragón<sup>506</sup> explains that it represents a positive vision of freedom in work, and a community that is democratically controlled by its members. He considers Mondragón a place of practice of ideal democracy. The concept has been taken on by neoliberal business circles in order to improve productivity and empower employees, but these efforts do not make any reference to the autonomous nature of making and executing decisions nor who benefits from any profits.

In addition to the modes of production and relations in workers' self-management, the application of the concept was also known through autonomous movements across the world including Zapatistas in Chiapas, and Kibbutzim in Israel, which took many different forms over the last century. The Kibbutzim ideal of working toward a utopian community, maximizing human potential to live in a community of equality and solidarity, is an interesting example, particularly given political instability in which they operate. Uriel Leviatan notes<sup>507</sup> during the late 1980s, a major decline of population in Kibbutzim was caused by the departure of a large number of particularly younger members. This was exacerbated by the abandonment of principles of conduct as many Kibbutzim became enterprise-like entities. One interesting outcome has been the recent formation of city communes, called the Educator Movement<sup>508</sup>. However, Leviatan stresses that this urban movement, with the aim of becoming a force to change society through education and political action, is not sustainable as the groups do not have the financial means to survive. This being said, Leviatan suggests that such utopian communities should serve as models for what is possible for humanity. Lessons from Kibbutzim show another

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<sup>505</sup> The Mondragón Corporation is a corporation and federation of worker cooperatives based in the Basque region of Spain. It was founded in the town of Mondragón in 1956 by graduates of a local technical college.

<sup>506</sup> Benello, *op.cit.*, p. 98

<sup>507</sup> Leviatan Uriel, "Kibbutzim as a Real-life Utopia: Survival Depends on Adherence to Utopian Values", *Psychology and Developing Societies*, vol. 25 n. 2, 2013, p. 258

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, p. 276

example of the aspiration of communities to explore alternatives, beyond dogmatism, as multiplicity and fluidity in social movements is necessary to nurture local solutions.

Human rights and humanitarian fields have not been a mature ground for such practice as they have been subject to the impositions of nation-states and the limitations of international institutions. The principles of self-management applied by the author during field work in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Turkey have shown that while these principles can work in small settings and team structures, considerable time is needed to make the shift from heteronomous to autonomous minds and behavior patterns<sup>509</sup>. Creating a space for people to share power to reach a common goal requires gradual steps and careful analysis of the local context. In this particular field setting, although these practices were well received on the ground [peripheral level], the author repeatedly noted that at the HQ level, the internalized perception of power and control dismissed self-management as unrealistic, possibly seeing it as a threat to all layers of the hierarchy. These professional experiences bring the fore the embedded conformism of the privileged in hierarchical structures that may present potential challenges in their relations with those who are outside of the educated buffer zone, as discussed in Part 1 - Chapter 1.

Due to its dialectical nature, characteristics and contradictions, there are no universal rules for self-management. However, it is an alternative way to conceive and manage relations regardless of their size and layers in a society. The power and responsibility of people making decision about their everyday life and a collective future is fundamental in a co-construction process. The role of organic intellectuals across communities and layers of society is crucial in making these connections and creating a common space.

A new way of organizing life from the ground up is necessary, based on local governance with the precariat in rural and urban peripheries. Using an approach grounded in solidarity, this practice for democracy sets the basis for imaginaries and alternatives

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<sup>509</sup> Based on the field work of the author of this thesis between 1999 and 2005.

which go beyond geographic boundaries as well as the structures reproducing hierarchies and patriarchy.

## **2.2. Social movements and autonomous initiatives**

The fear of insecurity in capitalism, with its imposed individualist perspectives, poses challenges to raise awareness of collective solutions and build solidarity. People in the peripheries are increasingly frustrated, surviving on the edge of their physical and emotional limits, and fearful of losing what they have if they divert from the set norms. Therefore, mainstream society emphasizes the importance of resilience and the notion of colonized minds is maintained through the militarization of everyday life by the institutions of the nation-states, normalizing this process through neoliberal policies. Disturbingly, many find comfort in this militarization process and are willing to sacrifice their rights and liberties under such securitization schemes.

Demands for a dignified living conditions and improved quality of life are not new struggles in Europe and not only the concern of displaced persons. The struggle to break the cycle of structural injustice and create more egalitarian societies has been part of European history for as long as colonial injustices have been shaping global north-south relations. Social movements that have shaped communities over the centuries have put a spotlight on today's struggles, gaining an increasingly global dimension. Recent attempts made to imagine alternatives and establish processes for co-constructing new communities have surpassed identity politics, focusing on improved working and living conditions for both long-term residents and newcomers. Susan Rosenthal explains that such struggles play a crucial role in building mental health for individuals, finding a meaning in solidarity<sup>510</sup>, and laying the foundation for new communities. Rosenthal's example of the workers movement in Poland is inspiring, showing the power of a shift in perspective and its affect on social change. The Polish workers' union, considered the world's largest union in the 1980s representing one third of the working-age population, organized themselves and

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<sup>510</sup> Rosenthal Susan, "Marxism and psychology", *Socialist Review*, n. 416, February 2016

undertook extensive strikes. Sick workers in hospital beds were gradually replaced by sick government officials. Rosenthal concludes that the rising class struggle provided the opportunity for solving individual problems collectively.

The commons are an important platform where people from all circles of life gather, discover their shared interests, and exchange stories. The struggle to instigate a process of social transformation cannot be achieved by categorizing groups such as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities, but needs to be considered in its entirety of a local community with all its inhabitants. This conceptualization has found a place in recent social movements and local initiatives in the Mediterranean region which are experimenting new ways of organizing and shaping their communities.

#### - **Social movements during the last decade**

In addition to the extension of global mass movements in recent years, including the alterglobalization movement (AGM) and Occupy, the last decade has witnessed a number of social movements in the northern Mediterranean region. These local movements and acts of resistance have included the urban middle class (who are gradually losing that status), the unemployed, working people, academics, migrants and refugees, farmers, women, teachers; the precariat that is collectively trying to find ways of surviving and live a dignified life<sup>511</sup> with fundamental rights. Beyond mediatized versions of the stories told, these have been positive examples of comradery, pragmatism and solidarity, and provide hope that further movements may emerge and bring about social change.

The anti-austerity movements also known as the Indignant Citizens Movements; Kínima Aganaktisménon-Politón in Greece (2010-2015)<sup>512</sup>; los indignados in Spain (2011)<sup>513</sup>, and

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<sup>511</sup> Sitrin Marina, "Horizontalidad: Where Everyone Leads" Yes! Solutions Magazine, May 2007

<sup>512</sup> Karyotis Georgios and Rüdiger Wolfgang, "The Three Waves of Anti-Austerity Protest in Greece, 2010 – 2015", *Political Studies Review*, vol. 16, n. 2, 2018, p. 158-169 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1478929916685728>

<sup>513</sup> Castañeda Ernesto, "The Indignados of Spain: A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street", *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, vol. 1, n. 11, 2012, p. 1-13 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2012.708830>

the Gezi park resistance in Turkey (2013)<sup>514</sup>, the Gilets Jaunes (yellow vests)<sup>515</sup> and Gilets Noirs (black vests)<sup>516</sup> in France (2018-2020), and the Sardines in Italy (2019)<sup>517</sup> all brought people from diverse political spectrum together to seek alternatives to the current socio-economic policies. As opposed to the social movements seen in the past, these movements were not centralized in a quest to obtain power, but challenged the impositions of nation-states that affect the everyday life of communities. With the exception of a few violent radical factions, these movements were peaceful, bringing up socio-political contradictions in creative, artistic and humorous ways, which allowed their message to reach out to a wider audience. As they lacked known hierarchical structures or a single leader, these movements disorientated the authorities, who viewed them as random, insignificant and purposeless actions of marginalized groups, particularly in their earliest phases. On many occasions, failing to accept the impact of these movements, excessive police force was used to 'restore order' and undermine the demands of the people involved.

Blair Taylor calls attention to the nature and outcomes of the social movements of the 1990s observing an ideological resemblance between neoanarchism and neoliberalism<sup>518</sup>. Taylor explains that following the fall of the Berlin wall, social movements were largely shaped by specific themes such as ecology, feminism, anti-racism, anti-corporate and consumer rights, feeding into a larger alterglobalization movement. While these actions put pressure on corporations and presented a threat to their profit making, they also educated corporations who created more ethical strategies so as to be

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<sup>514</sup> Ertür Başak, "Barricades" in Butler Judith, Gambetti Zeynep and Sabsay Leticia (eds.), *Vulnerability in Resistance*. Durham and London : Duke University Press, 2016, p. 97-121

<sup>515</sup> Agrikoliansky Éric and Aldrin Philippe, "Le mouvement des Gilets jaunes : un apprentissage en pratique(s) de la politique ? Avec Zakaria Bendali, Raphaël Challier, Magali Della Sudda et Olivier Fillieule", *Politix*, vol. 32, n. 128, 2019, p. 143-177 <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politix-2019-4-page-143.htm>

<sup>516</sup> Vacarme, "Gilets Noirs, Pour rester en Colère et Puissants!", *Association Vacarme*, vol. 3, n. 88, 2019, p. 68-79 <https://www.cairn.info/revue-vacarme-2019-3-page-68.htm>

<sup>517</sup> Floridi Luciano, "Le Sardine, anticorpi tra la rete e la piazza in difesa della Costituzione", *L'espresso*, 16 December 2019 <https://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2019/12/16/news/le-sardine-anticorpi-rete-piazza-1.341781>

James L. Newell in his article "Italian politics: resisting the right-wing populist tide in 2020", *Contemporary Italian Politics*, vol. 12, n. 1, 2020, p. 1-3, agrees with Marco Travaglio, as it is difficult to predict whether the *sardine* has a future in 2020 as they had emerged suddenly, undergoing explosive growth, but without organizational roots and without any signs of wanting to acquire them.

<sup>518</sup> Taylor Blair, "From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street – Neoanarchism and the new spirit of the left" *Routledge*, vol 17, n. 6, 2013, p. 729-747

acceptable to neoliberals and neoanarchists. Thus, Taylor queries what if anything the social movements of the 1990s changed, whether corporations learned how to better adjust, or the world sought alternative ways to relate<sup>519</sup>. This question remains relevant and opens a door for further discussions about the social movements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Taylor's conclusion is closely linked to relations to authority, power and privilege; the argument made by Arundathi Roy<sup>520</sup> resonates: that these social justice movements released steam so as to prevent explosive social reactions and discontent was redirected to various channels such as non-profit work.

Being aware of the antagonistic power relations between the center and peripheries, over the last decade a new set of movements have emerged, building upon previous movements. While it is essential to critique these movements, one important lesson learned is that as the movements become popular and embraced by wider circles, they have the tendency to avoid fundamental political questions of structural injustice and dissolve into tactics of the plutocracy. This is a crucial element that is related to the types of power and privilege sought through these social movements.

### Turkey

In Turkey, a protest that began to protect a public space in Istanbul turned into a mass act of resistance and protest against recent authoritarianism, spreading from Istanbul to the entire country. Triggered by an excessive use of police force, the protest rapidly became an anti-government movement and a catalyst for a wider sense of awareness on humanist values<sup>521</sup> and reclaiming public spaces. It managed to bring people from diverse political stands, including anti-capitalist Muslims, LGBTQTI groups, feminists, workers, anarchists, and business people to a common space, Taksim Comune<sup>522</sup> where they acknowledged each other's existence and viewpoints. During these 23 days of struggle

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid*, p. 745

<sup>520</sup> Roy Arundathi, "The NGO-ization of resistance", *Massalijn*, 4 September 2014.

<sup>521</sup> Özmen Emin, "Five Years On", an interview with *Magnum Photos*, 2018

<sup>522</sup> Yiğit Eda, *Gezi Direnisi*, Bellek- Atam yayinlari , Istanbul 2013, p. 9

(27 May-18 June 2013) meaningful solidarity between people was shown and alliances were built. This resistance also showed the importance of technology and social media in social movements at a time when the media was under government control and subject to harsh censorship.

An analysis by Pedro Levi Bismarck<sup>523</sup> looked at known trends in Europe in covering dissonant politically charged heritage, in this case Taksim square in Istanbul, a public space of historical significance for protests. He argues that the plan of the Turkish government regarding the Gezi park area was to tame the population through political subjectivation, and to teach them a lesson: to desist from questioning the authority of the nation-state and its decisions. A common space where a certain “experience of equality<sup>524</sup>” was made possible, and an attempt toward direct democracy took place, which the state needed to terminate. Levi Bismarck, referring to Walter Benjamin, calls for attention to be paid to totalitarian regimes that show a concentration of power by giving visibility to the masses through fetishism of construction (aesthetic performance and spectacle<sup>525</sup>) without addressing demands for a fundamental shift in rights and relationships.

In the following years, Turkey has experienced a series of striking events, including terror attacks, an attempted coup, an increase in the Kurdish conflict, a Syrian refugee influx and changes in the political system. The 2013 Gezi resistance was criminalized by the government as ‘an attempt to overthrow the government’, resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of many activists without accusation or trials, a process which is still ongoing in 2020. Despite the initial optimism, the Gezi resistance lost momentum with systematic government suppression to deprive people’s right to access the political realm without fear and persecution, expressing individual and collective freedoms and demanding rights. These developments had a significant impact on Turkish activism.

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<sup>523</sup> Levi Bismarck Pedro, “Architecture and the Aestheticization of Politics”, *Places Journal*, February 2014

<sup>524</sup> A definition used by Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958), p. 198-199

<sup>525</sup> A term used by Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 2008), p. 41



Zihnioglu<sup>526</sup>, explains that the Gezi protest did not produce quick solutions, and many activists withdrew their public statements including from social media. However, it led to the creation of new groups that focus on issues related to common spaces including environmental issues as well as people's 'right to the city', which are linked to the organization of communities at neighborhood level. This fed into local election campaigns and resulted in a change in local governance in 2019. Despite the negative outcomes of the consecutive years, the legacy of the Gezi protests and resistance continues, and presents further possibilities of social transformation.

### France

The yellow vest (*gilets jaunes*) movement in France has been prominent on the socio-political scene since November 2018, and protests continue to be organized in 2020 on a weekly basis across the country. With its plural factions ranging from anti-capitalist and anti-fascist groups to ultra-right nationalists in their iconic yellow vests, this is another example of a decentralized and non-leadered social movement common during the last decade. At times a scene of violent protests and excessive police brutality, the movement represents a great challenge for the French authorities as it is not linked to a specific political or ideological stand.

John Litchfield, in his analysis<sup>527</sup> of the emergence of the *gilets jaunes* movement, identifies a number of diverse groups within it including: small business owners from the peripheries who are struggling to survive and do not support the state bureaucracy and taxes; retirees, mostly from the peripheries burdened with high taxes; unemployed and low-waged provincial workers that struggle to find decent job; sub-urban and rural artisans; ultra-right/anti-migrant and anti-semitic conspiracy theorists; leftist urban guerillas; right-wing urban guerillas; groups with an interest in politics who want to start

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<sup>526</sup> Zihnioglu Özge, "The Legacy of the Gezi Protests in Turkey" in Richard Youngs (ed.) *After Protest: Pathways Beyond Mass Mobilization*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, 2019, p. 11-17

<sup>527</sup> Litchfield John, "Pocket guide to the Yellow Jackets: One movement, many sub-groups", Politico, 19 April 2019

political parties. Pierre Rimbert includes domestic workers such as cleaners and carers<sup>528</sup> in the movement as he argues that women constitute 51% of working-class labor force in France and earn 25% less with less job security.

Voicing the discontent of many in the peripheries, the *gilets jaunes* began their movement by demanding a decent standard of living as their situation gets progressively worse and the state's protection is progressively eroded. Jean-Claude Paye<sup>529</sup> sees mainly workers and employees from peri-urban and rural zones, who work in small businesses as the driving forces of the movement. Highlighting the class aspect of the movement, he points out the media denial of the class composition of the demonstrators, focusing only on one aspect of the movement's membership: independent workers such as freelance workers and the liberal professions. The government refusal to recognize the existence of the demonstrators and their claims that challenge government policies is often exacerbated by the police force, who label the group as delinquents. The French government attempted to influence public opinion through a series of 'public debates', with the title of *Le Grand Debat National*. In these discussions there was a notable absence of the demonstrators; which resulted in more of a monologue, according to Paye, where the French president 'chose the topics, posed the questions, and provided the answers himself'<sup>530</sup>, effectively 'othering' the protestors.

Regardless of the duration of the movement, it is interesting to note the similarities in government responses in both France and Turkey; both denied the existence of the demonstrators and their claims, using excessive police force, and organizing symbolic public debates to influence the public image of the movements, disconnecting the mainstream from 'the other'.

For many French citizens, the *gilets jaunes* have become a symbol of civic engagement as there has been a shift from the wage struggle to a long-term legitimacy of a larger

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<sup>528</sup> Rimbert Pierre, "La puissance insoupçonnée des travailleuses", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Janvier 2019, p. 18-19

<sup>529</sup> Paye Jean-Claude, "The Yellow Vests in France - People or Proletariat?", *Monthly Review*, 2019, vol. 71, n. 2, 2019

<sup>530</sup> *Ibidem*

change, targeting the mechanisms of exploitation. Some of the groups in the movement are increasingly organizing discussions and experiments in direct democracy, with weekly meetings, conferences and debates in common places. Elise Lobbedez's<sup>531</sup> research observes the changes in the movement and reflects on the demonstrators' stories. Some describe the *gilets jaunes* as a symbol and a state of mind, expressed in the changes in politics of everyday life, raised awareness, changing lives and habits of people, and consider the struggle as public education. While these personal changes cannot be attributed to the entire movement, the impact of the community-based actions emerging from everyday life conditions, needs and desires of people in the peripheries must not be sidelined. The posturing of nation-states is important to note, where the center does not differentiate between people as newcomers or long-term residents in its use of excessive force to maintain the status-quo and its power, privilege and authority.

*Gilets noirs* (black vests) is another social movement that has emerged in France since late 2018, from the outset more politically charged, focusing on the treatment of undocumented migrants. Considering the power of the *gilets jaunes* movement, the *gilets noirs* adopted the symbol of the vest (gilet) to attribute similar powers to the *sans papier* movement<sup>532</sup>. The movement brought to light the dilemma of migrants needing a job to obtain papers, and papers to get have a job. Compounding this problem is that both papers and a job are needed to secure housing. Inspired by the 1996 *sans papier* movement, the *gilets noirs* is mainly made up of migrants from former French colonies who are currently in France.

The *sans papier* movement, which began in 1996 at the Church of St Bernard in Paris with a 50-day hunger strike by 300 immigrants for recognition of their rights, resulted in police brutality and eviction. According to Madjiguène Cissé<sup>533</sup>, this act of resistance through occupation has been the inspiration for many movements for the rights of asylum seekers and migrants, as part of the anti-capitalist movements across the region and

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<sup>531</sup> Lobbedez Elise, "Un an après, le gilet jaune a bouleversé les quotidiens", *The Conversation*, 16 November, 2019

<sup>532</sup> Plateforme Enquête Militante, "We will go until the end, on lachera rien!: Interview with Gilets Noirs", *Verso*, 31 October 2019

<sup>533</sup> Cissé Madjiguène, "The Sans-Papiers: a woman draws the first lessons" *Politique*, n. 2, 1996, p. 38-45

beyond, including the No Borders Network, the Border Camps and the No One is Illegal Initiative. Among these associations of autonomous organizations, groups, and individuals, the No Borders Network supports freedom of movement and resist human migration control by coordinating international border camps, demonstrations, direct actions, and anti-deportation campaigns. The Border Camps have been involved in organizing a number of protest camps while the No One is Illegal Initiative is an international network of antiracist groups and religious asylum initiatives that represents non-resident immigrants who stay in a country illegally and are at risk of deportation. Cissé expresses the conditions of the migrants without documents as “living in a neocolonial situation while passing for independent countries<sup>534</sup>”. Although 1996 is one of the milestones in the *sans papier* movement, *sans papier* collectives have fought to obtain legal status and regularize since the 1970s as immigrant workers, and have played a historically important part of protest movements in France. In the 1980s and 1990s, the regularization of immigrant workers was sidelined with restrictive policies on migration. It was in 2007-2008 that *sans papier* workers came to the public scene again with a more solid footing, placing work at the center of their fight for regularization. Baron et. al.<sup>535</sup>, explain that the return of the discussion was not due to change in culture or understanding of the problem in depth, but from increased migratory flows and its material implications a shift in policy that was designed to meet the need of labor market dynamics, which were then eventually embodied in collective protests.

The movement received attention through their occupation of the Pantheon and the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, and is supported by such collectives as La Chapelle Debout and the Mouvement de l’Immigration et des Banlieues (MIB). La Chapelle Debout also draws inspiration from the history of autonomous *sans papiers* struggles and supports the actions of *gilets noirs*, trying to get the movement out of the ghettoized areas as a struggle for the dignity of workers and against an unaffordable life. The movement rejects the idea that immigrants are victims who need help, considering them rather as

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<sup>534</sup> *Ibid*, p.39

<sup>535</sup> Barron Pierre, Bory Anne, Chauvin Sébastien, Jounin Nicolas, Tourette Lucie, "State categories and labour protest: migrant workers and the fight for legal status in France", Sage, 2016, p. 6

political subjects fighting for their dignity<sup>536</sup>. It is often emphasized that it is a total struggle that should not be reduced to a piece of paper. Those who are involved who possess the right documents are not considered to be humanitarian helpers but comrades, struggling against structural injustices and racism. It is a platform for mutual exchange and learning together as described by Cissé;

*The struggle has taught us many, many things. It has taught us first of all to be autonomous. That has not always been easy. There were organizations which came to support us and which were used to helping immigrants in struggle. We have also learned that if we really wanted to be autonomous, we had to learn about democracy. We had to make our own decisions, get them acknowledged as truly representative of us, not allow them to be called into question from the outside, respect them ourselves and therefore learn to make others respect them, and to implement them ourselves. We have learned that in six months. Without the struggle we would not have learned it in ten years<sup>537</sup>.*

The autonomy of the *gilets noirs* is developing as they gradually adopt the principles of direct democracy and negotiate with other parties directly without intermediaries. The creation of local committees to establish and develop links between the residents of the neighborhood is becoming a common practice. During a research visit to the areas of La Chappelle and St. Denis<sup>538</sup> this vivid dynamic of community organization was observed. However, the targeted policies of the government to remove people from such spaces leads to the breakdown of these solidarity circles and practices of direct democracy. For example, the eviction of the camp in La Chappelle, which was conducted without consultation or alternatives, forced people to spend most of their time to find basic housing

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<sup>536</sup> Plateforme Enquête Militante, *art.cit.* <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4473-we-will-go-until-the-end-on-lachera-rien-interview-with-gilets-noirs>

<sup>537</sup> Cissé, *art.cit.*, p. 40

<sup>538</sup> Visited by the author in November 2019.

in small tent neighborhoods and encampments which are gradually becoming *bidonvilles*<sup>539</sup> in the north of Paris<sup>540</sup>, leading to further problems for local communities.

### Italy

Italy's recent unstable socio-political scene has been characterized by the rise of rightist elements. Policies introduced by right-wing party in the recent government and the incapacity of the left to create viable alternatives have had a significant effect on the psyche of the population, who have lost their confidence in the existence of any other options. The Sardines (*le sardine*) movement began with a series of protests in public squares in Bologna during late 2019 as a reaction to the right-wing rhetoric of ex-coalition partner Salvini. Having introduced a number of controversial policies during his position as the Minister of Interior, his campaign to gain power in Italian politics has not been welcomed by all, particularly those on the left. Giovanni Cominelli describes<sup>541</sup> the Sardines movement as a sign of people's repulsion against the politics that dominated Italian politics since the early 1990s. He stresses that a new generation of Italians who are more open to the world, have studied, worked and traveled in different countries, and whose employment may be precarious, are concerned about their future and dissatisfied with the current state of politics. They see establishment politics as a scene for staged actions; postures that are full of hatred (particularly against migrants and refugees), its actors constantly seeking enemies, targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups. Thus, the Sardines movement demands a change in the style of political relations and language, capable of creating constructive dialogue between diverse worldviews. The Sardines are challenging political parties and politicians to get back on track in reasserting values of tolerance in the society, removing the intellectual block that has overshadowed the politics of the last few decades.

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<sup>539</sup> Bidonville is a settlement of jerry-built dwellings on the outskirts of a city (as in France or North Africa).

<sup>540</sup> Pascual Julia, "Au nord de Paris, les campements de migrants deviennent des bidonvilles" *Le Monde*, 13 January 2020

<sup>541</sup> Cominelli Giovanni, "Il manifesto delle 'Sardine'. Per capire il fenomeno nuovo della società italiana", *Santalessandro settimanale online*, December 2019

With its grassroots nature, regardless of its founders and those who have inspired the movement, the Sardines are quite decentralized and lack a specific leader, attracting masses to the public squares using artistic images of sardines and the slogan, 'welcome to the open sea'. Although they appear in various public spaces across the country, their unified message underlines the weaknesses and incapacity of political parties, including those on the left, to address properly issues around nationalism, xenophobia, racism, sexism and anything perceived different than mainstream politics. For the Sardines, the priority is to occupy public spaces as a political act but without a partisan label, moving toward a new decade of "construction, solidarity with a stronger social fabric<sup>542</sup>". It is interesting to note that a flash mob to protest against a right-wing leader has turned into a countrywide movement.

### *Spain, Greece and anti-austerity movements*

Across the globe, neo-liberal economic structures were dealt a significant blow in 2007-08, causing a eurozone crisis whose impact was felt intensely in southern European countries, specifically Spain and Greece. With a rapid loss of employment, bankruptcy and drastic changes to their quality of life, they were subjected to heavy austerity measures that affected public spending and benefits, putting the continuity of the welfare state idea into question in these countries. Scrutinized by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, the social, political and cultural lifestyles of these countries were aligned with global markets and the requirements of neoliberal economics.

The direct impact of these impositions on the everyday lives of masses and the fact that these measures failed to provide the younger generations from these countries with any clear direction, led to the emergence of two closely connected, large protest movements in both Greece and Spain during 2011. The Indignant Citizens movements led to the peaceful occupation of squares in Madrid and Athens respectively, which instigated mass

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<sup>542</sup> Santori Mattia quoted in Gauriat Valérie, "Italy's 'sardines' have bigger fish to fry", Euronews - Unreported Europe, Dec 2019

movements across both countries, mobilizing millions in protest<sup>543</sup>. Building on the lessons learned from previous movements, including Democracia Real Ya (DRY) in Spain and Real Democracy Now (RDN), they combined online and offline activism strategies to strengthen and motivate movement actors.

Treré, Jeppesen, and Mattoni (Trere et. al) explain that in case of Spain, as opposed to previous movements of 2004 and 2006, 2010 and beyond, there was a historical shift in the activism through social media. Struggling against repressive internet copyright laws and data control, hacktivists, or 'freedom technologists' as John Postill calls them<sup>544</sup>, gradually became more predominant in social movements. Sampedro, Duarte<sup>545</sup> and Manuel, Treré, et al. point out that the Indignados movement in Spain builds on a long history of mobilizations in a flow of periodic civil disobedience, specifically over the last two decades.

In Italy, the Left, despite being subject to austerity measures and attempting to align themselves with the indignant citizens movement, could not overcome parochialism. Several attempts to organize protests in 2008, 2010-11, and 2012-13 against government policies resulted in internal battles with disjointed actions. This may explain why the Sardines movement does not use party banners or specific symbols; to avoid internal divisions. This situation was observed in some cases during field visits in Sutura and Palermo, however, other initiatives in Italy have overcome overly local perspectives.

The anti-austerity movement in Greece was inspired by the movement in Spain, and took place in three different waves. The first one was in 2010 following the bailout agreement. The second, in 2011, saw indignant citizens taking over the squares, and the third wave in 2012, led to the election of a coalition of the radical left party, Syriza. The concept of a 'citizen movement' was brought forward both in Greece and Spain, and questioned

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<sup>543</sup> Gerbaudo Paolo, "The Indignant Citizen: Anti-Austerity Movements in Southern Europe and the Anti-Oligarchic Reclaiming of Citizenship", *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 16, n. 1, 2017, p. 36-50

<sup>544</sup> Postill John, "Freedom technologists and the future of global justice", *Roar Magazine*, 19 January 2016

<sup>545</sup> Treré Emiliano, Jeppesen Sandra, Mattoni Alice, "Comparing Digital Protest Media Imaginaries: Anti-austerity Movements in Spain, Italy & Greece" *Triple C*, vol.15, n. 2, 2017 p. 408



traditional expressions of citizenship, provoking discussions about new forms of citizenships; a top-down legal status versus bottom-up processes.

In Greece, this discussion took on a different dimension following the increased migrant/refugee influx in 2015 and beyond. Local anarchist initiatives have been established that welcomed newcomers, seeing them as a natural part of their solidarity movement beyond their immediate communities and national borders. The connection between anti-austerity movements in Greece and Spain has shown its impact also during the height of the migrant/refugee influx in 2015-16 where a significant number of Spanish activists worked closely with Greek initiatives, particularly in the islands of Lesbos, Chios, and Kos.

Paolo Gerbuado emphasizes<sup>546</sup> that anti-austerity movements have primarily focused on the recuperation and reclaiming of public institutions and rights associated with public institutions rather than a construction of autonomous spaces. The movements questioned the power of economic and political elites, and tried to create more pragmatic and reformist strategies toward state-based direct democracy. The extension of these efforts resulted in the election of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain in coalition governments. While Podemos continued its position in the new coalition of the leftist government in 2020, Syriza lost power in October 2019 after three years of governance. Arnaud Castaignet<sup>547</sup> in his analysis points out that Syriza was transformed from a far-left party to a mainstream and a more central one in Greece, losing its constituent basis. David Adler adds to this critique, recalling Syriza's courageous promise to be creative in challenging the status-quo, and the "need to keep the flame of rebellion alive"<sup>548</sup>. This sentiment, which rose from the anti-austerity measures, was never fulfilled.

Regardless of the immediate outcomes, the social movements of the last decade have made the streets and squares the centers of political action and highlighted the essential

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<sup>546</sup> Gerbuado, *cit.art*, p. 3

<sup>547</sup> Castaignet Arnaud, "Political lessons from Syriza to European Progressives" *Open Diplomacy*, 7 August 2017

<sup>548</sup> Adler David, "The three mistakes behind Syriza's demise in Greece", *The Guardian*, 8 July 2019

role of technology through social media organizing methods. Beginning with the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia in December 2010, the Arab Spring continued in Egypt in 2011 as well as in other countries in the region. The waves of protest from *Sidi Bou Zid* and Tunis in Tunisia to the Tahrir Square in Cairo, and from Puerta del Sol in Madrid to the Zuccotti Park in New York City, have demonstrated the transnational influences linking the different protests, one inspiring the others<sup>549</sup>.

While Gerbuardo underlines the urban nature of movements and the concept of “public spaces as the product of relations between natural and social objects<sup>550</sup>”, Mounira M. Charrad and Nicholas E. Reith suggest that local solidarities, marginalization, and kinship played a critical role in inspiring the protests<sup>551</sup>. Charrad and Reith argue that before the protests made world news in Tunis, they had already been running approximately ten days in the central province of *Sidi Bou Zid*, referred as ‘la Tunisie profonde’, a poor and marginalized region of the country. They stress the importance of what they term as ‘trust networks’ composed of people from rural and forgotten areas instigating the movement in Tunisia, meaning that when people face serious risks, they value more (implicit or explicit) mutual trust, interpersonal connections and thus, trust networks. Charrad and Reith stress the importance of political agency in local solidarities, which emerge from the challenges faced in these peripheries of power. The role of organic intellectuals, in this case activists abroad, is also important to note. It is these organized groups who took time from their work and studies to collect and process all the information coming from the movement. Their crucial role of editing and disseminating news through social media alerted major news channels to the movement, which otherwise might have been subject to state censorship.

The symbolic significance of the social movements of the last decade was underpinned by events in Tahrir Square, Cairo. Although the Arab Spring began in Tunisia, the

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<sup>549</sup> Romanos Eduardo, "From Tahrir to Puerta del Sol to Wall Street: The Transnational Diffusion of Social Movements in Comparative Perspective" *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, n. 154, 2016, p. 103-118

<sup>550</sup> Riphagen Wladimir and Woltering Robbert A. F. L., "Tales of a Square: The Production and Transformation of Political Space in the Egyptian (Counter) Revolution", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol.40, n.2, 2018, p. 117-133

<sup>551</sup> Charrad Mounira M., Reith Nicholas E., "Local Solidarities: How the Arab Spring Protests Started", *Sociological Forum*, vol.134, n. S1, 2019, p. 1174-1196

Egyptian uprising has played a pivotal role in influencing other movements in Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey. The essential role of social media and technology among Egyptian activists and protesters gave a different momentum to these movements across the globe. Ways of organizing at a local grassroots level have sprung up in Egypt and Greece against the common practice of excessive policing by governments. As seen in various areas in Cairo<sup>552</sup> and as described above in the case of Greece, through neighborhood-watch groups or popular assemblies these actions provided services for community health, food distribution and waste collection.

#### - **Autonomous initiatives**

It is essential that struggles for autonomy and the creation of new forms of governance question and contest established power relations and privilege. This critical questioning does not necessarily have a determining role in what is to be created, but encourages the involvement of people from all layers of societies, allowing free and creative ideas to be revealed. There are numerous examples from recent history of the tendency for leftist and progressive movements to transform into totalitarian regimes following a process of transition, particularly during nation-state building. The concept of autonomy as “the capacity, of a society or of an individual, to act deliberately and explicitly in order to modify its law and its forms”<sup>553</sup> as explained by Castoriadis in an earlier chapter, describes it as a vivid process of education and political activity. A foreseen shift from heteronomy to autonomy, therefore, will need to be conscious of the collective nature of self-rule (*autos-nomos*), and these rules will eventually become inadequate with constant community regeneration. During the co-construction process that follows forced displacement, the idea of self-rule needs to apply this principle and consider the needs and dynamics of newcomers, encouraging a dialogical process of constant assessment and adjustment of community needs. Castoriadis underlines the importance of egalitarian participation in law making and execution in autonomous collectivity with the motto “we are those whose

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<sup>552</sup> Riphagen and Woltering, *art.cit.*, p. 123

<sup>553</sup> Straume, *art.cit.*, p. 2

law is to give ourselves our own laws<sup>554</sup>". Following and during displacement, newcomers' role in decision-making is easily dismissed in reference to autonomy, as integration is the expected behavior. Gadotti stresses that "autonomy is not participation, and is not a question of taking part in power, but about having power<sup>555</sup>". Gadotti adds that autonomy is always relative and historically determined, as it is conditioned by circumstances.

Those 21<sup>st</sup> century communities for whom displacement is a new norm, and displaced persons living in the geographic peripheries and peripheries of power, need to be more autonomous and distant from centralized systems.

As the challenges faced by nation-states increase, the difficulty in addressing these problems within a desired timeframe in an effective and efficient way will force communities to find their own solutions to the immediate problems they face. As a result, although nation-states may be able to offer guidance on how to address concerns in line with international standards, their operational capacities and ability to interfere will be limited, and gradually fade. If the actors representing both nation-states and local communities maintain a heteronomous relationship, as seen in the processes of decentralization, discomfort and power battles will persist. If the relationship is conceived differently, and decision-making powers regarding all aspects of community life are placed at a local level, more democratic and autonomous structures may have a positive impact on the shape of the relations, redefining the roles of nation-states and local communities/municipalities in a more constructive manner.

One question that emerges is how best to proceed in defining the next steps of governance; what possibilities exist that can or should be further explored? Not in the name of creating a perfect society, which may essentially lead to totalitarianism, but so as to take a step toward a radical democracy, an unfinished process of social transformation.

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<sup>554</sup> Castoriadis, *op.cit.*, p. 321

<sup>555</sup> Gadotti, *op.cit.*, p. 139

In seeking a balance in honoring the principles of human rights and maintaining the dignity of displaced persons, the creation of autonomous spaces and initiatives are valuable experiences, introducing horizontal and non-hierarchical relations. These common spaces are where the difference between newcomers and long-term residents has been better understood and minimized, creating a living and or work environment for all present. Despite the fact that these efforts are often sidelined or seen as marginal, local initiatives play a significant role in introducing creative and free ideas that have inspired and fed into social change movements. Creativity and acts of solidarity are found in multiple examples; in the Greek Islands where local communities and activists, including those from across Europe were the first to respond through a direct engagement with newcomers; rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea; and, local anarchist groups embracing newcomers in their environment in Greece, Italy, and France. While in some cases, such as Lesbos, these acts of solidarity were simple, community-based initiatives, in some cases they had anarchist elements, such as the Idomeni border of Greece and the arrivals to Lampedusa, where groups responded to the necessity of their everyday concerns using a pragmatic approach. In all these efforts, self-managed, place-based community actions have tried to address human suffering without conditions that were dictated by either national or international laws, financing or tools.

The creation of autonomous spaces has been an important part of social movements, particularly those working in solidarity with marginalized groups such as migrants and asylum seekers. These efforts are notably distinct, however, in that they are politically motivated with an anarchist approach, while also following principles of collective self-management. Anarchism, in these cases, is considered not as a utopian fantasy but as a criticism of the existing social, economic, and political system. Divisions between individual and social anarchism, as noted by Bookchin, surfaced and caused an antagonistic dilemma between groups in both Greece and Italy as groups sought pragmatic solutions to accessing state and international funds in their role as first-responders. The initial welcome and genuine support of local communities gradually turned into frustration as the forcibly displaced presence continued, increasing numbers

arrived, and community resources grew limited. This was compounded by a lack of community involvement in decision making concerning matters that had an impact on them, which continued as national and international actors eventually became more involved. This resulted in communities stepping back from their original supportive roles. The incapacity of governments to address the issues in a timely manner, the lengthy bureaucratic procedures, as well as gaps in legislation for helping people in need, have often led to disputes between central authorities and local communities, as seen in the case of Lesbos and Chios, Greece.

Finding it increasingly difficult to negotiate a route through the impositions of the nation-state as well as systemic exclusionary policies, the occupations and squats of autonomous anarchist initiatives have taken their place in the political landscape of Greece and Italy. The long-standing traditions of solidarity and protest, particularly evident in urban settings, have gained a new dimension with population movements in the last decade. Although they may not have sustained their actions in the long run, these autonomous and anarchist initiatives may be considered as places where direct democracy honored basic human rights and dignity and people were treated as equals, in contrast with the traditions of paternalistic humanitarianism.

Many of these self-management initiatives make reference to the Paris Commune, an experiment that lasted 71 days in 1871. Over the last century and a half, this experience has served as a model for grassroots participatory democracy in a liberated society. Thus, as opposed to the systemic insistence on durability of a nation-state, the content and the objectives of such experiments have remained in the collective memory and have inspired transformative social change. Fluvio Bonelli in his reflection on the Ex MOI<sup>556</sup> in Turin, Italy, describes the people he has met and their approach to life under difficult conditions. Bonelli notes that Ex MOI made him think about the Paris Commune, given the genuine exchange and feeling of solidarity. Despite its unsafe, difficult conditions, he warned that

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<sup>556</sup> Bonelli Fluvio, Quale Futuro in Romeo Antonella (ed.), *Abbadoni assembramenti umani e spazi urbani: rifugiati e negligenzopolitiche di accoglienza*, Torino, Laissez Passer, 2017, p. 235-237

any external intervention to remove people from this place would create serious social problems.

As data emerges predicting increased forced displacement due to climate change and environmental disasters<sup>557</sup>, it is expected that increasing chaos will ensue. It is likely that people in need will not be covered by international protection mechanisms, and nation states will continue to fall short in addressing the issues in a timely manner. Such times will require creative, local-based solutions, as this section has argued.

The Baobab experience in Rome is another example of a community activists-based initiative that provides basic needs for migrants in transit, including food, a safe place to spend the night as well as legal and medical assistance. Operating since 2015, it has developed creative ways to provide its services, using social media and refugee/migrant communication networks very effectively<sup>558</sup>. After their center was evacuated by the municipal police, the Baobab devised a way through social media and migrant/refugee networks of generating resources and communicating the availability of assistance in various locations without putting asylum seekers and migrants at risk, particularly during the Salvini administration. The mobility and flexibility of the initiative allowed more than 70,000 people to benefit from its services and proved that Rome's civil society was willing to act. Aware that this was an insufficient short-term solution, Baobab volunteer Valerio Bevacqua<sup>559</sup> claimed that government policies hinder their work and deliberately put them in a criminal position, particularly following the periods of extremist attacks in Europe.

The Ambulatorio Medico Popolare, a self-managed clinic in Milan, offers essential services for those who fall outside of the national health system, including those who are homeless, and foreigners without resident permits. Often threatened with expulsion by city officials, the clinic is hosted by a social center<sup>560</sup> (*centro sociale T28*) that has

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<sup>557</sup> UN Human Rights Committee decision CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016, Jan 2020, reported in *the Guardian* as 'Climate refugees can't be returned home, says landmark UN human rights ruling' Lyons Kate.

<sup>558</sup> Baobab is a group of volunteers and private citizens that, in 2015, found itself facing a migratory emergency of about 35,000 migrants passing through the walls of the center Baobab, located on Via Cupa, in Rome.

<sup>559</sup> Negri Giada, Interview: Baobab Experience to fill an institutional void in the Italian capital, European Civic Forum, 26 January 2018

<sup>560</sup> Centri sociali are a tradition of struggle by the Italian left.

occupied abandoned buildings since 1975<sup>561</sup>. Together with those without resident permits, the clinic also helps Italians in need of assistance. Access to health care is linked being able to provide an address, and as there has been a rise in house evictions in recent years, as is evident in Lupi's decree on housing<sup>562</sup>, Italians have also had trouble accessing health services. According to Doctors without Borders (MSF) there were more than 10,000 asylum seekers who remained out of the protection system in 2018 with limited or no access to medical services, as most lived in hidden places, due to fear of deportation.

Over the last decade another autonomous self-managed experiment in Sicily, Contadinazioni – Fuori mercato<sup>563</sup> was born. As a self-defined anticapitalistic socio-political project, it focuses on alternatives to the market using an egalitarian self-management approach. Addressing the rights to income, healthy food, education, culture and the environment, Contadinazioni works with newcomers, providing a space for work and a dignified life. Working on land seized from organized crime in Sicily as well as abandoned public spaces, the initiative creates an autonomous space in which alternatives can emerge. With its methodology in governance, it recalls the experiment in Marinaleda, Spain where municipalization of the land also began with land occupation.

As much as the legitimacy and legality of such initiatives are denied by nation-states, the role and effectiveness of the protection of human dignity and rights by nation states also needs further questioning.

The Welcome Refugees initiative that was developed as a response to the Syrian refugee influx has gained significant momentum since 2014, based on local communities organizing with their own resources. A small but a meaningful initiative, operational in 19 countries today, has developed into an international network that offers temporary living

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<sup>561</sup> Ghiglione Giorgio, "L'ambulatorio a Milano che cura migranti e senza dimora" Internazionale, 2 July 2018

<sup>562</sup> Repubblica Italiana, "Decreto-Legge 28 marzo 2014, n. 47", *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 2014. (Decreto-Legge convertito con modificazioni dalla L. 23 maggio 2014, n. 80 (in G.U. 27/05/2014, n. 121).

<sup>563</sup> Contadinazioni – Fuori mercato is based in Campobella di Mazara, Sicily, and has markets in 17 places across Italy.



space and support with dignity to individuals and families. The initiative is operational both in Greece and Italy, and individuals connecting with the network provide refugees with an alternative place to reception centers and camps. As the network is able to provide temporary housing for newcomers, it plays a transitional accommodation role and demonstrates the potential and power of network members self-organizing. The sustainability of such initiatives is uncertain as it is subject to the availability of volunteers and individual resources. However, it is seen as an organic way of introducing a new place to newcomers and establishing more natural relations with the long-term residents.

In Greece, centers for autonomous action are often squats occupied by Greek anarcho-communist activists and people who have fled war, poverty, or persecution in Muslim majority countries<sup>564</sup>. The City Plaza model makes a political point in its rejection of legal definitions of status of the displaced persons and through its creation of a space for all in need. Using the principles of self-management, the City Plaza has the potential to address the issues outside of camp-based state and NGO projects.

Katelyn Squires, researching resistance and solidarity in Exarcheia, Athens, discusses the art of squatting and the concept of anarchist space<sup>565</sup>. Squires writes that a number of autonomous spaces were created through the occupation of abandoned buildings following the 2004 Olympics, playing a role in anti-austerity movements in 2008. She points out the importance of common spaces in anarchist initiatives, which as well as serving as living quarters, become gathering points for solidarity. One example is the occupation of a building close to the Botanical garden (Botanic squat) in Athens by unemployed and homeless youth, which provided food from farmers to customers directly<sup>566</sup>. At different stages, these squats provided housing, food and other basic needs to asylum seekers and migrants, primarily from a base in Exarcheia, Athens.

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<sup>564</sup> Grewal Zareena, "Muslim Refugees Team Up with Anarchists in an Effort to Shame Greece", *Atlantic*, 22 January 2018

<sup>565</sup> Squires Katelyn, "Erisian Mysteries: The Art of Squatting, Resistance and Solidarity in Exarcheia, Athens", *Contingent Horizons*, v. 4, n 1. 2018, p. 17-31

<sup>566</sup> Rakopoulos quoted in Squires, *art.cit.*, p. 23

Thessaloniki has been the setting for a number of autonomous spaces and squats in the last decade, described as unique spaces for freedom and solidarity by the groups involved. The buildings occupied by some of these groups, including Knimat o Rama (the former Yfanet fabric factory), Mundo Nuevo, Terra Incognita, as well as the Biologica student squats<sup>567</sup> have been turned into spaces for people who are deprived of their rights as human beings. The criminalization of such actions is considered a form of state repression in an environment where displaced persons are stuck between closed borders, militarized zones and state bureaucracy. The residents from one site in Thessaloniki, Albatros, were evicted in 2017 and a number of people were left homeless with no option but to take to the streets. The Greek state's approach in such situations appears to be harsh on those using a solidarity approach, but encouraging those using a charity approach; a situation that perpetuates dependency.

Government authorized evictions have become common practice when dealing with building occupation. Through a show of power, evictions put to rest the risk of people questioning the authority of the state and allows government to take back control. The evacuation of Albatros, among many, gave momentum to another movement, 'You can't evict solidarity'. The motto 'You cannot evict a movement! You can't evict solidarity!' has been used extensively in and beyond Greece since 2017. The associated actions show that such acts of occupation and creating autonomous, anarchist spaces will not disappear anytime soon, even if the actions are short-lived or individuals leave the movement. The statement of inhabitants<sup>568</sup> accused of squatting at the Albatros house summarizes the situation faced by many displaced persons who remain out of the state and international protection mechanisms;

*"It is the first time that the people without a European passport are also accused of squatting and this has the purpose of scaring others from becoming politically active against their oppression and isolation in the society. This is targeting a group of*

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<sup>567</sup> Radar squat net is a network that provides updated information on places presently squatted in Greece.

<sup>568</sup> "You can't evict solidarity" is a campaign against repression. It was founded to support international refugee and non-refugee activists that got arrested during evictions of refugee-squats in Thessaloniki (Greece) in July and August 2016.

*people that has been labeled as “economic migrants”, which means they are already facing huge discrimination in the asylum procedure and are more threatened with deportations than others.* <sup>569</sup>”

Tsavdaroglou explains that solidarity initiatives create a common language and common spaces of action for locals and refugees, overcoming enforced segregation. He stresses that such situations reflect ‘a broader ethos within the squatted buildings, recognizing that people are facing precarious situations but trying to avoid defining their existence according to their vulnerability’, building a culture of mutual respect as opposed to systematic victimization of newcomers in camp situations<sup>570</sup>.

The fetishized notion of durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons, good governance, and economic stability through neo-liberal policies often need and are supported by ideologies that secure ‘the eternal presence’ of the nation state. Holding up the superior position of the state by any means is often used to justify the state-driven atrocities over people, and sacrifices fundamental human rights and dignity. Despite the dismissive mainstream consideration that anarchism is not able to construct concrete social systems and leads to chaos, autonomous and anarchist spaces have provided viable examples which more formal groups have not dared to experiment with or have deliberately dismissed.

These autonomous anarchist spaces have inspired social movements; the many initiatives in formal settings in local and national governments should not be ignored or sidelined. Aside from its existentialist context, defined by Hakim Bey, the concept of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ)<sup>571</sup> is worth considering as small and nomadic forms of resistance in pockets of anarchy that occur in daily life<sup>572</sup>. The TAZ concept accentuates

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<sup>569</sup> Full defense can be found at <https://cantevictsolidarity.noblogs.org/post/2017/05/07/thessaloniki-trial-for-the-eviction-of-the-squat-albatros-postponed/>

<sup>570</sup> Tsavdaroglou, *art.cit.*, p. 376-40

<sup>571</sup> Bey Hakim, “The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy Poetic Terrorism” *The Anarchist Library*, 1985, p. 1-22

<sup>572</sup> Bey’s context of TAZ refers to liberated areas of land, time, and imagination where the political change is de-territorialized, decentralized, linearized on all political, economic, social, libidinal and narrative levels. In this capacity, there is constant dissolution and recreation of spaces, even with a consideration of small gatherings (Hakim Bey and Jeff Nikolai’s definition).

essential moments and events that give inspiration to many movements. They allow organic intellectuals to find common ground and engage in a process of meta-integration.

The *Sportello Sans Papier* in Palermo, inspired by the *sans papier* movement in France, offers acknowledgement and assistance to people who are invisible in the present system, but make substantial difference in everyday lives of communities where they live. Referring to the *sans papiers* as the “excluded amongst the excluded” and calling for their rightful recognition as strong actors in democratic politics, Etienne Balibar claims that *sans papiers* were responsible for “breathing life back into democracy<sup>573</sup>” in France.

Balibar, in his speech of 1997 in Paris “Ce que nous devons aux Sans Papiers” (What we owe to the Sans-papiers) eloquently lays out the role *sans papier* play in society in the following three main points;

*“We owe them for having broken through the communication barriers, for being seen and heard for what they are;*

*We owe them for having shattered the pretensions of successive governments to play two games: on one side, ‘realism’, administrative competence and political responsibility (regulating population flows, maintaining public order, assuring the “integration” of legal immigrants...); on the other side, nationalist and electoral propaganda (creating scapegoats for insecurity, projecting the fear of mass poverty into the phantasmal space of identitarian conflicts);*

*We owe them for having recreated citizenship among us, since the latter is not an institution nor a status, but a collective practice<sup>574</sup>.”*

Balibar’s speech in Paris and later in Austria is an important in highlighting the powerful influence of social movements in addressing structural injustices, regardless of the legal status of the people involved. The struggle of *sans papier* challenges the hypocritical

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<sup>573</sup> Balibar Etienne, “What we owe to Sans papiers”, 1996, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0313/balibar/fr>

<sup>574</sup> *ibidem*

stand of the nation-state, demanding the people are seen as legitimate right bearers who have been sharing similar precarious conditions with many in French society. It is this impetus that comes with population movement that challenges the established norms of the center. Balibar stresses that societies that are static and unexposed to mobility risk suffocation. The much-needed breath of fresh air may come from multiple sources, including forced displacement, and contribute to the needed momentum for social movements.

In a search for alternatives to advance it is essential to take a further step beyond known approaches considered as the norm, eliminating repressive practices and authoritarian practices. This should not ignore reflections on what has been done at various levels, or experiments at marginalized corners, regardless of their duration and size.

### **2.3. Meta-integration in between the margins of the coloniality of power and colonized minds**

Autonomous local spaces offer a platform for people in the peripheries of power to gather, organize and act collectively to address their concerns and make decisions about everyday life. They contribute to the empowerment of communities with a strong sense of solidarity. Raúl Zibechi refers to these areas as “territory of resistance<sup>575</sup>”, not necessarily implying a particular space but rather the social relations developed among people in struggle. People in the peripheries of power include the marginalized in rural communities, in impoverished urban areas, migrants, and refugees who are subject to the forces of neoliberal nation-state politics, unfair corporate economic practices and those subject to the impositions of the norms of the center.

Organic intellectuals who build bridges between newcomers and long-term residents, have a limited room for maneuver, operating between the margins of colonized minds, an

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<sup>575</sup> Zibechi Raúl, *Dispersing Power – Social Movements as Anti State Forces*, Oakland, CA, Edinburgh, AK Press, 2010, p. xii

internalized learned behavior and coloniality of power, a systemic imposition that perpetuates existing hegemonic relations.

Zibechi<sup>576</sup> emphasizes the existentialist need for societies in movement to shift their position from their inherited place. He sees the key to such a struggle to look within instead of focusing the attention and energy on the state, political parties and their messages to prolong their influence. Zibechi's point on the importance of the creation of 'temporary and horizontal spaces for the exchange and sharing of knowledge regarding alternative experiences' in order to create new social ties and networks is also in line with some of the findings of this research; the fundamental need of creating a common space, the importance of a process of commoning and the power of multiple stories of the displaced. Through his work in South America as well as reflections on Europe, Zibechi points out that "historically social movements have had a strong relationship with both the state and capital, which consisted of opposition and resistance but also in demands". He concludes that movements today follow a dual strategy: "they resist and demand, but they also build".<sup>577</sup> Zibechi's point of building is another way of considering the concept of co-construction in the meta-integration process. The reconsiderations and analysis of the concepts need to offer concrete alternatives, in touch with the real conditions on the ground, not leave them at a theoretical level. Amin recalls the importance of becoming conscious of the imperialist nature of the established system<sup>578</sup> as the fundamental condition for activists to work together for a single cause. Accordingly, the conscious development of and connection among the layers of organic intellectuals is essential<sup>579</sup>, especially relevant to specific aspects in the co-construction process, which the next section goes on to describe.

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<sup>576</sup> *Ibid*, p. 122

<sup>577</sup> Streule Monika, Schwarz Anke, "'Not all spaces are territories': creating other possible urban worlds in and from Latin America – an interview with Raúl Zibechi", *Geographica Helvetica*, n. 74, 2019, p. 105-111

<sup>578</sup> Amin Samir, "The Democratic Fraud and the Universalist Alternative", *Monthly Review*, vol. 63, n. 5, 2011

<sup>579</sup> Humphrys, *art.cit.*, p. 1-6

## - **Creating space and tolerance for multiple stories**

Acknowledging the presence of multiple narratives, making space for all of them, and being tolerant regardless of the discomfort they may create, is fundamental to build alternatives. Chris Harman, in his book *People's History of the World*, calls attention to a common practice of destroying all the documentation of the previous era in history following an invasion, underlining the desire of nations to start everything from scratch with a new period. While such attempts are often followed by dissonant heritage that is then addressed by many generations to come, they ignore the dialectical aspects of relations between groups, the environment and accumulated knowledge in each specific landscape, and can often lead to the exclusion of specific groups. The discussions that took place in northern Paris' Cité des 4000 and St Denis have shown that while integration into the French mainstream society is encouraged as an official narrative, people, particularly those from francophone Africa retain colonial history as part of their narrative and find common ground in their struggles.

Revisioning alternative governance following displacement is a process of dialogue toward collective construction. It is a dynamic and constantly renewed action to redefine and redesign relationships in an autonomous manner. This process needs the direct involvement of all inhabitants and can realistically be put into practice at a local level and small scale, where people have the opportunity to be involved directly as part of their everyday life in their respective communities. Paying particular attention to avoid the reproduction of hierarchical and patriarchal power relations, as well as not favoring historical/traditional privileged groups, the process of meta-integration recognizes newcomers (refugees and migrants) and long-term residents as political actors who are empowered to claim their rights and make decisions about their own futures.

The history of collective struggles of peoples for a just world have inspired generations of social movements. As many were not peaceful, but were carried forward on the conviction that the struggle was the only way forward, many gradually become dogmatized,

undermining the presence of multiple narratives. The stories of people on the move have been essential parts of these social movements, bringing diversity and change to new places, and redefining relations as well as societies. The Mediterranean region is a vivid example of these constant movements contributing to the region's cultural richness today. *Elisa Bonacini* in Palermo who is a heritage specialist, explained that what makes Sicily special is its unavoidable diversity resulting from population movements over centuries. Sicily today is the compilation of all these diverse small communities, which have influenced each other overtime. Therefore, a *Palermitano* is not defined by the duration of stay over generations, but also by their connection to the city, community and landscape.

The complexity of the problems today cannot be addressed in a dogmatic manner and require creative and multidimensional ways to cope with sophisticated capitalist strategies. Elinor Ostrom<sup>580</sup> advocates a polycentric governance approach, creating important economic opportunities and self-regulating tendencies through interorganizational arrangements. Focusing on anti-capitalist struggles, David Harvey notes that the left as a whole is troubled by “fetishism of organizational form”<sup>581</sup>, either pressing for democratic centralist state structures, or radical democracy with horizontal and non-hierarchical governance of the commons, dismissing the possibilities of alternative forms of territorial governance. Based on the trend and forecast of increasing displacement, any reconsideration of governance must move away from known parameters of settled communities, and consider community regeneration as well as a shift from an engrained sense of permanency.

Therefore, autonomous local solutions are not necessarily concerned with replacing nation-states as anti-statist struggles, these solutions instead aim at acknowledging and transforming the existing positive experiences at local levels toward progressive social change. As Zibechi concluded<sup>582</sup>, any efforts in this regard should go beyond resisting

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<sup>580</sup> Tarko Vlad, “Polycentric Governance: A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration”, *George Mason University*, 2015, p. 9

<sup>581</sup> Harvey David, *Rebel Cities; From Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London and New York: Verso, 2013, p. 125

<sup>582</sup> Streule Monika, Schwarz Ankem, *art.cit.*, p.108



and demanding, instead they should use the available resources to build alternatives to conceptualize and build another world. This conceptualization cannot be selective, avoiding unwanted narratives about certain places and peoples, which has an impact on the confidence and respect among groups, leaving long-lasting scars in the collective memory of communities.

In a meta-integration process described in Chapter 1, it is essential that historic relations of oppression are addressed by allowing space for people to tell their own stories, rather than the stories being related to them are told through experts, academics or politicians who rationalize that they are more able to express the concerns of others. The organic intellectuals' role in facilitating this process is crucial; it enables people to represent themselves directly in their interactions with society. The stories of displaced persons must find common ground in a process of constructing new communities, regardless of whether they are considered irrelevant or individualist. The pedagogical and dialogical aspects of meta-integration accompany communities in gaining mutual understanding, building a consciousness for collective wellbeing and reframing relations.

**- Being conscious of not reproducing hierarchical and patriarchal structures**

Any expectation that progress will be immediate and problems solved is unrealistic given the complexity of embedded forces within colonized minds and the coloniality of power in heteronomous structures. The relations of power and privilege among multiple actors, including newcomers, long-term residents, local and regional administrations, civil society as well as national and international entities, are likely to reproduce rooted dominant relations of hierarchy and patriarchy in the new place.

Being in direct contact and feeling the pulse of a community is fundamental for working through such complexities and contradictions during a socio-political construction of communities after displacement. If managed strategically, the process of community co-construction can be an empowering act of solidarity and sustainability, leading to a much-

needed shift in perspective. In this regard, meta-integration, as a sensitive process of dialogue, builds on the agency of communities to adapt to changes, under unstable conditions where social relations are temporary and fragile.

The analysis of power dynamics between local, national and international actors helps communities develop realistic coping mechanisms to address the reproduction of dominating relations. In this regard, organic intellectuals play a crucial role in keeping communities focused on targeting structural injustices and helping them not to get distracted by the sophisticated mechanisms of neoliberalism. The policies that perpetuate precarity and insecurities generate fear among populations and prepare the ground for the erosion of basic democratic rights and freedoms. This is particularly valid for marginalized communities whose members are vulnerable to manipulation by the center. Thomas Hobbes concludes in *Moral and Political Philosophy* that “when citizens are insecure and at the same time driven by competitive aspirations, they yearn for political stability rather than civic engagement, protection rather than political involvement<sup>583</sup> ”. This is a condition that has been observed in recent years, allowing right wing rhetoric to find a comfortable space in politics and fueling populist movements. When the conditions of daily life are precarious, and people consider their conditions to be temporary, their approach to community life and politics are influenced and shaped by these conditions.

Being conscious of the distinctions between heteronomous and autonomous structures and their implications on local communities is a crucial quality of organic intellectuals, who are genuinely interested in moving the processes forward without being paralyzed by dogmatic notions. This does not mean they are apolitical or imagine alternatives without referring to a specific ideological or espousing political views, rather they are aware of the dynamic forces that influence such processes. Understanding the importance of organic intellectuals’ role across various socio-economic layers of societies and organizations, as well as their agency to interact with and mobilize their communities, it is possible to develop solidarity-based creative solutions.

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<sup>583</sup> Hedges, *art.cit.*, <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/sheldon-wolin-and-inverted-totalitarianism/>

The efforts of the organic intellectuals in each group to identify commonalities across diverse ideological and political stands leads to mutual understanding among diverse individuals and groups, feeding into a process of meta-integration and direct democracy following displacement. As mentioned above, participants should be wary of the danger of an internalized tendency to reproduce horizontal hierarchies and patriarchy, even in alternative structures. The rationale of representational democracy (often male dominant voices) which claim to be able to represent people better than themselves silences marginalized communities and voices. The example of District 5 in Huelva, Spain is powerful, as *Manoli Garcia*<sup>584</sup> explained. When community members go to meetings with regional and central authorities and introduce strategic plans developed through a lengthy community consultation process, they are often asked who they represent. As marginalized members of their communities, they are proud to declare that they represent themselves, and what they are negotiating represents the will and result of a long community consultation process. It is this political stand that constitutes the basis for the practice of direct democracy.

- **Acknowledging the presence of organic intellectuals at all levels and seeking cooperation**

Organic intellectuals are not members of any specific group, nor do they follow a uniformed pattern. They are the product of their own situations, they make connections and bridge gaps. Their role in the meta-integration process is crucial, but they do not necessarily seek leadership. Acknowledging their presence in various layers of the society and understanding the conditions in which they operate is essential when building networks and cooperation across borders. Mutual recognition of organic intellectuals and their involvement in constructive dialogue is a crucial step for communities engaging in a process of meta-integration increasing our understanding of the present-day challenges faced during a process of co-construction.

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<sup>584</sup> The visit took place in April 2018. Ms. Garcia is a long-term resident, activist, community worker (female late 40s)

As all social relations involve power, the positions of privilege of organic intellectuals in their respective political and ideological stand should be recognized when engaging in a dialogue process. Gramsci stressed that subalterns see the world as a product of their subordinated and dominated positions as well as lived experiences, which is influenced by the hegemonic accounts of the dominant groups. As much as this may result in colonized minds and acceptance of subordination, the counter-hegemonic conception also emerges in the course of struggle<sup>585</sup>.

Aware of the plutocracy's strategies and efforts to assert its power, the struggle to create another world represents an attempt to overcome these hegemonic impositions and the construct alternatives, harnessing the political power of local communities as a counter balance to nation-states and corporate power. As this attempt requires cooperation and solidarity at a large scale, Paul Kivel argues<sup>586</sup> that "none of us can stay connected to social justice organizing and true to social justice values while working in isolation" particularly referring to those inside non-profit organizations in the buffer zone. Although Kivel's point is valid in that it emphasizes the need for a wider network outside the non-profit industrial complex, the construction of new communities in the nexus of displacement and governance will have to work across social layers, making connections and breaking down isolation through a global political community, facilitated by organic intellectuals.

In the quest for alternatives, the effort to reach out to different groups despite a difference of opinions and political stands, may sideline organic intellectuals within their respective organizations. At times due to career choices, and other times finding themselves naturally in specific situations, the need to connect with others who are in similar place of intellectual displacement may lead to a feeling of isolation or intellectually marginalization from their respective communities and organizations. While such figures may be restricted by the limitations of the organizations in which they operate, they also are

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<sup>585</sup> Crehan, *op.cit.*, p. 116

<sup>586</sup> Kivel Paul, "Social Service or Social Change?" in Incite, Women of Color Against Violence (ed.). *The Revolution will not be funded: being the non-profit industrial complex*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007, p. 146

familiar with the loopholes of the heteronomous structures; allowing them to influence policies and resources for specific objectives. Under the present system, the organizational power of these entities matters, and at times, they are able to put very creative ideas into practice, inspiring, providing resources and planting seeds for a number of local initiatives. *Mathilde De Riedmatten*<sup>587</sup> in Thessaloniki was able to point out clearly the shortfalls of both her own organization as well as those of the authorities with whom she has worked. She has also been able to identify progressive local initiatives and organic intellectuals, and was successful in creating an informal network that goes beyond the means of the bureaucratic systems in which they operate and reach out to alternative initiatives.

In addition, there is also observed antagonism between those who work with international organizations in well-paid positions and those whose are under more precarious working conditions, as short-term consultants, and project-based locally employed staff. Regardless of their contractual situation, they constitute educated individuals who understand the language of the non-profit industrial complex and play their essential role as the organic intellectuals of the buffer zone.

The organic intellectuals of the buffer zone, faced with the dilemma of possessing privileges and an interest in engaging in a social transformation process, nevertheless have the potential to create opportunities, make connections and identify a common thread among different layers of the society as indicated in Diagram 7.

It should be further stressed that the presence of organic intellectuals is also noticed by the entities of the present system at local, national and international levels, and they do not hesitate to undermine and dismiss the progressive elements in their structures to maintain the status-quo. David Sessions calls attention to the concept of the 'thought leader'<sup>588</sup> who also serve as the [organic] intellectual of the center whose purpose is "to

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<sup>587</sup> Ms. De Riedmatten is a protection officer at the UNHCR Thessaloniki office.

<sup>588</sup> Sessions David, "The Rise of the Thought Leader, How the superrich have funded a new class of intellectual", *The New Republic*, June 28, 2017

mirror, systemize, and popularize the delusions of the superrich”, using humanitarian and development arguments. A concept of the left, the organic intellectual, through the educated buffer zone, is introduced as a thinker, the ‘thought leader’, public intellectuals that are publicized and televised and often become celebrities, influencing public opinion as part of the non-profit industrial complex.

The closure or discontinuation of many programs and initiatives are good examples of how the logic of the center interferes and dismantles possible threats that question its hegemony. These interferences have ideological and political bases; the rationale is that these initiatives may act against national interest and integrity, although the classic explanation is budget cuts and lack of resources. As the impact of transformative social movements cannot be controlled at the street level, and are portrayed by nation-states as insignificant and marginal actions (e.g. such as the recent social movements in northern Mediterranean countries), any support given to such actions by the institutions of heteronomous structures are surveyed and controlled. Basic principles and values of human rights can easily be sacrificed as enforcement is often subject to funding, through the dynamics of donor-recipient relationships. Such relationships narrow the focus to specific projects and programs by imposing specialization. This prevents staff from addressing the root causes of problems with a holistic and cooperative approach. Gramsci argued that hegemony of the dominant group is established through creating and sustaining what is known as ‘common sense’ through social institutions, culture, and education<sup>589</sup>. It is ultimately the notion of this common sense that determines what is acceptable in society and society’s response to social and political events, including forced displacement.

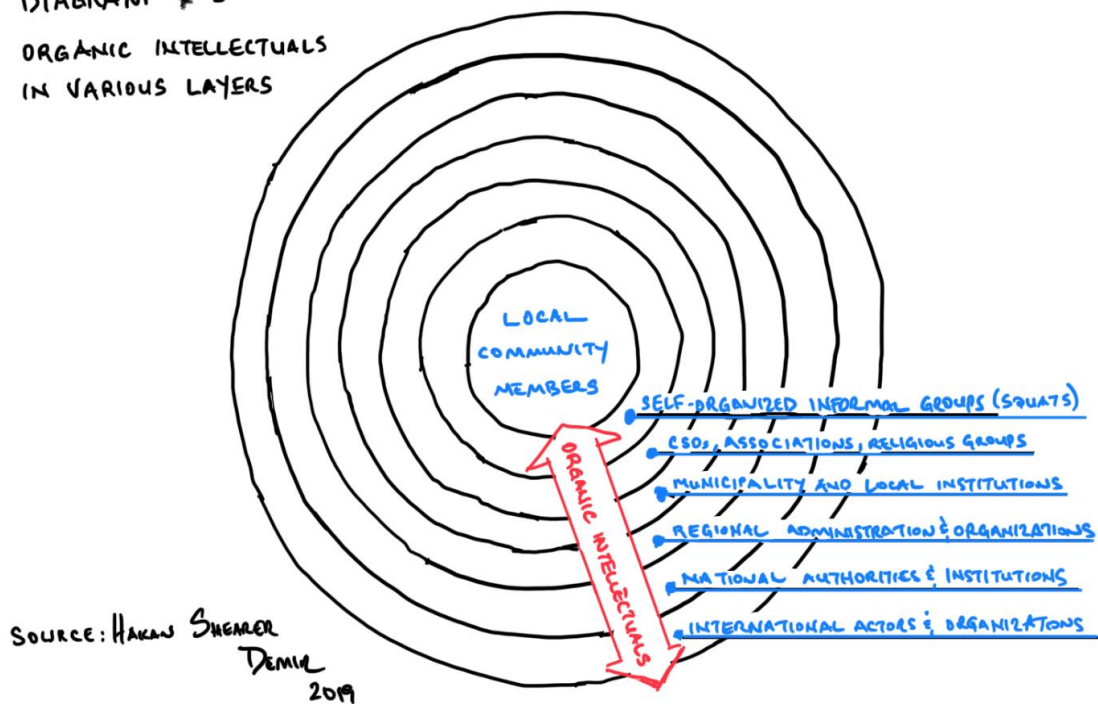
The right-wing rhetoric that is on the rise in Europe and across the globe targets the notion of common sense and tries to change what is acceptable behavior today, including xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism as well as anti-migrant/refugee

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<sup>589</sup> Rojaz Durazo Ana Clarissa, “We were never meant to survive” in Incite, Women of Color Against Violence (ed.). *The Revolution will not be funded: being the non-profit industrial complex*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007, p. 123

discourses. The acknowledgment and solidarity among organic intellectuals (among newcomers and long-term residents in the peripheries) generate momentum for a common struggle against this rhetoric and the structural injustices it perpetuates. Small but significant attempts to create change constitute the basis for larger transformations. It is the organic intellectuals that steer population movement to movement of the people.

DIAGRAM 7 -  
ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS  
IN VARIOUS LAYERS



- **Adopting a politics of proximity - direct democracy**

In order to go beyond theory and offer concrete alternatives, in touch with the real conditions on the ground, every action and project needs to be conceived, elaborated and implemented as a step toward direct democracy as a part of a larger cause. Direct representation of all present and the principles of self-management should be considered essential elements of educational, work, and social life toward the creation of a new cultural narrative. Although diverse cultural settings may require different strategies in the realization of direct democracy, the struggle against structural injustices require local

community members to be a part of everyday life with the consciousness of hierarchical and patriarchal relations across cultures and geographies.

James Scott warns<sup>590</sup> that centralized movements often result in a state structure, replacing one existing hierarchical structure with another ideological and political stand. As none of those state structures have historically guaranteed fundamental freedoms and rights for all, some also became totalitarian regimes, trying to exercise their power within and across their borders.

Amin maintains<sup>591</sup> that local government is one possible field of struggle for establishing new forms of power. He underlines that such processes should not be undertaken dogmatically and achieved by any means; recreating the same power structures just transferring them from central to the local level, rather, they should engage communities in a genuine bottom up co-construction that is relevant to the everyday life of communities. It is also worth recalling Hein de Haas' point on the limitations of the displaced persons' agency and impact on structural change as migration is only one aspect of a broader process of social transformation and development<sup>592</sup>. Therefore, a placed-based approach to the development processes with all of its inhabitants is crucial. The Marinaleda experience in Spain may offer a different perspective on this issue, as when communities shift their positions on their governance structures at a local level, they become active agents of change and directly involved in the politics of everyday life.

The specificity of such structures must be left to the local communities themselves, using the principles of direct democracy, such as assemblies and networks, to organize, envision and put alternatives into practice. Originating in the period of the Paris Commune, the term communalism as a coherent process that is adaptable to cultural,

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<sup>590</sup> Faculté des Lettres, Langues et Sciences humaines, "'When the revolution becomes the State it becomes my enemy again': an interview with James C. Scott", *The Conversation*, 20 June 2018

<sup>591</sup> Amin, *op.cit.*, p. 125

<sup>592</sup> De Haas, *art.cit.*, (*Migration Theory, Quo Vadis?*), p. 19



historical and ecological contexts<sup>593</sup> is further explored as a politics of proximity to direct democracy in co-construction of communities following forced displacement. In referring to adaptability, Eleanor Finley talks about communalism's historical precedents in tribal democracy and town/village assemblies existing in nearly every corner of the earth<sup>594</sup>. In her article "Reason, creativity and freedom: the communalist model", Finley explains that there are numerous small-scale examples of communalistic models throughout history, from the Iroquis Confederacy of North America to Kuna of Panama as well as the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas.

In his extensive journey through and analysis of Marxism, Anarchism and their relation to human organizations and environment from early stages of their existence, Bookchin's concept of communalism advocates a localized, grassroots democratic social philosophy. Bookchin envisioned this self-government becoming gradually strong and a power itself, challenging and possibly dismantling the power of the nation-state as it is known today. As he considered communalism as a political philosophy, he referred to municipalism as its political practice. Bookchin concluded that struggle against structural injustices needs to be reclaimed by popular power and be institutionalized in local assemblies within communities to create a true political force<sup>595</sup>.

Consequently, the meta-integration process considers self-management as its fundamental element in imagining alternatives in direct democracy. This will allow communities to have the possibility to redefine and redesign their relations in preparation for a coming period which is predicted to generate increased forced displacement.

As Fanon has stated, "humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and generally obscene emulation... if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries.... For Europe,

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<sup>593</sup> Popp-Madsen Benjamin, "Review: The next revolution: Popular assemblies and the promise of direct democracy", *Contemporary Political Theory*, n.16, 2017, p. 274 – 277

<sup>594</sup> Finley Eleanor, "Reason, Creativity and Freedom: The Communalist Model" Resilience, 21 February 2017

<sup>595</sup> Bookchin, Next Revolution, *op.cit.*, p. 54

for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man"<sup>596</sup>.

## Conclusions for Chapter 1

In recent social movements, autonomous and self-managed initiatives have played a crucial role. Regardless of their size and duration, these initiatives have shown that it is possible to honor human rights and dignity, particularly welcoming newcomers to the fight against structural injustices as well as providing basic services with limited resources. Gadotti indicates that it is the daily struggles, the day-to-day changes, and the quantity of small changes in a certain direction, which offers the possibility of a great change. Change takes place as a result of a continuous, patient, supportive effort<sup>597</sup>.

As displacement has become one of the struggles of everyday life for many communities across the Mediterranean region, alternative governance models must be local, autonomous and self-managed, actively seeking to dismantle the patriarchal and hierarchical elements that have dominated societies. Crucial steps to be taken include the challenging, but necessary process, of delinking, decolonizing minds and rejecting the coloniality of power. These constitute the pedagogical aspect of a transformation process where social relations are redefined and redesigned in an environment of constant change and instability. Such a process brings to the forefront the needed potential of displaced people and create a platform for the mobilization of vulnerability, the main question posed in this thesis.

Autonomous and anarchist initiatives provide important examples of collective self-management as well as practices in direct democracy in the northern Mediterranean region, most recently embracing community-based local responses to forced displacement. They have been open, creative, flexible, productive, resourceful and self-

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<sup>596</sup> Fanon Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 2004, p. 239

<sup>597</sup> Gadotti, *op.cit.*, p. 78

reliant in most cases, and show solidarity in their approach. Despite being dismissed by authorities and mainstream society as viable solutions, these initiatives often receive attention at times of crisis, as the inability of the nation-states addressing the problems is revealed, such as in the case of refugee/migrant influx that has been ongoing since 2015. Although the anarchist initiatives in the northern Mediterranean region have fed into social movements, offering inspirations, ideas, and spaces for collective action, their concerted efforts have not been sustained in the long run. Field observations and interviews verified the differences in rationale and approaches among various anarchist groups can cause friction<sup>598</sup>, resulting in a negative impact on their capacity to cooperate. Some anarchist initiatives remained isolated and could not overcome their dogmatic approach, while many other have benefited from a variety of opportunities to meet other groups in solidarity in person and on-line. They showed that interconnectedness and interdependency are not so much choices but necessities for these initiatives, and that 21st century movements are different to previous ones due to their aspiration for horizontality and their decentralized nature. These movements are indicators of a different approach, one that does not oppose the state, but imagines the practical and theoretical struggle against domination as beyond the nation-state. John Clark explains that the idea of a sophisticated anarchist view goes beyond criticism and seeks to understand the roots causes of inequality in all aspects of socio-economic life<sup>599</sup>. Simon Springer conceives of anarchism as reinventing everyday life through a desire to create new and non-hierarchical forms of organization<sup>600</sup>. Both reflections on anarchism feed into a process of co-construction of society that is imagined as going beyond the limitations of the nation-state that characterize the movements of the last two decades.

At a time when fundamental rights and freedoms erode in democracies in the Mediterranean region, and increased displacement continues to change communities, the

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<sup>598</sup> The longstanding question in anarchist circles of working with the tools and entities of the present capitalist system without becoming a part of the system or refusing to engage with the systemic tools, and practice the right to self-rule in spite of being marginalized and weakened under the pressure of the systemic impositions. This has been a cause of friction and split between groups both in Italy and Greece.

<sup>599</sup> Springer Simon, "Why a radical geography must be anarchist", *Dialogues in Human Geography*, Vol. 4, n. 3, 2014, p. 250

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid*, p. 252-253

crisis is not about refugees and migrants, as has been so often decried by nation-states, but a crisis of governance. The meta-integration process can pave a path for addressing the crisis situation and steer it to a process of co-construction by acknowledging the role of organic intellectuals at all levels. A brief analysis of the networks of municipalities indicate that most of their actions share traits, they operate within their organizational mandates, and lack an organic connection between each other. Whilst their links to nation-states should be critically questioned, the presence of organic intellectuals in these networks as well as lessons learned from these experiences must not be ignored. Their strengths can be recycled in a different setting using a different approach. The acknowledgement of organic intellectuals in all layers of society allows a platform of solidarity to emerge, an opportunity to pool resources in support of a process of co-construction. For example, any resistance from local communities in accepting newcomers' involvement in the socio-political process may benefit from the skills and experiences developed by organic intellectuals. Any deliberate exclusion of segments of communities just postpones the problem, a tendency that has been observed on many occasions during the current integration processes.

The importance of autonomous and anarchist spaces and initiatives, their organic links to social movements, and their possible impact on transformative social change prompts certain questions: what next and how to move forward? The observations and interviews conducted as part of this research assessing the work of organic intellectuals has revealed high levels of frustration concerning the short-lived nature of these initiatives and onward movements making efforts futile. The consequence of this frustration results in their withdrawal of active engagement in the movement. The dilemma of challenging the nation-state structure and its impositions without presenting concrete alternatives weakens the power of such initiatives, which can then be easily dismissed by the people in the peripheries. It also unintentionally perpetuates the right-wing rhetoric of the lack of alternatives to well-established capitalist relations. While in some cases resistance is suppressed by fear driven practices (state-driven police brutality, incarceration, restricted freedom of press, speech and association, eventually leading to self-censorship), some

are led by individual and social anarchist tendencies which reject organized and institutionalized forms of involvement, yet this essentially comes from a position of privilege. For those who have no choice but to escape or fight for survival where they live, there is a concrete need to create a space for solidarity as the crisis situation that the privileged fear is a part of everyday life for those in the peripheries. Therefore, there is continuity in struggle even though it may take various forms in different places and time. In this regard, Ma Mung's concept of "temporal continuity" is worth recalling. Ma Mung, focusing on the Chinese diaspora, poses the question of how a dispersed social entity [diaspora] reproduces itself in a stable manner despite distance, and creates human collectives and their own worlds. Ma Mung emphasizes that people through mobility do not create a world that existed before, but transform themselves into a new and autonomous world of their own. Ma Mung refers to the creation of diasporic space and time as the collective subjectivity; a self-made genealogical continuity and imagined community as a geographic contiguity.

Borrowing Ma Mung's concept of temporal continuity and adopting it to the impact of autonomous and anarchist initiatives in the context of displacement as temporary spaces (not necessarily by choice), there is a continuity in struggle regardless of one's affiliation with an entity, space and time. It is the learning from the temporary spaces and initiatives and continuity in struggle that keep a transformative process dynamic and progressive. Hence, a transformative process that targets structural injustices has to find creative and pragmatic ways that consider the reality of everyday life in any given time and space. Recalling the main question of this thesis, such a condition is fundamental to consider in a transformation process.

Refugee camps, refugee like-situations, urban neighborhoods in the peripheries are concrete examples of this notion. Consequently, a newcomer, as an individual, has to transfer his/her temporal continuity to a collective subjectivity in a new place (spatial contiguity) close to people who look like him/her or share the same concerns. This essentially constitutes the peripheries of power and geographic peripheries. Ma Mung

further discusses the existence of interpolar relationships in a collective subjectivity where the displaced persons, having gone through many obstacles, are aware of the presence of other similar individuals from other places. They understand the need to engage in a process of co-construction regardless of its temporary nature. This is a survival tool for people who are forcibly displaced. Constituting a space, with such an awareness, in a new environment helps to create a transnational imaginary, in some cases undermining nationalism<sup>601</sup> and ethnic chauvinism<sup>602</sup>.

Crisis situations require autonomous and anarchist approaches for alternatives to emerge, however, more organized strategies are needed to stand up to the imposition of the center. Social transformation must happen gradually through an internalized process of self-instituting by communities in order to create a socio-political environment with all its inhabitants.

This organizing is self-instituted and takes place at local level in order to encourage direct democracy. Cognizant of the influential forces of coloniality of power and colonized minds, the process of meta-integration is oriented toward building confidence in collective solutions<sup>603</sup>, self-managed communities and a practice of direct democracy in a more institutionalized manner at a local level. Bookchin's work on municipalism sets out a path for exploring where the inspiration from different autonomous anarchist spaces and social movements are drawn from, paying particular attention to a balance between a theoretical framework and the reality of everyday life for communities.

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<sup>601</sup> Chan Brenda, quoted in Ma Mung Emmanuel, "Temporal Continuity, Spatial Contiguity and Creation of a Social Entity's Own World", *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 41, n. 4, 2012, p. 334

<sup>602</sup> Ong Aihwa, quoted in Ma Mung, *art.cit.*, p. 334

<sup>603</sup> Rosenthal, *art.cit.*, <http://socialistreview.org.uk/410/marxism-and-psychology#.VrS-zSPt9Rt.facebook>



## CHAPTER 2 – Municipalism: common ground for forced displacement-affected communities

*When you are equal with another person, the problem of integration doesn't even arise.*

*Malcolm X*

The universality of human rights and dignity goes, in principle, beyond any country boundaries. Despite the restrictive regulations, policies and practices employed by nation-states to control human mobility, acknowledging and honoring peoples' right to a dignified life remains a fundamental thread through many social movements. A more horizontalist and decentralized focus in social movements in the first two decades of the 21st century, including examples of occupations, assemblies, and self-managed groups, hold different characteristics compared to more dominant forms of labor centered movements common in previous decades<sup>604</sup>. A range of initiatives taking place in autonomous and anarchist spaces have experimented with alternative ways of organizing the society through self-management and direct democracy at local levels. However, the feasibility and survival of these anarchist initiatives and spaces, despite their inspiration and creativity, has been a challenge, and they are often targeted by nation states. Evictions at squats in Greece and Italy by right wing governments which have taken place without the provision of alternative accommodation are common in recent years. Numerous experiments on the left – attempts to obtain the state power through the current political system – have also faced significant challenges in governance, as they are isolated or are forced to align with global neoliberal powers.

In search of a way forward, Murray Bookchin's work on municipalism suggests a new form of local governance through direct democracy, which seems to be a suitable framework to look into the co-construction of new communities following displacement. While a number of elements of Bookchin's work, including social ecology, popular

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<sup>604</sup> Finley Eleanor, "Indigenous Direct Democracy: Three Case Studies", *Academia*, 2016, p. 1-34



assemblies, municipal confederation, dual power and the feminization of politics have been explored by many authors in various contexts, this research brings a deep analysis of these concepts in the framework of forced displacement. In this regard, municipalism is not considered a blueprint for a future communal society, but a framework to analyze direct democracy at local levels that may inspire a wide range of opportunities following forced displacement.

The principles introduced by Bookchin as the main ingredients for a transformation process are currently being experimented in various parts of the world, including “Fearless Cities”<sup>605</sup>. In some cases, they are challenging the restrictions imposed by the central governments on migrant and refugee reception and presence in participating cities. In addition to the Riace and Kilikis, two previously mentioned examples, other Fearless Cities initiatives that are in line with direct democracy include the Trampoline House in Copenhagen and municipal identification cards in New York City<sup>606</sup>. As part of a global network, Solidarity Cities (see section 1.2.2) is also a pragmatic example. Led by Barcelona, Berlin, Athens and Amsterdam, the network aims to relocate refugees between cities without the authorization of national governments. A city-led attempt to transfer one hundred refugees from Athens to Barcelona in 2016 was blocked by the Spanish central government<sup>607</sup>. Encouraging local inhabitants’ work through direct democracy is a natural segue to the arguments made in this thesis, and is aligned with the process of meta-integration that seeks to explore a local governance model. Building on the experiences of autonomous spaces, municipalism operates in a more institutional form based on self-management through neighborhood assemblies, which resembles Castoriadis’ notion of self-instituting society<sup>608</sup>.

In this process of self-instituting, the agency of local communities after forced displacement becomes crucial in making independent choices and the necessary

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<sup>605</sup> Fearless cities is a global municipalist movement of towns and cities that are standing up to defend human rights, democracy and the common good.

<sup>606</sup> Hansen Bue, Ruis Anna, Gagne Celinem, "Sanctuary Cities", in *La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu. Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019p. 139-142

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142-143

<sup>608</sup> Castoriadis, *op.cit*, p. 321

structural changes. It involves all members of society participating directly, equally and consciously in a collective process of shaping institutions. De Haas states that mobility is a potential force for structural change, allowing people's access to local resources through their networks; however, he points out that the degree to which that newcomers can exercise agency and make change is limited<sup>609</sup>. While De Haas' assessment is valid and is observed across many communities, a different local structure based on municipalism with the municipalization of local resources may create an environment where the community's agency can bring about change. Cognizant of the diverse legal systems in the Mediterranean region that determine the parameters to exercise this agency, the Marinaleda experience is an important example, this long-lasting struggle in Spain has shown that other ways are possible. While the struggle of Marinaleda still continues, and remains politically targeted by the central government, the people of Marinaleda have shown that they have learned by practicing direct democracy, transforming themselves while they transform the community as a whole.

Those who seek 21<sup>st</sup> century alternatives in governance critically question and reject pre-existing patriarchal and hierarchical structures. Previous historic experiments, although inspirational, for example: the Athenian democracy; 16<sup>th</sup> century communal movements in Spain; the Paris Commune; and, the 1930s Spanish anarchist collectives, they maintained patriarchal values in one way or the other<sup>610</sup>. Therefore, the education and formation of movements today are prone to trial-and-error rather than immediate success. In recent years, the Rojava experience<sup>611</sup> in Syria has presented a notable alternative that challenges patriarchal values and hierarchical structures under difficult conditions.

All these efforts need to build on one another, going beyond the perceived image of sporadic protests, and gain gravitas in order to challenge the system of privilege. Bookchin's proposal of a viable municipalist society, beyond personal and moral

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<sup>609</sup> De Haas, *art.cit.*, (Migration Theory, Quo Vadis?), p. 1-39

<sup>610</sup> Bookchin M, *op.cit.*, (*The Next Revolution...*): p. 100

<sup>611</sup> Further information on the Rojava experience is provided later in this section.

commitments, based on human nature and instincts of mutual aid<sup>612</sup>, can be a platform for a common political space. This would potentially channel efforts to build dual power. Bookchin argues that communities can claim the commons and actualize their potential in free municipalities that are rationally and discursively constituted and institutionalized<sup>613</sup>.

As displacement and urbanization are inherently intertwined processes, most autonomous spaces and social movements take place within or in the immediate periphery of urban settings, creating a natural laboratory to experiment with municipalism. Rural to urban migration as well as the cross-border population movements are both closely linked to urbanization, with people meeting in urban peripheries. These are the spaces with increasingly diverse demographics and shared precarious conditions. Therefore, communalism as a form of organizing and municipalism as its political expression are opportunities for further analysis, where common spaces and the process of commoning can be realized as a political action.

A co-construction process must be non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal, creative, bottom up/grassroots, part of a network, consider the apparent continuity in displacement, but valuing the temporariness of the experiments through community regeneration.

This chapter explores the concept of municipalism as a viable option for co-constructing communities after forced displacement, linking it to an overall picture in the nexus of displacement and governance. In light of the ineffectiveness in addressing displacement and shortfalls in Greece and Italy, the conditions in the studied areas, both semi-urban (Kilkis and Sutera) and urban (Thessaloniki and Palermo) settings are compared to the elements of municipalism introduced by Bookchin. In addition, the Marinaleda experience is also considered as an inspiration, as it presents a model that should be explored further and adjusted for the co-construction of communities and governance. This struggle, born

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<sup>612</sup> *Ibid*, p. 184-185

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*, p. 193

out of the precarity faced by daily and seasonal workers in Andalusia, is essential for understanding the context of the perceived temporary nature of the displaced persons and the prolonged stay in displacement. By analyzing cases studied in Greece and Italy, this section considers whether areas affected by forced displacement can use municipalism as an option, and if so, what parameters and conditions are needed for this transformative process to take place, using the meta-integration process as a criteria for assessment.



## SECTION 1 – The concept of municipalism and its role in direct democracy

Democracy is generally conceptualized according to its relation to the state; representational (modelled after Roman republic representing state's constituency) and direct (Athenian, an example of communal self-management)<sup>614</sup>. Finley stresses that representational democracy, a bourgeois parliamentarianism, is defined by a professional bureaucratic apparatus. However, Athenian democracy, despite its communalist origin, did not shy away from slavery and control of women<sup>615</sup>. Therefore, hierarchy and patriarchy were inherent in the origins of democracy. Today, representational democracy continues to maintain its bureaucratic nature as the dominant style of governance with its close affiliation with the state. Direct democracy, on the other hand, has been city-based since classical Athens, in medieval Italian cities, and more recently in the "Fearless cities" and "Right to the City"<sup>616</sup> movements. Having become a slogan of the social movements in recent decades, Right to the City movements across the globe have reclaimed the city and the common spaces through local activism and have become platforms for struggle against structural injustices both for long-term residents and newcomers. While urban settings are considered the centerpiece for such movements, it is essential to recall Lefebvre's conception of the right to the city going beyond the limits of the city and

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<sup>614</sup> Eiglad Eirik and Bookchin Murray, *Social ecology and communalism*, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007, p. 136

<sup>615</sup> Finley, *art.cit.* (Reason, Creativity and Freedom...), <https://roarmag.org/essays/communalism-bookchin-direct-democracy/>

<sup>616</sup> The 'right to the city' is an idea and a slogan that was first proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* and that has been reclaimed more recently by social movements, thinkers and progressive local authorities as a call to action to reclaim the city as a created space; a place for life detached from the growing effects that commodification and capitalism have had over social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in cities worldwide over the last two centuries <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/henri-lefebvre-right-to-the-city>.

Lefebvre's ideas on space are particularly fitting for a social movement today as they relate to the everyday experience of those who are entitled to the right to the city by virtue of inhabiting the city as opposed to one's nation-state citizenship, according to Mark Purcell <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1111/juaf.12034?scroll=top&needAccess=true>.

Lefebvre's conception of the right to the city goes beyond the limits of the liberal democratic nation-state and offers a critique of the norms of existing society. David Harvey, in his more recent work on "The Right to the City" and *Rebel Cities*, joins Lefebvre in his conclusion of urban areas as revolutionary spaces. Harvey points out that urban areas are in most cases are in the hands of a small political and economic elite who shape the city as per their interest, therefore, he considers the making and remaking people and the cities a human rights issue <http://purochioe.rrojasdatabank.info/harvey2008.pdf>.

As the right to the city movement has become an important part of urban movements across the world, it is crucial to recall that Lefebvre's making and remaking idea has strong socialist views, beyond state as an open project where the details are not already worked out for an ideal society, but efforts toward a collective-self-governing society with all its inhabitants. In this regard, it is a struggle to de-alienate urban space and inhabitants engaging in meaningful interaction with the city and reclaiming grassroots decision making processes from the managerial class and state officials (Lefebvre Henri, *The Urban Revolution*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, p/18701880, quoted in Purcell Mark, "Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City).

critiquing the norms of the existing society today, as the majority is under precarious conditions with limited access to resources and pushed to the peripheries of power. Current socio-political and economic relations assert the hegemony of the center through the nation-state, despite signs of the people's rejection including social unrest and movements. In the peripheries, the aspiration for a dignified life and freedom is suppressed through the burden that everyday life places on people struggling to survive. Mbembe maintains<sup>617</sup> that liberalism creates and perpetuates a culture of fear by constantly reintroducing the topic of danger and threat, leading to the expansion of control, constraints and coercion in order to normalize suppression. The security measures in cities across Europe and at the border crossings are no longer questioned, as the control over personal data has become a major concern of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The control of such data and its use regarding refugee cases registration iris scanning<sup>618</sup> has proved controversial, with growing concerns on the impact on human rights. While the technological aspect of displacement is not discussed here, the loss of control over local resources and surveillance of communities<sup>619</sup> raise concerns about fundamental freedoms and rights, creating conditions of vulnerability to manipulation.

With the COVID-19 pandemic on all government agendas, many states are using powers of a state of emergency, compounding these concerns; the normalization of oppressive surveillance<sup>620</sup> may undermine human rights across the board, more specifically for those in vulnerable conditions. The sensitive line between the necessity to monitor a global public health crisis and the restrictions such surveillance may bring to human rights "could lead to more draconian enforcement of public health measures that unfairly penalize people living in poverty and other minority communities"<sup>621</sup>, according to Amos Toh. Cautious of the surveillance measures and their impact on human rights, a statement<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Mbembe Achille, "Difference and Self-determination", *E-flux*, n. 80, 2017, p.1 - 12

<sup>618</sup> UN4RefugeesMigrants, "Iris scan helps Syrian refugees in Jordan receive UN supplies in 'blink of eye", 2016

<sup>619</sup> Muiznieks Nils, "Europe Is Spying on You" *The New York Times*, 27 October 2015

<sup>620</sup> Stasi Maria Luisa and Bukovská Barbora, "COVID-19 Surveillance Must Not Be Used as an Excuse to Entrench Surveillance". Just Security, 20 March 2020. <https://www.justsecurity.org/69282/covid-19-surveillance-must-not-be-used-as-an-excuse-to-entrench-surveillance/>

<sup>621</sup> Toh Amos, quoted in "Governments Should Respect Rights in COVID-19 Surveillance", Human Rights Watch, 2 April 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/02/governments-should-respect-rights-covid-19-surveillance>

<sup>622</sup> Joint civil society statement: States use of digital surveillance technologies to fight pandemic must respect human rights 2 April 2020. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL3020812020ENGLISH.pdf>

issued by more than one hundred civil society organizations across the globe, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, called for specific attention to be paid to how such measures could reshape the relationship between governments and their people, with possible long-term damage to human rights. In line with these concerns, the intergovernmental organizations such as the UN<sup>623</sup> and the CoE<sup>624</sup> have also issued guidance to governments on respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law during this pandemic period.

In light of the erosion of representational democracies today, experiments in direct democracy, at various scales, show opportunities for the future. The Marinaleda experience shows the possibilities in direct democracy, and a solidarity-based struggle for social change that receives wide-ranging public support locally and globally. As Sánchez Gordillo states, “Marinaleda is a conquered utopia; a concrete and modest example developed through a lot of mistakes, trial and error, and doubts, but with a great enthusiasm. It is an attempt to set up a workers democracy<sup>625</sup>”. He adds that when politicians claim to be democrats and declare others to be violent, they deliberately cover the fact that mainstream democracies often use excessive violence to protect the interest and privileges of a specific social class, and the ruling elite of the center<sup>626</sup>. Therefore, what they claim as democracy is only for the few.

The principles of direct and assembly-style democracy may help people in the peripheries of power to meet, organize and become active in a process of social transformation. This is particularly relevant at a time when forced displacement generates vulnerability for all involved; a crucial meeting space for the people living precarious lives who seek to be part of an egalitarian governance model.

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<sup>623</sup> United Nations, "COVID-19 and Human Rights We are all in this together", April 2020, p.1-22

[https://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/sites/www.un.org.victimsofterrorism/files/un\\_-\\_human\\_rights\\_and\\_covid\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/sites/www.un.org.victimsofterrorism/files/un_-_human_rights_and_covid_april_2020.pdf)

<sup>624</sup> Council of Europe, "Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis: A toolkit for member states", Information Documents SG/Inf(2020)11, 7 April 2020, p. 1-9 <https://rm.coe.int/sg-inf-2020-11-respecting-democracy-rule-of-law-and-human-rights-in-th/16809e1f40>

<sup>625</sup> Sánchez Gordillo, *op.cit.*, p. 83

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28



Communalism, a term interchangeable with municipalism, focuses on reclaiming the public sphere to exercise authentic citizenship and freedom. It demands that power is held by ordinary people, redefining politics and citizenship in a non-statist, post-national and anti-capitalist political structure. It addresses people's aspiration for a quality of life, beyond mere survival. It is a form of local governance that is primarily concerned with everyday problems, considering all residents capable of making their own decisions about their neighborhoods, not delegating to others. By recognizing the changing dynamics of precarious communities, the fragility and interdependency of human conditions are understood and addressed accordingly. This recognition is based on a struggle against structural inequality beyond identity politics, residency status, legal status or nationality.

Municipalism is not an end to itself, as it is a strategy for challenging the neoliberal political and economic order and responds to demands for greater democracy. It questions what is promoted as democracy today with gradual loss of rights and freedoms and its reduction to a voting ritual. Tarinsky stresses that this strategy generates the pressure through social movements with increased citizen participation in the institutional processes on one side, and the creation of autonomous democratic decision-making bodies on the other. It allows local communities to express their collective decisions, cooperating to create a balance in power<sup>627</sup>. He believes that change will require thinking and acting outside of the framework of the current system, as it enjoys operating in a closed web of globalized and centralized power.

Municipalism is participatory politics, and can be practiced anywhere regardless of size, using a rational approach to ensure direct participation. In this regard, reclaiming the commons and deciding on the utilization and management of the public space and life is at the center of municipalist action. The aim is to build grassroots power with local people with the capacity to expand itself. Thus, municipalism focuses on the emancipatory and rational nature<sup>628</sup> of the institutions and aims to transform them.

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<sup>627</sup> Tarinski Yavor and Olney Eve, "Direct democracy and the passion for political participation", *Roar Magazine*, 19 November 2019.

<sup>628</sup> Bookchin, *op.cit.*, (Urbanization without Cities...) p. 191

The concept of municipalism is closely aligned with the process of meta-integration, which is open and adaptable to changes in cultural, economic, social, political and ecological contexts. As a ground-up holistic process, from neighborhood and village gatherings to town and city assemblies, municipalism is already present in democratic processes in most places across the globe.

One examples of recent application of the concept was following the 2001 US bombing in Afghanistan. At that time, the returning Afghans, following 30 years of displacement, utilized a traditional communalist practice called *loya jirga*; the grand tribal council. The approach was commonly applied at street level<sup>629</sup>. This traditional knowledge and practice provided greater access to communities in a post-war zone and existed in parallel to the presence of the international community. In the same line, the *Kuchis*, a traditionally nomadic group, had their own communal social and economic patterns in their mobility and separated in smaller groups if they became too large to manage decision-making<sup>630</sup>.

In the European context, the Paris commune has been the inspiration for many experiments and has also influenced communalism as conceived of by Bookchin. Indeed, Bookchin attributes the first use of the term to the Paris Commune, concretizing its meaning with actions needed for success. Along with the Athenian democracy and Italian city states, self-governance of US indigenous groups also contributed to Bookchin's analysis. Beyond meeting the immediate needs and desires of today's communities, the future-oriented nature of communalism allows a dialectical balance between what is done today, the impact on surrounding areas, the environment and future generations to be maintained. Finley recalls<sup>631</sup> the Seven Generation Principles of the Iroquis Confederacy in North America, where all decisions made on behalf of the present community needed to consider the impact on the subsequent seven generations. Indeed, indigenous groups

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<sup>629</sup> The author has worked with this local organization practice in Kabul in 2002.

<sup>630</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Kuchis" 2020

<sup>631</sup> Finley, *art.cit.*, (Indigenous direct democracy)

[https://www.academia.edu/32721062/Indigenous\\_Direct\\_Democracy\\_Three\\_Case\\_Studies](https://www.academia.edu/32721062/Indigenous_Direct_Democracy_Three_Case_Studies)

often emphasize that community signifies all inhabitants in the territory, the broader ecological community including the natural world.

### 1.1. The concept of municipalism

While pursuing a non-statist approach to power, municipalism underlines the need to transform the institutions and their mechanisms in order to distribute power at local level, thus in a municipal scale. Its supporters argue that this scale of governance allows direct democracy to be operational despite being detached from centralized state structures. It can meet the need that communities have to organize and make decisions about their everyday life concerns, constituting a counterbalance against the monopoly of the corporate-driven state policies.

While autonomous communities engage in the process of municipalism, municipality is considered as a strategic entry point, a common political space for developing broader practices and theories. In this politics of proximity, face-to-face interaction is crucial for redefining and redesigning relations as being in common. Such conditions exist in the peripheries of power where demographic diversity can be a vehicle for overcoming parochialism<sup>632</sup> originating in countries of origin or the diaspora, and interdependence organically emerges due to the precarious conditions faced by people. The challenge in such situations is the individual or group's lack of awareness and difficulty in self-perceiving as a political body with power. It is this tipping point of becoming aware of oneself as political, which is systematically suppressed by dominant institutions, and prevents people from engaging in political action as autonomous beings. Bookchin in his analysis of workers, stresses their multiple identities arguing that they can no longer be considered proletariat<sup>633</sup>. David Harvey, adding to this point of multiple affiliation and

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<sup>632</sup> Parochialism is the state of mind, whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. It consists of being narrow in scope. In that respect, it is a synonym of "provincialism" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parochialism>). In the context of municipalism discussed in this thesis, parochialism is closely linked to the concept of 'local trap' discussed by Mark Purcell where there might be a false assumption that everything local is more democratic and rights based. Therefore, while the importance of the municipalist principles in governance are emphasized, it is also essential to pay attention to parochialism and consider local actions as part of global networks and social movements.

<sup>633</sup> Tarinski and Olney, *art.cit.* <https://roarmag.org/essays/direct-democracy-yavor-tarinski/>

changing nature of labor and concerns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, states that the precariat, in all its diversity must be considered in the process of social change, as they have a crucial role. Self-organized democratic councils constitute the basis for Bookchin's political project. It is very much aligned with the creation and collective use of the commons as argued earlier. David Harvey considers Bookchin's proposal as the most sophisticated and radical<sup>634</sup>, adding that the creation of autonomous spaces alone are yet to present viable solutions<sup>635</sup>.

Bertie Russel, referring to a politics of proximity in municipalist movements<sup>636</sup>, stresses that it is not about being in the same physical space, but establishing human encounters that shapes collective actions. Therefore, municipalism supports the idea of going beyond territorial and possessive connection to a place, and valuing the relational connections that are created as a part of a struggle in the process of meta-integration. Consequently, the process of meta-integration can be facilitated by using Bookchin's principles of municipalism, preparing the way for overcoming the dilemma of temporariness and marginalization of autonomous and anarchist spaces and initiatives, bringing them closer to the politics of collective action.

There are divergent views on Bookchin's municipalism that question the concept and the way it could be realized under current circumstances. While he advocates for the mobilization of social forces to democratize local governments, Mark Purcell warns against the local trap<sup>637</sup>, the assumption that all local structures are democratic and progressive, reminding us that they are also subject to the social construction of their inhabitants. Therefore, localization can also lead to less democracy as the engagement of the inhabitants with institutions is not a defining feature of municipalism but a part of a broader strategy.

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<sup>634</sup> Harvey, *op.cit.*, p. 85

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122

<sup>636</sup> Russel Bertie, "Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities", *Antipode*, v.0, n.0, 2019, p. 13

<sup>637</sup> Purcell, *art.cit.*, 2006 p. 1921-1941

In his analysis of Bookchin's views, one of the concerns Damian White raises is the possibility of active participation of working people with a number of responsibilities in everyday life, including care for children and the elderly. He argues someone working 12-14 hours a day will not have time to participate in neighborhood assemblies and these assemblies may easily become places for people who can afford to be there. He also adds that community-based solutions to complex local and global issues have limits that could not be addressed by people at the local level.<sup>638</sup>

John P. Clark has been one of the most critical of Bookchin's politics, including his notion of dialectic naturalism, social ecology and libertarian municipalism. Clark writes of Bookchin's obsession with what he terms an illusion of the future, and his tendency to dismiss the present with contempt<sup>639</sup>. Clark finds Bookchin's views unrealistic and misleading as he presupposes that the citizenry and agency Bookchin refers to has already been formed and merely awaits the opportunity to take power<sup>640</sup>.

Moshe ben Asher and Khulda bat Sarah express their concerns about the concept of replacing the nation-state with a confederation of free municipalities. In their joint article "Should We Revive Murray Bookchin?"<sup>641</sup> they question whether libertarian municipalism can overcome the conservative elements in society as knowledge and experience of movement-building requires decades to achieve its objectives, with the challenges of funding, recruiting, educating, and training dedicated professional organizers. Asher and Sarah conclude that a vision of a future without higher levels of institutional powers beyond municipalities would be a dystopian nightmare.

It is interesting to note that some of the most critical views of Bookchin are more spirituality-driven, the more secular left provide a more balanced analysis. Declared as

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<sup>638</sup> White Damian, "Murray Bookchin's New Life", Jacobin, 7 November 2016

<sup>639</sup> Clark John, "Domesticating the Dialectic: A Critique of Bookchin's Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics, Capitalism Nature Socialism", Capitalism Nature Socialism, vol. 19 n.1, 2008, p. 82-97

<sup>640</sup> Clark John, "Beyond the limits of the city: A communitarian anarchist critique of libertarian municipalism," Ch. 10 of *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism*, New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 247-290

<sup>641</sup> Ben Asher Moshe and Bat Sarah Kulda, "Should we revive Murray Bookchin? Can anarchism drive community organizing for urban decentralization and direct democracy?" *Social Policy*, v. 48. n. 3, 2018, p. 1-7

utopic and unrealistic by many of his critics, Bookchin's municipalism was sidelined for decades. However, his concepts are now gaining traction with discussions on localization, climate change, local response to epidemics and in some aspects of social movements. The observation that each neighborhood has its own dynamics of culture, identity, class, race and ethnicity raises concern that they will need non-ghettoized political alliances at the city level.

The Fearless Cities network, including Barcelona, Lisbon, and Bologna has been experimenting with municipalism in a variety of contexts and continues to expand this solidarity network. Recent movements indicate that there is a concerted effort to find alternatives to the hegemonic elements in society. For example, one of the factions of the *gilet jaunes* movement in France has been discussing municipalism and exercise of direct democracy. The Rojava experience in Syria is another concrete example inspired by Bookchin's concept of municipalism<sup>642</sup>.

Despite the ongoing war or possibly due to the destructive elements of war in Syria, the Rojava experiment (renamed as the Democratic Federal System of Northern Syria in 2016) has focused on ecological issues and collective rights<sup>643</sup>, challenges hierarchy and patriarchy and seeks a different society acknowledging all the different peoples in the region. The Social Charter of Rojava<sup>644</sup> sets a precedent for practical implementation of municipalism in a specific context. Bülent Küçük and Ceren Özselçuk stress that women's resistance for liberation in Rojava, which received worldwide media coverage, is also a

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<sup>642</sup> Goanec Mathilde, "Gilets Jaunes gather for third "Assembly of Assemblies", Roar Magazine, 31 July 2019

<sup>643</sup> Mathivet Charlotte, Pulgar Claudio, "The Rojava : an experience of municipal autonomy in wartime - Interview with Engin Sustam", Cities, Territories, Governance, 2016. [http://www.citego.org/bdf\\_fiche-document-1751\\_en.html](http://www.citego.org/bdf_fiche-document-1751_en.html)

<sup>644</sup> Bookchin Debbie, "How My Father's Ideas Helped the Kurds Create a New Democracy", *The New York Review of Books*, 15 June 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/06/15/how-my-fathers-ideas-helped-the-kurds-create-a-new-democracy/>

In the ninety-six articles that follow, the Contract guarantees all ethnic communities the right to teach and be taught in their own languages, abolishes the death penalty and ratifies the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar conventions. It requires public institutions to work toward the complete elimination of gender discrimination, and requires by law that women make up at least 40 percent of every electoral body and that they, and ethnic minorities, serve as co-chairs at all levels of government administration. The Social Contract also promotes a philosophy of ecological stewardship that guides all decisions about town-planning, economics, and agriculture, and runs all industries, where possible, according to collective principles. The document even guarantees political rights to teenagers.

political struggle for equality<sup>645</sup>; it recognizes the inequalities around gender roles and social formation of the society, challenging set patriarchal norms.

Referring to the Rojava Social Charter, Küçük and Özselçuk emphasize the important role of autonomous organizations and popular assemblies such as women's houses (where human rights issues related to women, harassment, rape, early marriage, etc., are addressed) and peace committees (conflict transformation between individuals and groups) for community involvement. These community-oriented and place-based mechanisms of self-governance are essential to address structural injustices and transform society. In line with Lefebvre's idea of the contract for new citizenship<sup>646</sup>, such a charter is not an end goal but a political awakening and a catalyst for a movement for collective self-management. Considering the conditions under which the experiment with municipalism takes place, Rojava has remained marginalized and participants were unable to create transformative solidarity relations with people from other social movements. However, Küçük and Özselçuk conclude that historical interactions in the region, particularly at the Turkish-Syrian border, go beyond the circulation of people, goods and commodities, captivating "ideological commitments, memories, moral principles, and political strategies (generally through undocumented and informal means)"<sup>647</sup>. Accordingly, the implementation of municipalism has influenced the region, encouraging local governance practices, and showing the strength of community-driven change, even in difficult circumstances.

## 1.2. The municipalist principles

Despite critics dismissing Bookchin's views as utopian or dystopian, his grassroots vision of direct democracy seems more realistic than ever, particularly given the unequal distribution of wealth and the deteriorating conditions of people in the peripheries of power who are subject to systemic environmental and economic injustices. Although higher

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<sup>645</sup> Küçük Bülent and Özselçuk Ceren, "The Rojava Experience: Possibilities and Challenges of Building a Democratic Life", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 115, n.1, 2016, p. 186

<sup>646</sup> Purcell, *art.cit.*, p. 146

<sup>647</sup> Küçük and Özselçuk, *art.cit.*, p. 189-190

levels of institutional powers are pushed as the only viable option for governance, both internationally and in nation-states, such institutions have proved incapable and/or unwilling to protect fundamental human rights and dignity in recent decades. Any alternatives to the corporate interest driven status-quo of the nation-states have been subjected to intimidation and repression, generating fear in society, and hindering a genuine and organized solution-seeking to the present system. The creative outlet of anarchist initiatives and spaces have retreated from public view, but they have continued to exist in the forms of life-style choices and social anarchism, as extensively analyzed by Bookchin in his book *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*<sup>648</sup>.

It could be argued that Bookchin's work is increasingly significant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as he clearly challenges the nation-state, its impositions and undemocratic practices. More importantly he offers concrete steps for a process of social transformation through peaceful means by installing democratic elements from the bottom up. The radical nature of his approach and language is a product of decades of a dialectical political transformation, filled with conflicts and constant questioning, and does not claim to be conclusive. His attempt to extract the essential points from Marxist-Leninist thought to Trotsky and anarchism is consolidated in communalism/libertarian municipalism, not as a blue print but a process that supports direct democracy, removing the dogmatic nature of traditional political lines and opening a door to new possibilities. Bookchin's proposal of a communalist project offers a way to support the grassroots organic transformation of communities, with a built-in dynamic force for continuity in social change. Through active engagement in local institutions with sound progressive programs, the political power of the peripheries can counterbalance the hegemony of the center. This dual power provides gravitas for an equal negotiation process for the people in the peripheries.

Municipalism is of particular significance when dealing with co-construction processes that follow forced displacement, as it represents a moment when the ability of nation-states to offer democratic solutions to human suffering is particularly questionable. The

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<sup>648</sup> Bookchin Murray, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, Montreal, Buffalo: Black Rose Books, 1986. p. 191



principles introduced by Bookchin and his colleagues<sup>649</sup> place the spotlight on organic intellectuals<sup>650</sup> in considering these principles in their efforts to accompany people through the meta-integration process. The shifting positions generated by forced displacement can stimulate people to explore a style of governance that honors human rights and the dignity of peoples from all walks of life and inspire them to seek a decent quality of life that is in harmony with the natural world. Accordingly, a co-construction process that embodies municipalism can challenge present trends of wealth accumulation and global power.

The principles introduced below are interconnected; a co-construction process would be incomplete if any are lacking. The strength of communalism lies in the application of these principles in their entirety.

## **Dual power**

The origin of the term dates back to the 1917 Russian revolution. Dual power refers to the power of people from below in their local areas counterbalancing state power, which is centralized and deterministic. Creating dual power is a self-instituting process coming out of democratic assemblies which are considered essential parts of communities, presenting sound programs and policies on their own. Thus, municipalism builds on the momentum from autonomous spaces and social movements and channels them into more structured local struggles that present a challenge to the nation state.

It is worth recalling the point made by Gustav Landauer, that the state as an entity, with all its problems, needs to be replaced or transformed into a new form; a product of the people who live in it<sup>651</sup>. Debbie Bookchin and Sixtine van Outryve emphasize the importance of the struggle for popular legitimacy and of working with democratic and self-

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<sup>649</sup> The Institute of Social Ecology was founded by Murray Bookchin and Dan Chordokoff in 1974.

<sup>650</sup> For detailed explanation of organic intellectuals, see Section 2.2.

<sup>651</sup> Vodovnik, *op.cit.*, p. 11

governed grassroots counter-institutions that build popular power<sup>652</sup>. As such, the circumstances in which dual power can be built are created in contrast to how centralized state power is exercised: as a separate entity that is above the people, disinterested or incapable of addressing the will of the people.

Feldman and Herson-Hort<sup>653</sup> refer to the potential of dual power to replace the present system through popular legitimacy, emphasizing the importance of democratic and self-directed institutions of the communities in challenging the governing institutions of capitalist society. According to Murray Bookchin, dual power can bridge the potential power vacuum that might occur during the transition period when constructing a new society and its structures. He stresses that social radicals should be active in municipal governance, presenting programs that encourage popular assemblies generating dual power. While the elaboration of programs through popular assemblies at the local municipal level is an important first step, it is important to note that isolated cases of municipal movements are easy targets for the nation-state protecting the interest of the political center, to ensure it continues to benefit from the present system. The prevalence of popular assemblies in one geographic area does not guarantee its longevity, connecting with other similar municipal structures is important to strengthen their initiatives and rebalance the power of the nation-state. Murray Bookchin proposes municipal confederations to strengthen these solidarity networks across municipalities to share resources, develop common strategies and support each other. It is this block of power of confederalism which constitutes dual power and challenges the center.

While M. Bookchin foresees an actual replacement of state power with confederation of municipalities, displacement affected communities may not be able to create this dual power immediately. However, the concept of dual power generated by local communities in the peripheries is a significant challenge to the hierarchical and paternalistic mode of operations that exist today. The example of the Palermo migrant council at the municipal

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<sup>652</sup> Bookchin D. and van Outryve, *art.cit.*, <https://roarmag.org/magazine/confederation-commune-of-communes/>

<sup>653</sup> Feldman Barry and Herson-Hord Mason, "Building Dual Power for a Symbiotic Future", *Journal of World Systems Research*, v. 25, n.1, 2019, p. 1-10

level is an interesting practice which is in line with this principle; a platform for immigrants allows them to voice their concerns about everyday life and seek joint solutions.

For dual power to be constituted, mechanisms for decision-making by popular assemblies must be formed. This mechanism begins at street and neighborhood level and moves upward to the town and city level. As the methods of establishing popular assemblies and its operation vary from place to place and are determined by local conditions, reactions from the center are to be expected due to their internalized, rooted interests, and should not be ignored. Feldman and Herson-Hort<sup>654</sup> underline that only the popular support of people in the peripheries of power can shift the concept of authority at this point.

Huelva in Spain and Viscri in Romania stand out as good examples of initiatives that are working to create dual power. Both the District V integral plan in Huelva and the development of a social contract in Viscri benefit all of the town's inhabitants as they were developed by the inhabitants. In Viscri, the Roma community members developed a social contract that established dual power with the local administration which must acknowledge the social contract before developing or implementing policies. For instance, a decision of the local community to keep vehicles out of the village in order to not disturb village life and animals resulted in a new location for the parking lot. The local mayor was compelled to commit to decisions in the social contract and matters contained within the document that reflected the community's interest.

Local direct democracy and the concept of dual power are in tension with the center and its interest in controlling global capital. Ordinary people in communities, particularly newcomers, are not welcome despite all the talks and declarations on basic rights and quality of life, as they question and challenge the current state of relations; from the common right to clean water, air, and environment to decent and affordable housing, work and education. Autonomous initiatives and social movements finding a common space in an expanded sphere of democratic self-governance and can therefore create an

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<sup>654</sup> *Ibid*, p.1-10.

opportunity for a more democratic and egalitarian society. The strategy of creating a dual power using a municipalist approach may represent a tipping point for the engagement of many autonomous communities through direct democracy.

## **Popular Assemblies**

Popular assemblies are the basis for direct democracy. They allow the direct exercise of public power from the smallest to the largest settings, including streets, neighborhoods, villages and towns. They emphasize the power of people to meet face-to-face to discuss, exchange, understand and elaborate on issues that concerns their everyday life and future. Popular assemblies can be considered decision and policy making bodies, granting a mandate to an elected individual to present their specific positions and decisions. As opposed to representative democracy, this person does not hold specific unchecked powers for a determined period of time, but acts as a delegate who transmits the message of the community. If they do not respect the terms of the mandate, the person can be recalled by the assembly and replaced with another delegate. The role of the delegate is administrative, their mandate is to execute the decisions and policies adopted by the local assembly. Such assemblies ensure that the results of the execution of decisions are reported back to the smallest assembly that exists in the territory, and further instructions are received from these grassroots groups, with power exercised from the bottom up. Attention is paid to avoid creating an overarching and ruling entity above assemblies, instead of focusing on respecting the autonomy of local assemblies<sup>655</sup>. In larger territories, such large cities, the coordination for wide-ranging decisions on environmental and economic rights, amongst other matters, are made through an assembly of assemblies, where delegates are ultimately responsible to their local groups.

The ability to exercise power at the smallest group setting (e.g. street level) gives all inhabitants the opportunity to actively engage in the democratic process directly,

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<sup>655</sup> Bookchin D. and van Outryve, *art.cit.*, <https://roarmag.org/magazine/confederation-commune-of-communes/>

representing themselves, sharing their concerns, understanding the positions of others, and seeking collective solutions that facilitate community well-being with the existing resources. It is particularly in the peripheries of power that such an approach to decision making can be an empowering process, as the relations of power, privilege and authority are better understood and addressed.

Such assemblies are a feasible approach and could be used at the outset of displacement to minimize isolation and disorientation, and help the process of recovery by transforming vulnerability and resilience to resistance and action. In this case, it creates a dual power that can confront the paternalistic nature of the international humanitarian system. By engaging in such a process of dialogue, all sides become aware of the current conditions and their respective positions while taking on the responsibility of making realistic demands and necessary changes. The direct engagement of newcomers in community life allows them to understand the situation of long-term residents and helps them to seek solutions together. The categorical separation of people in any given space feeds into alienation and otherization, which can result in political manipulation by the center, who make decisions on behalf of the communities without having a clear understanding of the situation on the ground. For example, the concerns of everyday life in Kilkis are not relevant to everyday life in Thessaloniki, and all decisions are taken in a centralized manner in Athens. This relevance is no more obvious than in local movements in the peripheries in their attempt to build power to balance that of a central authority, which only happens through assemblies that allow direct involvement.

The assemblies, therefore, are a fundamental way for people to exercise collective power using institutionalized methods through municipalism, from the neighborhoods to the entire municipality and beyond. This form of self-instituting local governance presents a path in the context of current socio-political relations, allowing groups to move forward from the anarchist and autonomous spaces where creativity emerges but movements are not sustained to struggle against structural injustices. Changing institutions is only

possible if ordinary people enter and challenge the rooted beliefs that the interests of career politicians are more important than community interest<sup>656</sup>.

The practice of popular assemblies, from refugee camps to urban cases as well as in new places of arrival is an essential way of commoning. The creation of a common space for assemblies is a pragmatic and concrete step that can be facilitated by organic intellectuals. The acceptance and validity of assembly decision-making power remains a challenge in displacement affected communities. The Marinaleda experience (Part 2 - Chapter 2, Section 1.3) provides a concrete example of popular assemblies at work in collective self-management in a municipalist context. This is when organic intellectuals across various layers of society play a crucial role throughout the process of meta-integration in order to develop dual power. In this regard, a place-based and people-oriented approach is adopted by assemblies at the outset, and the distinction of legal status and categorization does not present an obstacle for people's decision making.

## **Confederalism**

Confederalism is another of the alternatives to the nation-state seen in solidarity movements and municipalities, it is also termed confederation, co-federation or federation to avoid any association with the racist project of the Southern Confederacy in the United States. For Bookchin, self-instituted libertarian communities are interdependent and need to operate together based on shared resources, production and policymaking. With its roots in the anarchist movements dating back to Proudhon, and influenced by the National Confederation of Labor in Spain<sup>657</sup>, Bookchin looks beyond the concept of confederalism seen in federalist nation-state structures such as Switzerland and Germany, emphasizing the need for democratic and communalist forms of interdependence among communities.

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<sup>656</sup> Russel, *art.cit.*, p.16.

<sup>657</sup> Biehl Janet, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*, Montreal, Buffalo, NY, London, Black Rose Books, 1998, p. 101-111

Over the last four decades discussions on federalism and confederalism have gained a complicated dimension due to the case of Cyprus, most recently highlighted with the 2004 UN proposal known as the Annan Plan. Nicos Panayiotides, referring to long standing negotiations between Cypriot Turk and Cypriot Greek representatives<sup>658</sup>, stresses that both sides are trapped in a stalemate due to a lack of confidence and fear as well as Turkish insistence on a confederation and Greek insistence for a unitary state. Panayiotides points out the general lack of awareness of what constitutes a confederation, with 51% of Greek Cypriots not understanding its implication<sup>659</sup>. Niyazi Kızılyürek acknowledges the 'costly' insistence of a confederate solution on the Turkish side<sup>660</sup> and unitary nation-state on the Greek side, foreseeing the need for a federal Europe in order to survive in the long term. Kızılyürek states that there is a dilemma created by the logic of the nation-state between citizenship and national identity, and sees a community of citizens in a federal Europe as being possible if the notion of nation-state is overcome<sup>661</sup>.

Through confederalism, individualist solution-seeking, an underlining policy in the humanitarian and development field, is put in the spotlight. It has been claimed that the key concepts of sustainability, self-sufficiency and decentralization, values that drove the international humanitarian system in the last decades, perpetuate a non-collective view of rights and freedoms. This does not mean that individual and community rights and freedoms cannot co-exist, but under the present system, such policies undermine the right to the commons through excessive privatization of public assets. Bookchin argues that cultural and political changes are needed in society, as without such change, the notions of decentralism that lead to localist isolation and self-sufficiency may easily result in parochialism and chauvinism<sup>662</sup>. Therefore, a conscious form of interdependence within

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<sup>658</sup> Panayiotides Nicos, "Is the Cyprus Problem Unsolvable? The Geopolitical Trap of the Weakest State", *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies*, vol.12, n.1, 2019, p. 11

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12

<sup>660</sup> Kızılyürek Niyazi, "Konfederasyon ve Kaybolan Yıllar" *Yeni Düzen*, 5 August 2018 <http://www.yeniduzen.com/konfederasyon-ve-kaybolan-yillar-12764yy.htm>

<sup>661</sup> Le Mouel Pierre, "Interview with Niyazi Kızılyürek MEP: My campaign "was not federalism in abstract but federalism in practice", *Thinking Federalist*, 27 July 2019. <https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/niyazi-kizilyurek-mep-my-campaign-was-not-federalism-in-abstract-but?lang=fr>

<sup>662</sup> Bookchin M., *op.cit.*, (The Next revolution...) p. 67-82

society, and between society and the natural world, without surrendering local control<sup>663</sup> is crucial for survival and maintains the integral and unique aspect of community life in a confederalist setting.

Thus, decentralization driven by centralized government structures pushing for self-sufficiency and sustainability are not necessarily democratic or feasible for the majority of the people in the peripheries, deprived of their rights to access resources, and unable to afford a life style based on those individualistic values that are promoted to them by the present system. Decentralization, localization and self-sustained communities are not alternatives to the present system as long as they maintain their hierarchical and patriarchal elements in their structures. Using a symbolic framework, they would present a picture of dispersed small triangles instead of one large one, a false characterization of local democracies. Purcell's warning against using a "local trap with a neoliberal approach<sup>664</sup>" is pertinent, as it represents a danger to both democracy and social justice. Purcell's reflection on localizing decision-making as the solution for complex issues in governance and ecological sustainability is important to note at a time when there is major emphasis on urbanization at the global scale. He raises a very important concern regarding population movement and increased urbanization predictions and scenarios in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The prioritization of quality of life at the urban scale, Purcell argues, would limit democracy to the cities, leaving semi-rural and rural areas (geographic peripheries) out of the equation and reinforcing the local trap. Recalling Lefebvre's vision to favor those who inhabit space over those who own it, and not privilege the urban over rural, Purcell stresses the critical importance of the right to inhabit and consider inhabitants at a wider scale in order to overcome the local trap.

The importance of the local economy in municipalism is emphasized and strengthened through community control over local resources, neither private nor state-owned. A network of municipalities challenging the state through a confederalized economy

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<sup>663</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74-75

<sup>664</sup> Purcell, *art.cit.*, p. 1921-1941



presents a dual power, which is conceived through the municipalization of the commons at the service of all inhabitants, as seen in Marinaleda, Spain. It is essential to note that this very challenging struggle requires a different type of education and organization than represented by current mainstream norms. It is about primarily a shift in the relationship between the governed and those who govern. It is the autonomous and anarchist initiatives which feed into social movements that harness libertarian struggles and make this shift happen.

## **Social ecology**

The legacy of human interaction with the natural world has been abusive and destructive particularly since the industrial revolution. The environment has increasingly become something to be exploited and seen as a resource for profit-making. The dominating nature of relationships in hierarchical and patriarchal societies are reflected onto the environment, often ignoring the delicate environmental balance and the role of human communities as a part of the natural world. Bookchin refers to social ecology as an understanding that environmental problems are fundamentally social and political in nature, and are rooted in the historical relations of domination and social hierarchy. Therefore, ecological problems today cannot be understood or resolved without addressing social problems.

Bookchin's argument on social ecology is closely linked to the points made earlier regarding the need for an Anthropocene view of relations today<sup>665</sup>, particularly in light of the predicted increase in climate and environment-induced forced displacement. Bookchin's precise analysis of the effect of the hierarchical mentality and class relationships on society as setting the basis for the domination of the natural world<sup>666</sup> is very important in understanding the essential balance between human groups, the corporate self-interest driven ambition for development, and the environment.

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<sup>665</sup> Discussed in Part 2 Chapter 1 with reference to Crutzen and Gemmene.

<sup>666</sup> Institute for Social Ecology, "What is Social Ecology?" <https://social-ecology.org/wp/1986/01/what-is-social-ecology/>

Referring to various forms of domination, including economic, gender, and ethnic, as well as corporate and state-driven extraction of resources by any means possible, Bookchin emphasizes the need for collective action and social movements in order to confront and challenge the socio-political sources of the ecological crisis. Recent social movements such as Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future have brought the urgency of human interference in nature into mainstream culture and encouraged further discussions concerning alternatives. Chaia Heller states<sup>667</sup> that nature is an essential part of everyday life and relates to people living in urban and rural areas as part of social ecology. Its social aspect is linked to everyday life practices; how communities are organized to reclaim public spaces, neighborhoods, social relations as well as protecting green areas and local resources. Heller argues that the transformation of these hierarchical and dominating relations, based on privileges including gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, education, class, ethnicity, or nationality, will have an effect on the relation with nature. Such action is crucial in a process of social and political co-construction. Thus, the concept of social ecology is fundamental in redefining and redesigning the relationship with nature through the lens of the Anthropocene.

Brian Tokar, discussing the lessons learned from the climate justice movement, states that those who contribute the least to climate disrupting forms of pollution have long experienced the severest consequences<sup>668</sup>. These consequences include the loss of basic land rights and food sovereignty of farmers, the forced displacement of millions of people due to climate change, and large development projects, such as mega-dams leading to land appropriations for resource extraction. All of these are linked to aggressive corporate profit-making. To overcome this dominant relationship and establish more balance with the natural environment, a major shift in relations is now unavoidable.

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<sup>667</sup> Institute for Social Ecology, "Notes on an Ecology of Everyday Life". <https://social-ecology.org/wp/1999/01/notes-on-an-ecology-of-everyday-life/>

<sup>668</sup> Tokar Brian, "On Social Ecology and the Movement for Climate Justice" in Jacobsen Gaarsmand Stefan (ed.) *Climate Justice and the Economy: Social Mobilization, Knowledge and the Political*, London, Routledge, 2018, p. 168-187

Tokar's reflections on social ecology<sup>669</sup> and its role in a process of the co-construction of communities highlight the need to confront the social and political roots of contemporary ecological problems. He argues that Bookchin and his colleagues' work on these issues since the 1960s have examined the systemic roots of the ecological crisis and made a logical linkage to social hierarchies which exist in society, offering a framework for social action.

Hence, the municipalist principles laid out by Bookchin must be considered in their entirety, as complimentary pieces in the process of co-construction with social ecology organically embedded in a social and political vision. Working to create a world where autonomous decision-making power is in the hands of communities, municipalist principles offer a framework for organic intellectuals in their engagement with displacement affected communities. In this regard, the community-based efforts of local organizations such as Omnes in Kilkis and Floxenia in Commune in Thessaloniki are in line with these principles. Their impact in the process of co-construction should be explored further.

### **Feminization of Politics**

The feminization of politics refers to building and relating to power in different ways than the norms of the patriarchal forms. In this regard, struggling for hierarchical power over others is dismantled as a concept, and more horizontal decision-making and new forms of leadership are introduced. The main focus of this process is to bring feminist perspectives into politics, ensuring gender equality in governance, and challenging masculine patterns of structural conditions in society that generate unbalanced power relations. This includes encouraging more collaboration than competition, more dialogue than following one voice, more horizontality than hierarchy and creates a space for the direct involvement of marginalized groups, beyond the gender aspect that the term

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<sup>669</sup> Tokar Brian, "On Bookchin's Social Ecology and its Contributions to Social Movements", *Institute for Social Ecology*. <http://social-ecology.org/wp/2008/03/on-bookchins-social-ecology-and-its-contributions-to-social-movements/>

'feminization' might imply. Roth and Shea Baird emphasize<sup>670</sup> the importance of challenging the artificial division between the personal and the political using everyday life practices of the horizontal politics of proximity in order to construct emancipatory alternatives.

In the Fearless Cities movement, a global movement of municipalist experiments, the feminization of politics is also referred to as 'depatriarchalization' by some of the cities to emphasize the dominant and privileged representational elements in society which are often white, male, heterosexual, and wealthy.

Marta Cillero, in her article "what does it mean to feminize politics?"<sup>671</sup> stresses that in addition to much needed presence of women in politics, it is important to change the structure of institutions that prevent women and marginalized groups from accessing political power. Thus, the conditions for the reconciliation of public and domestic spheres need to be created, to combat the rooted gender roles that mostly impact women. In the context of displacement, although many life changes are questioned and adjusted in a new place, gender roles are rarely challenged or are not considered to be a priority. The former mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, who has been one of the influential mayors in the Fearless Cities movement, claimed that "the focus on the feminization of politics is not about replacing one political agent with another, but to change the very character of political agency<sup>672</sup>". Stereotypical strong male behavior pattern in politics need to be avoided, or function as part of a community that acknowledges its weaknesses and room for improvement. Bertie Russel refers to this approach as overcoming "a politics of separation<sup>673</sup>" between communities and authorities, which characterizes the municipalist context.

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<sup>670</sup> Roth Laura and Baird Kate Shea, "Municipalism and the Feminization of Politics" Roar Magazine, n. 6, 2017

<sup>671</sup> Cillero Marta, "What does it mean to feminise politics?" Political Critique, 10 July 2017

<sup>672</sup> Russel, *art.cit.*, p. 7

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

Junque, Tepp and Fernandez, in their experiences of the feminization process in Argentina and Spain, conclude that it is important to create spaces where male power is deconstructed and women are empowered as the relationship between masculinity and power have a great amount of influence in identity construction of men as well as the socialization of women<sup>674</sup>.

Boulton, Amich Vida and Berges emphasize the challenges faced by those in small towns and rural areas where traditional practices and inequalities between sexes, including caretaking, domestic, and agricultural work, are rooted in power relations<sup>675</sup>. Therefore, some of the criticism of direct democracy is worth particular attention when practiced in displacement affected communities. Direct democracy is time consuming, and prevents women's participation due to existing gender roles in society. The feminization of politics challenges these roles and attempts to make it easy for women to be actively involved. This is all the more important in the process of co-construction, and efforts must be made to ensure it is not perceived as a secondary issue. Many such situations were observed during this thesis; communities where patriarchal relations are perceived as cultural and are justified limit the political involvement of women. In Palermo and Thessaloniki, anarchist and autonomous spaces encourage direct involvement, however, the fact that single men are over-represented among newcomers unintentionally creates an environment where women are reluctant to take part. In both study areas, Italy and Greece, religion and the culture of the country of origin influenced women's participation in public life. This difference is observed between women from the Middle East, Indian sub-continent and Africa, where those coming from predominantly Muslim countries have a more limited presence in public life and affairs.

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<sup>674</sup> Junque Marta, Tepp Caren, Fernandez Mariano, "Organizing a municipalist platform: structure and confluence" in La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu, *Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 56

<sup>675</sup> Boulton, Vidal, Berges, *op.cit*, p. 73

### 1.3. Municipalism in action

#### *Fearless Cities*

Experiments in direct democracy are underway across the world in various forms, and a wide range of initiatives seek each other out to create a wider network of solidarity. Beyond abstract forms of establishing a society, communities put into place concrete actions to adopt and apply transformative strategies and this has been one of the most important characteristics of 21<sup>st</sup> century autonomous initiatives and social movements. Utratel and Troncoso describe an increase in interest among municipalist platforms to coordinate, share resources and best practices, effectively operating as trans-local affinity networks<sup>676</sup>. Furthermore, they point out how these coalitions emerged from a number of movements that succeeded in changing mindsets, culture and power relations, moving beyond male-dominated institutional politics and bringing the feminization of politics into political discourse and action.

Fearless cities or Rebel cities<sup>677</sup> is a network where organic intellectuals from different walks of life and layers of society play a crucial role in the search for solutions using direct democracy. Cities across all of the world's continents demand transparency and take a more active role in democracy through participatory budgeting, the utilization of common spaces such as gardens and the creation of co-operatives, as well as giving people a voice in urban planning. From Rojava-Syria to Montreal Canada, including *inter-alia* Beirut-Lebanon, Gdansk-Poland, Belgrade-Serbia, Naples-Italy, Grenoble-France, Barcelona-Spain, Amsterdam-Holland, Valparaiso-Chile, and Jackson-Mississippi USA<sup>678</sup>, communities try to address their local concerns even as they build on their transnational dimension to form a network. A common thread can be seen among all

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<sup>676</sup> Utratel Ann Marie and Troncoso Stacco, "Promoting the Commons in the Time of Monsters - How peer-to-peer (P2P) politics can change the world, one city at a time" Common Dreams, June 2017.

<sup>677</sup> David Harvey uses the term *Rebel Cities* in his book with the same title.

<sup>678</sup> La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu, *Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 149-208

these movements across the globe, with people interested in playing an active part in local affairs and directly represent themselves.

Utratel and Troncoso's point that the populist-left tends to make paternalistic promises (e.g. Syriza, Podemos and Bolivarian Socialism)<sup>679</sup> is worth considering as these political parties aim to replace state control, and do not target hierarchical and patriarchal structures that perpetuate the relations of power, privilege and authority under the present system. History is not deterministic; the municipalist movement rises up from neighborhoods in the peripheries of power, where communities do not present a unified form and do not relate to the nation-state in a traditional manner. They are fragmented, divided, have diverse backgrounds, needs and aspirations. It is their social, economic and cultural displacement that makes them vulnerable, and it is the mobilization of this vulnerability that makes them political under the precarious conditions present in the peripheries of power. Harvey, emphasizing the revolutionary potential of urban social movements, stresses that "the revolution of our times has to be urban or nothing"<sup>680</sup>. While cities are natural platforms for gathering and organizing for social change, the urban-rural balance is integral, as social ecologists have long argued. However, the degraded quality of life in urban settings calls for further reflection, particularly during the current pandemic, as technological progress would allow for movement to rural areas with better environmental conditions.

Recent social movements support the idea that it is cities that are fertile ground for social action and change. A search for alternatives to cope with the changing nature of society, lifestyles, demographics, complexities, alienation and isolation in overcrowded urban settings provided an impetus to the right to the city movement, inspired by Henri Lefebvre. Harvey refers to Lefebvre's work<sup>681</sup> as a cry of existentialist pain in everyday life. With urban populations gradually increasing, providing an ideal setting for capitalist relations and population control, cities also present an opportunity to transform these relations,

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<sup>679</sup> Utratel and Troncoso, *art.cit.* <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/06/03/promoting-commons-time-monsters>

<sup>680</sup> Harvey, *op.cit.*, p. 25

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x

possibly going beyond the class-based affinity with urbanization. The direct correlation between the consumption-based urban settings and resource extraction from rural territories have played an important role in reinforcing center-periphery relations.

The consciousness raised through direct democracy and the global network of Fearless Cities, with its approach to municipalism in diverse territories offer the opportunity to target various forms of exploitation and dispossession targeting vulnerable populations. A municipalist approach, that considers social ecology and feminization of politics, therefore, is a political response capable of transforming this vulnerability into resistance and action. Starting from everyday life practices through popular assemblies, the implementation of direct democracy is an empowering act, shaping the present and the future of communities. Forced displacement, in this regard, is a trigger for a transformative process and networks regardless of their title including known examples such as Fearless Cities, Sanctuary Cities<sup>682</sup>, Transformative Cities, and Rebel Cities representing progressive examples of this change taking place.

### Marinaleda

The fundamental similarities between Bookchins' municipalist principles and a concrete implementation of radical municipalism in Marinaleda, Andalusia can be traced back to Spanish anarchist movements in late 1800s and early 1900s. The transformation process in Marinaleda over the last four decades is an inspirational example of population movement turning into a movement of the people. A place that has experienced poverty, resource extraction, emigration initiated a collective struggle with the slogan of 'the land is for those who cultivate it', which was also embraced by the Landless Movement in Brazil. The concept of people's non-possessive relation to the land and the right to its use constitutes the basis of the struggle for Marinaleda. The demography of daily and seasonal workers in Marinaleda is similar to forcibly displaced people and newcomers

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<sup>682</sup> Sanctuary cities that welcome refugees and migrants, provide a dignified space for people while they are waiting for the results of their asylum status to be clarified.



living under precarious conditions. Marinaleda's people came together in the hope that working municipalized land and gaining access to housing as well as other services would create better conditions. In this regard, Marinaleda is an example of direct democracy that can be used as a model for a co-construction process in the context of displacement affected communities.

The recent history of Andalusia has changed drastically since the military dictatorship of Franco (1939-1975) gradually turning into a village that has been described as a communist utopia<sup>683</sup> (1979 - present). The struggle in Marinaleda began in the late 1970s with the direct involvement of unions through land occupation. A landless farming community (daily and seasonal workers) facing chronic unemployment, lack of housing and extreme poverty, families living on two euros a day, embraced the struggle and dedicated their time as a community for their common cause, planning, strategizing and acting for each step through assemblies. This workers' democracy was a fundamental step for survival to provide food, employment and shelter and ensure real participation of the people in community life. A history teacher at the time; an organic intellectual who emerged from the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Andalusia, led the peaceful struggle of this agrarian rural village of 2,700 people. This remarkable transformative process focused on honoring fundamental human rights<sup>684</sup>, including the right to work and education as well as adequate housing and shelter. After 12 years of struggle, including land occupation, hunger strikes, marches, and demonstration at the regional and national levels, 1,200 hectares of land was conceded to the village. For the last three decades it has been run through the cooperatives, with assemblies as the governing bodies making decision on how the village is run. This system without bosses is run through cooperatives, making decisions ranging from the type of harvest to the construction of a canning company to marketing of the products.

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<sup>683</sup> Sanchez Gordillo, *op.cit.*, p. 83-100

<sup>684</sup> Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

The Marinaleda model – seeking solutions with limited resources in a rural setting for daily and seasonal workers under precarious conditions – is inspirational considering the conditions faced by the displaced persons who are often under similar precarious conditions. Although Marinaleda’s residents have been part of the struggle for a few decades, and it has not received a major influx of newcomers in recent years, its local governance model can be applied to a displacement context. There are parallels that can be drawn between the conditions in Marinaleda and those faced by forcibly displaced persons.

It is vital to understand that Marinaleda shows us that what is considered as illegal, such as occupation, is a political construct that can change, and be regularized if there is the political will. The land occupation in Marinaleda, following consistent political pressure, forced the nation-state to acknowledge the protesters’ demands and legalizing what they had previously labelled as an illegal occupation. In addition, the state regularized this act by providing necessary resources, including a water pipeline. The concepts of legality, regularity, safety and orderly migrant and refugee movements are also historically bound and can be conceptualized with alternative logic that goes beyond hierarchical and patriarchal patterns. The difference to note in this comparison is the consistency of the leadership and the people involved in the struggle, which could be a potential challenge in forced displacement-affected communities. On the other hand, considering the protracted time spent in displacement, it should be explored as a possible option.

The experience in Marinaleda is a concrete example of the human rights conventions being put into practice by ensuring the right to housing, employment, education, social and cultural life with dignity. Apart from the size of the community, the ability to exercise fundamental rights through direct democracy – ‘the right to have rights’ as Arendt eloquently expressed – becomes the fundamental point for the dignity and survival of displaced persons. A common space and a commoning process creates the right conditions for claiming and exercising these basic rights. Observations during the author’s field visit to Marinaleda confirmed the importance of commoning: discussions that took

place during work at the fields and factory were analytical and transformative, showing the dynamic educational aspect of this process.

The popular assemblies that constitute and govern the cooperatives and the town are the foundation for direct democracy. Marinaleda has experienced a process of social transformation where people have played a central role in decision making and taking responsibility in governance. This participatory decision-making process, at times lengthy and painful, brings community members to discuss issues that affect their everyday life concerns. Sánchez Gordillo states that this is about fighting together and making lives together in all aspects of community life<sup>685</sup>. The possibility of using assemblies in displaced communities would provide an important step to shift power relations from paternalistic humanitarian work to a solidarity-based approach. Although it may present a number of concerns given the way refugee camps and camp-like situations are operated, exercising direct democracy can have multiple positive effects on both displacement-affected communities and the organizations that work with them.

Marinaleda, having experienced emigration in previous decades during an exodus of the 1960s and return in the 1980s, also presents an example for depopulated rural areas in the Mediterranean region experiencing mobility towards urban settings with the ensuing loss of local agricultural knowledge and practices and depopulated towns and villages. While resettlement of newcomers to the rural areas and repopulation is being discussed in some countries, often the governance style is not mentioned. The process of municipalization of the commons and direct democracy as exhibited by Marinaleda may change the discourse and interest of communities, particularly for those who are concerned with quality of life in light of intense urbanization today. This could also present a counterbalance to the tendency of increasing mobility toward cities.

It is clear that Marinaleda types of settlements are not the targeted destination points for newcomers, as they often head to larger cities where there are more opportunities and a

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<sup>685</sup> Hancox Dan, *The Village Against the World*, London, Verso, 2014, p. 231

supportive diaspora that can accommodate them. However, the governance style with which Marinaleda is experimenting and municipalist principles set the parameters for alternatives.

Sánchez Gordillo, who has played an essential role in the movement, has transformed himself within the struggle, adding to his skills as a teacher. He became an alternative politician in the regional and national politics with his effective role as an organic intellectual in a transformation process of the community. Reflecting on the struggle over four decades, Sánchez Gordillo emphasizes the constant presence of exploitation and warns that it is important to be aware of it and fight against it in a collective manner. He stresses that the future depends on what is done in the present, therefore, instead of making predictions and imagining a bright future in isolated corners, people must struggle in the present to shape the future. According to Sánchez Gordillo, this can only happen through direct democracy, where people make decisions about today and the steps that will affect tomorrow. He believes that direct democracy allows people to be informed, understand and systematically make decisions through assemblies, instead of deciding every four years to elect representatives who remain far from the people and the place. This decision-making involves all aspects of the municipality, including the budget through a municipalized economy, so that people have access to information and spend the available money through their understanding of collective needs. Therefore, the scale needs to be smaller to remain manageable. This is in keeping with the theories of Janet Biehl who discusses the need for a municipalized economy under community control<sup>686</sup> rather than the current economic system rooted in class-based societies.

Emerging from the real needs of the community, Marinaleda's population considers housing to be a basic right, apart from property speculations and the business that evolves around it. Today, young Marinaledans are given a plot for a house, to build on their own with the technical assistance provided by the municipality. Their physical work on the construction counts as part of the repayment with a remaining payment of

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<sup>686</sup> Baher Zaher, "Confederalism, Democratic Confederalism and Rojava", *libcom*, 20 February 2018

approximately 15 euros monthly, spread over 18 years. The contract made with the municipality prevents the owners from selling the house, but instead they can pass it on to their heirs. According to Sánchez Gordillo, in Spain where there are more than a million empty apartments and thousands of families without housing, such an approach offers a dignified solution for the people of Marinaleda.

For employment, interested people can receive €47 for 6 ½ hrs of work a day, earning a monthly salary of €1,128, an amount that applies to all with no hierarchical positions. While the current jobs involve agricultural work and food processing, any profit made from the community income is put back into community funds for further job creation and expanding employment opportunities. At a time where unemployment has been high in Spain (26.09% in 2013 and 14.7% in 2019)<sup>687</sup>, Marinaleda's ability to keep unemployment under 5% is impressive. In terms of women's involvement in the work force (as per the norms of rural agricultural family structures in Spain), child care is provided by the municipality at the cost of 12 euro/month including meals. This has allowed more women to join the workforce and attend assembly meetings. The sport facilities are also provided at low cost, with the community investing in its wellbeing. Sánchez Gordillo stresses<sup>688</sup> that political democracy without economic democracy is a deceit, therefore, transformation processes need to have economic aspects to ensure the involvement of the money poor.

This small rural village in Andalusia and its struggles has at times been dismissed by mainstream Spain as a small unsustainable bubble. Primarily involved in everyday life concerns and politics of the village and the region, Sánchez Gordillo has a remarkable capacity to relate what happens in Marinaleda to the global affairs and economic system, making a thorough and realistic analysis of where Marinaleda stands today. After many years in the struggle, he states that "if you change reality in one single place you can

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<sup>687</sup> CEIC, "Spain Unemployment Rate 1976 - 2020", *National Statistics Institute*, 2020

<sup>688</sup> Sanchez Gordillo, *op.cit.*, p. 89

change the world' and he adds that if nothing, Marinaleda is showing the world that 'a different way, a different world is possible.'<sup>689</sup>

The Marinaleda model has been noticed beyond Andalusia and Spain, inspiring various initiatives such as the Ovacik municipality in Turkey, and most recently the *gilet jaunes* in France. Given that their contexts are fairly different, this influence has also played a different role. The Ovacik case, with its approach to agriculture and production has attempted to ensure that the villagers and workers return to nature, meet their basic needs and open an area that can meet the needs in a dignified manner. With its solidarity among cooperatives and people, Ovacik has continued a socialist tradition in Anatolia's unique geography; with its own dynamics and social segments<sup>690</sup>. Accordingly, the Ovacik community pays specific attention to ethnic, religious and development concerns, which must be considered in their entirety. The *gilets jaunes* have a more urban dimension and the relationships to the production has a different dynamic. Isabelle Labeyrie, in her article of 2019 "Marinaleda, un modèle de démocratie directe"<sup>691</sup>, states that many French in the *gilets jaunes* movement show an interest in understanding this model better, and visit Marinaleda. In addition, the indignados movement in Spain is paying more attention to the Marinaleda model. Searching for alternatives in a time of crisis, Francesca Stainano<sup>692</sup> who studied Marinaleda in the context of solidarity and inclusive citizenship, points out that a common space and struggle is the basis for solidarity. In the case of Marinaleda, vulnerability and resilience of people under precarious conditions was transformed to resistance and a strong political action that central government could not ignore.

Dan Hancox's book *The Village Against the World* offers a descriptive observation and analysis of the struggle and life in Marinaleda from diverse angles through lived experiences and interviews with the inhabitants. He states that practiced solidarity and

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<sup>689</sup> Interview with

<sup>690</sup> Acer Gezal, "Maçoğlu: Toplum yaptığınız her şeyin farkında", *Deutsche Welle Türkçe*, 4 April 2019  
<https://www.dw.com/tr/maçoğlu-toplum-yaptığınız-her-şeyin-farkında/a-48205197>

<sup>691</sup> Labeyrie Isabelle, "Marinaleda, un modèle de démocratie directe", *France Inter*, 23 March 2019  
<https://www.franceinter.fr/monde/marinaleda-un-modele-de-democratie-directe>

<sup>692</sup> Stainano Francesca, "Un'alternativa concreta alla crisi: dalla cooperazione solidale alla cittadinanza inclusiva. Il caso studio di Marinaleda", Thesis, Pisa University, 2015, p. 1-180

comradery over decades has turned into strong loyalty among those who struggle together. Hancox refers to the younger generation's more distant relationship with the 'jornaleros'<sup>693</sup> identity, as they were not an active part of the struggle, and therefore have a different affinity with the local politics today. Changing conditions and easier accessibility to other countries and opportunities affect their relationship with Marinaleda. Hancox concludes that "the solidarity of struggle binds people together in an almost ineffable way through a shared experience, a shared goal, shared risks and hardships<sup>694</sup>". With the emphasis on the pedagogical and transformative aspect of displacement as an opportunity for social change, the solidarity among people in the peripheries of power constitutes the basis for the struggle against structural injustices. Regardless of divergent views of the younger generation, Marinaleda has demonstrated to the world that different opportunities exist.

With all its supporters and critics, Marinaleda is neither a communist utopia nor is Sánchez Gordillo the savior of a community. Marinaleda is concrete proof of the functioning of a direct democracy governance model. This rural community provides an alternative based on solidarity, political consciousness, and collective struggle for a better world, driven by an organic intellectual whom (as Gramsci described) grew out of the conditions of everyday struggles in Andalusia. While Sánchez Gordillo has held the position of mayor for the last four decades, the assemblies have encouraged many more organic intellectuals to emerge, holding various positions across the cooperatives and the community.

#### **1.4. The significance of municipalism for displacement-affected communities**

The ability to exercise fundamental freedoms and rights in everyday life is closely linked to the protection that is meant to be ensured by national laws and international conventions. In the context of displacement, the rights to mobility and access to space

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<sup>693</sup> Landless farm workers and day laborers with no job security (with a specific political significance in Andalusia)

<sup>694</sup> Hancox Dan, "The Village Against the World: A communist utopia in Marinaleda, Spain" *Places*, October 2013

and resources are at the heart of the dilemma of governance at central and local levels, as seen in the way the refugee/migrant influx has been addressed in Europe in recent years. The instrumentalization of refugees and migrants in national and international politics, and responses at the community level have presented contradictions across Europe. This has been seen in particular in the Mediterranean region, where Greece, Italy and Spain have been the main arrival points.

The refugee/migrant situation in Italy and Greece in the last five years specifically has shown the effectiveness of local responses on one side, and the weaknesses of working in isolation in addressing this growing phenomenon on the other, where the essential need for a network of solidarity was revealed. Local communities have been destabilized by continuous anxiety without a foreseen solution, caught between the concerns of daily survival with limited resources and central government instructions on border controls and the situation of overcrowded camps. As a consequence, a significant shift in perspective and response to the influx has been observed, such as on the Greek island of Lesbos where a genuine support of local communities in 2015 turned into an untenable issue of survival, faced with protests regarding the increasing numbers of arrivals and the construction of new camp sites in 2020.

The prolonged and bureaucratic asylum procedures, as per the Dublin III agreement as well as the externalization of the border policies of the EU following the 2015 influx, resulted in the continual reproduction of emergencies without addressing the issue in a dignified manner. Recent government policies, such in cases of Turkey, Greece and Italy, have instrumentalized people's desperation and disorientation in displacement, keeping them in a constant phase of vulnerability and emergency. Such an approach has perpetuated insecurities and precarity among newcomers, and prevented them from exercising their rights. Autonomous and anarchist spaces have provided more dignified options regardless of legal status, seen as part of the struggles of local communities.



The organic relationship between social movements and support for the recent influx of migrants and refugees has gained more visibility in recent years through occupations and squats in Greece and Italy. However, it should be noted that these actions are not a recent phenomenon assisting newcomers alone; their existence has been closely linked to structural problems including homelessness, imposed austerity measures, institutionalized racism, and unequal income distribution, phenomenon that have been present in these countries and increasing in prevalence for decades<sup>695</sup>. The construction of a crisis creates new group of victims and vulnerable groups, subtly marginalizing the representational power of social groups that have been fighting against systemic injustices for decades<sup>696</sup>. With the focus on the new 'crisis', the attention to a systemic issue is reintroduced as a recent phenomenon, in this case linked to the arrival of migrants and refugees, shifting from the structural injustices that were a focus prior to the arrival of the newcomers.

In places where 'temporariness' has become a norm, the sense of belonging to a place and people as well as the willingness to take a part in a collective struggle for rights requires that people are acknowledged and treated as equals. It is essential to emphasize the relational connection to a place and people as opposed to merely a historical, possessive and territorial connection. The possessive relationship to a place is a material possession, but it is also the instrumentalization of the tools and arguments of the nation-states in the form of legal citizenship, national interest and integrity. Newcomers, lacking this historical claim to the land, are instead connected through relationships to both the location and the people living there. This can lead to problematic relations between the majority and the descendants of newcomers, also known as new minorities, as they claim their rights as citizens. In this regard, displacement-affected communities consider the new equation, beyond the norms, categorization and hierarchization of the center and the nation-state, as community of equals, through the engagement in a "politics of equals"<sup>697</sup>.

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<sup>695</sup> Carastathis Anna, Spathopoulou Aila, and Tsilimpounidi Myrto, "Crisis, What Crisis? Immigrants, Refugees, and Invisible Struggles", *Refugee*, vol. 34, n. 1, 2018, p. 29-38

<sup>696</sup> Incite, *op.cit.*, p. 31

<sup>697</sup> Baiocchi, Connor, *art.cit.*, p. 90

Rancière points out the importance of recognizing who is considered a member of the political community. A number of specific groups, including women, slaves, the landless, have historically been perceived as lacking qualifications and power, and their positions sidelined<sup>698</sup>. This can be observed in mainstream reactions to Roma communities, minorities, and displaced people including, migrants, asylum seekers, stateless, refugees: a dangerous pattern in the context of efforts to create a community of equals. Although the existence of such groups is acknowledged by the state, they are not considered part of the political community, therefore, they lack a platform to voice their position and exercise their power as people. In consideration of a co-construction process after displacement, it is imperative to understand that the denial of these groups' viewpoints has a significant influence on the concept of equality and self-understanding of a community. Consequently, a community of equals cannot exist as people cannot engage in politics as equals, setting an obstacle to seek genuine alternatives that target structural injustices in its entirety. Current integration policies of the nation-states keep people 'apart' while they claim to count people as a 'part'<sup>699</sup>. Thus, the process of meta-integration examines the conditions of being a part of the political community. The effort of creating a community of equals ties a particular case in a local context (conflict situation) to a universal claim of rights and freedoms. Accordingly, the politics of equals goes beyond the known interest groups, counts all parts of the community, works with more than what is considered as a norm, and uses an egalitarian approach. Baiocchi and Connor argue<sup>700</sup> that such a process is rooted in collective action outside of the State.

Cognizant of these influences, efforts to create a community of equals must take multiple levels of struggles into consideration, and encourage mutual understanding as well as political engagement of equals in the process of co-construction. For example, the response to the refugee/migrant influx in Greece after the EU-Turkey agreement led to a creation of a community of equals among activist groups. It became apparent that a shift

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<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92

<sup>699</sup> According to Jacques Rancière, 'part without a part' refers to an excluded group from the community. They are not only excluded, but they make up what might be described as a 'constitutive other' against which the ideal of the community is constructed, those whose qualities make them unfit for participation in the *demos*. Baiocchi, Connor, *art.cit.*, p. 92-94

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90

from a humanitarian focus (temporary assistance) to a community development approach (a more permanent multi-stakeholder negotiation) was necessary<sup>701</sup>. In this case, activist groups believed that their work was an act of solidarity, however in its essence the contributions remained more of a charity nature.

The local groups assisting asylum seekers in need of basic assistance waiting to cross the Idomeni border would end their engagement once people crossed the border. Their efforts were essentially based on the concept of assistance and did not require them to negotiate as equals. After the EU-Turkey agreement, when the stay became more permanent, the relationship with the asylum seekers and migrants necessitated greater levels of community engagement and negotiation with other actors. Oikonomakis underlined that the refugee solidarity movement was pulled into salaried NGO work, and that this had an impact on the power relations between activists and newcomers<sup>702</sup>. He calls this process the “privatization of solidarity”<sup>703</sup>. He points out that the closure of the Balkan route shifted the way how local groups dealt with the refugee/migrant influx; from humanitarian assistance for people in transit, to working with people who are potential members of the community. This resulted in the solidarity movement gaining a new dimension, with a more political connotation.

Therefore, the lifestyle anarchist approach in solution seeking had to move out of its comfort zone, negotiate with the local and national institutes, and engage in local community politics. This shift caused among anarchist groups to seriously question themselves; they found themselves in an environment where they were more relevant than before and had a crucial part to play in the response efforts. This new role, emerging out of the conditions and everyday concerns of the communities required all actors to collectively renegotiate their positions under a new set of terms.

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<sup>701</sup> Oikonomakis Leonidas, “Solidarity in Transition: The Case of Greece” in D. della Porta Donatella (ed.), *Solidarity Mobilizations in the ‘Refugee Crisis’*, *Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology*, 2018, p. 65-98

<sup>702</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid*, p.89

An important aspect of the struggle to co-construct is the presence of an economic system of resistance. It is crucial to ensure the involvement of the money-poor and overcome class divisions. Arajuero stresses<sup>704</sup> that a movement needs to incorporate people's economic survival needs into the struggle in order to ensure access to the processes that lead to the creation of a community of equals. While it has not been addressed in the formation of the consolidated framework introduced in this section, the importance of the economy of alterity should be acknowledged. The Marinaleda example is an important example of the economy of alterity. From land occupation to production and management of assets through cooperatives, Marinaleda's economic relations reflect an economic system of resistance, covering fundamental rights and needs of the inhabitants. On the other hand, the Madrid, Barcelona and Paris<sup>705</sup> Fearless Cities projects are examples of a social and solidarity economy (SSE) in urban settings. They aim to stimulate the capacity for autonomous organization and development of community initiatives for people living precariously. Bringing various community businesses together, they also build a network of SSE that gradually occupies a significant place in local economies<sup>706</sup>.

Following the analysis of the concepts of displacement, integration and local governance, as well as considering possible scenarios and exploring a way forward, two main conclusions emerge. The conceptualization of a co-construction process that is transformative and works toward a community of equals embodies these two outcomes in a framework as the meta-integration process, which has been explored in this research, and the municipalist principles that have been put forward by Murray Bookchin and his colleagues. These two elements are consolidated in a framework that organic intellectuals can experiment in a variety of settings. They may also inspire a much-needed shift in perspective concerning forced displacement and its increasing impact on the way societies are shaped and governed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>704</sup> Arajuero, *op.cit.*, p. 210

<sup>705</sup> Corrons Tània, Álvarez Isabel, Fernández David, "Economies for the common good" in La Comuna/Barcelona En Comu, *Fearless cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement*, Oxford, New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2019, p. 130-136

<sup>706</sup> In 2015, SSE projects in Barcelona involved 8% of the population, generating 7% of the city's GDP. *Ibid*, p. 133

The meta-integration process helps communities to engage in a dialogical relationship to define new roles and work towards creating a community of equals. The adoption of municipalist principles provides guidance for those searching for alternatives, helping them to organize communities along different lines than previously conceived. The combination of these two concepts in a framework represents an attempt to facilitate the process of social transformation, encouraging all actors to reconsider their positions, as seen in the Greek initiative example in Idomeni, and engage in a politics of equals. The framework offers both a new perspective, and a tool, to displacement-affected communities, allowing them to analyze and imagine alternatives, particularly at a time when displacement is on the increase with its multiple causes, influences and impact.

### **1.5. Being a minority in displacement-affected communities**

During the process of co-constructing new communities, the majority-minority dynamic is an important aspect to take into consideration; newcomers and their descendants are automatically considered as minorities. Such a blanket categorization of newcomers undermines the distinct differences and dynamics between newcomers and sets a precedent for the treatment of 'minorities within minorities', silencing individuals and groups to express themselves and become a part in a co-construction process following displacement.

The breakdown of Yugoslavia demonstrates an interesting example of the shifting nature of majority and minority identities. Serbs, as the ethnic group representing the majority power, were then viewed as minorities within the autonomous regions of Yugoslavia. With the changes to borders during the Yugoslav wars, many of these Serb minorities from the provinces became refugees in Serbia proper. Although these displaced persons belonged to the same ethnic group as the majority population, they were considered as newcomers, and treated as a minority. Serbs from Kosovo found themselves in a similar situation, having enjoyed certain privileges prior to the 1999 conflict, they subsequently became IDPs/refugees in Serbia. They continue to be considered a minority as per their status.

Thus, the concept of minority is exposed as a socio-political construction, driven by power and dominance.

Despite the UN's definition suggesting that it is numerical superiority and dominance that is the criterion in majority-minority relations, an absence of an internationally agreed legal definition of 'minority' leaves nation-states with the liberty to apply preferential strategic decisions regarding recognition of any group they consider a threat.

In the displacement-governance nexus, the entitlement to rights, particularly in terms of playing a part in decision-making, is closely linked to who is considered local. Within the context of the discourse on 'local'<sup>707</sup>, the majority-minority distinction plays a crucial role, in essence entailing relations of power, privilege and authority. Such a distinction, having determined the parameters of majority-minority relations under various governance styles over centuries, shapes the way minorities are perceived and treated by the ruling entity. Whether minorities are considered the old minorities<sup>708</sup> or new minorities<sup>709</sup>, the distinction can be imposed by the majority with heteronomous tendencies or self-identified by a specific group for cultural survival. In either case, Akgönül contends that the dominance of the majority allows for specific policies for each group, based on who is considered suitable for assimilation (inclusion) and those for whom assimilation seems impossible (exclusion)<sup>710</sup>.

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<sup>707</sup> As discussed in Part 2, Chapter 1.

<sup>708</sup> Old Minorities, also referred to as historical, traditional, and autochthonous minorities. Old minorities are those who have a distinct language, culture, or religion compared to the rest of the population or who have become minorities through the redrawing of international borders, having seen the sovereignty of their territories shift from one country to another. These are ethnic groups that have not achieved statehood on their own for various reasons and that have now become part of a larger country (or several countries): they are the so-called 'old minorities' or 'sub-state nations'. In many but not all cases, their co-ethnics may be numerically or politically dominant in another state, which they therefore regard as their 'external national homeland', or kin-state. Medda-Windisscher, Roberta, "Old and New Minorities: Diversity Governance and Social Cohesion from the Perspective of Minority Rights", *De Gruyter: Acta Univ. Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies*, n. 11, 2017, p. 26-27

<sup>709</sup> New minority groups stem from migration – the 'new minorities'. These are groups formed by individuals and families who have left their original homelands to emigrate to other countries. In most cases, their reasons are economic, although political reasons play an increasingly important role as well. New minorities thus consist of migrants, refugees who are living in a country other than that of their origin, on a basis that is more than merely transitional. Moreover, the term 'new minorities' is broader than the term 'migrants' as it encompasses not only the first generation of migrants but also their descendants, extending to include second and third generations of individuals with a background of migration, many of whom have been born in the country of immigration and who cannot objectively or subjectively be subsumed under the category of 'migrants'.

*Ibid*, p. 27

<sup>710</sup> Akgönül Samim, "États Nations et Minorités Quelles Voies D'Expression ?", in Serge Théophile Balima, Michel Mathien (ed.), *Les médias de l'expression de la diversité culturelle en Afrique*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, UNESCO, 2012, p. 66

The concept of minority has a significance with regard to power and domination. Thus, as opposed to the idea of '51% majority rule', it is not the number of people that determines the strength or weakness of the group, but its internal dynamics, including its ability to implement power strategies. The majority-minority dynamic has been part of communities among long-term residents and newcomers alike, setting hierarchies based on the power and dominance of specific groups. Although minorities have been distinguished according to national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities (former/traditional minorities) in international instruments, new categories have been part of the minority protection and rights discourse, as new minorities primarily refers to newcomers and their descendants as well as those who are categorized according to their sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, size and political affiliations.

The historical dimension of possessive and territorial relations to a place and people is often determined by the majority-minority dynamics. The minority question is an inevitable element in political discussions in the world's 200 plus nation-states (193 UN recognized), who defend their sovereignty, interest and integrity at any cost. The challenge in the widely accepted and practiced formula for co-existence is to fit the estimated 4000-6000<sup>711</sup> nations (considering only old minorities) struggling for cultural survival within the borders of recognized nation-states. Therefore, as much as it is rooted in the representative democracies of nation-state formation, the categorization of people as majority and minority is simply a power- and dominance-driven notion, reflecting the "reproduction and challenges to the relations of power and privilege, associated with gender, race and class<sup>712</sup>."

The concept of minority entered the international arena with the multilateral regime for the protection of minorities in the framework of the League of Nations, and continued reluctantly with the United Nations. This makes it impossible to identify all groups constituting minorities, and impossible for them to benefit from the rights attached to the

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<sup>711</sup> Cultural Survival (quoting International Labor Organization) estimates that there are approximately 5,000 different indigenous groups living in 90 countries worldwide. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/issues>

<sup>712</sup> Rigoni, *art.cit.*, p. 838

concept. In a period in history when the hegemony of the state is questioned and political action for alternatives is being explored, the states' fear of their ultimate relevance is confronted with legitimate claims for recognition and basic rights. Such ambiguity in definition allows states to deviate from making commitments to clearly defined minorities.

The recognition of a minority is a political decision; therefore, it is a socio-political construction and not neutral. Regardless of their recognition, minorities are often subject to restrictions on expression of their differences as they present a threat to the unity of nation-states<sup>713</sup>. The fear of new minorities stem from the claims of old minorities as recognition would open Pandora's box as far as demands for power and rights granted to traditional minorities is concerned, and further challenge what is considered the norms of the majority.

Geneviève Koubi points out<sup>714</sup> that despite the absence of a legal definition of minority, international and national legal systems are able to respond, punctually or uniformly, to some of the difficulties linked to the emergence of identity phenomena or by virtue of concerns. The Dictionary of Sociology defines a minority as "a subgroup geographically included in a larger group (nation/society/people), whose members share common characteristics that differ from the surrounding group<sup>715</sup>." These common characteristics are, in general, defined as religious, linguistic, cultural and national. However, in international documents they are grouped under three headings: religious, ethnic and linguistic.

According to the United Nations, an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority is any group which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State whose members share common characteristics of culture, religion or language, or a combination of any of these<sup>716</sup>. This definition does not foresee any requirement of citizenship,

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<sup>713</sup> Medda-Windisscher, *art.cit.*, p. 39

<sup>714</sup> Koubi Geneviève, "Penser les Minorités en Droit", in Fenet Alain (ed.), *Le Droit et les Minorités*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2000, p. 395

<sup>715</sup> Fairchild Henry (ed.), *Dictionary of Sociology*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1944, p. 134

<sup>716</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Concept of a minority: mandate definition", 2020  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/ConceptMinority.aspx>



residence, official recognition or any other status to belong to a minority group. The 1992 United Nations Minorities Declaration requires that States protect and take the necessary measures for the existence of minorities. Within the CoE, there are two essential texts relating to new minorities: The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The 2019 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues<sup>717</sup> presents a number of definitions, formulations and descriptions put forth by various United Nations entities, designated experts, committees, commissions or sub-commissions between 1947 and 2010. Among all these attempts in the UN system, the 1977 definition by Francesco Capotorti (Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities) is the most reviewed and used definition across the board today. Capotorti refers to a minority as “a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language”<sup>718</sup>.

As discussed in the case of the displaced people (Part 1 - Chapter 1), categorization of any group comes with a label that puts any person affiliated with these groups under a blanket definition, regardless of their self-identification or relationship with the group. For example, the Syrian refugees are seen a part of the same category by the majority regardless of numerous subgroups they may represent. In the center-periphery relationship, the people of the peripheries of power belong to a specific group and are perceived as the ‘other’ according to their potential to benefit the center. In this regard, their existence constitutes a distinctive minority presence, farther from the norms of a center that determines the majority norms. Thus, minorities are subjects to be ‘educated’

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<sup>717</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues (A/74/160): Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities”, 2019  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/ConceptMinority.aspx>

<sup>718</sup> Fortman, Bas de Gaay, “Minority Rights: A Major Misconception?”, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2011, p. 276

where their presence and proximity to public and political life is tolerated as per whether they accept alignment with the norms of the majority. Any divergence from these norms presents a discomfort for the center, and only through the majority will it gain approval to exercise its power.

The presence of minorities in any nation-state is tolerated, with limitations, as long as the majority norms are abided by and groups are aligned with the norms of the center. The ‘good’ and ‘bad’ minorities are assessed according to the trouble they create for the norms set by the majority. In this regard, the way one self-defines as part of a majority or minority is linked to one’s consciousness, which Lefebvre stresses in *Critique of Everyday Life* that cannot be explained by itself as it needs to be seen in its totality in context. Baskin Oran points out that “as there is no class without class consciousness; there is no minority without minority consciousness<sup>719</sup>”, which can emerge through self-identification or can be imposed by the majority. Pierre George refers to three processes in consideration of minority identity as the complete lack of minority conscience, weak or strong minority conscience<sup>720</sup>. While the first concerns the loss of identity by dissolving into mainstream culture; integration, the second indicates co-existence with the others while preserving aspects of cultural heritage. The third process relates to maintaining solid and distinctive cultural roots and visibility within a dominant culture. This can be seen in the Roma community of Viscri, Romania, who were shamed and resisted identifying with their ethnicity for decades, choosing instead to introduce themselves as Romanian based on their citizenship. According to Ms. Fernolend<sup>721</sup>, despite the Roma community in the region having tried everything to integrate at the expense of losing their identity and cultural practices, the historic discriminatory perception and treatment of Roma by the majority did not change and they were kept from political processes.

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<sup>719</sup> Oran Baskın, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar, Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama*, İstanbul, İletişim, 2005, p. 26

<sup>720</sup> George Pierre, *Géopolitique des Minorités*, Paris, PUF, 1984, p. 19

<sup>721</sup> Ms. Fernolend is the head of Mihai Eminescu Trust in Romania. A long-term resident of Viscri, she has been working with Roma communities for over 30 years. The author has been working with Ms Fernolend and observing developments over the last five years.

In Greece, Kokkali, in her analysis of the Albanian minority<sup>722</sup>, refers to the presence of Albanians as 'good migrants' and 'integrated', invisible in the public sphere (without forming ethnic neighborhoods or ethnic infrastructures such as cafes and specialty shops, etc.), not challenging the existing orders and values of the dominant society. The distinction between displacement by choice and force plays a role in majority-minority dynamic as the nation-states' integration policies try to prevent social norms from decaying. While the Roma community has a historical but not territorial presence in Romania, Albanians and their descendants in Greece have maintained their connection to their place of origin and often see Greece as source of employment, not engaging in the politics that may affect local dynamics.

Akgönül refers to hierarchical phases of minority visibility as passive, active and reactive<sup>723</sup>. Minorities who are passively visible do not demand specific social or legal accommodations, while minorities who are actively visible require the majority to preserve elements of their minority identity. Minorities in the reactive hierarchical phase, however, visibly demonstrate their presence and demand rights as distinct groups outside of the majority identity. Akgönül emphasizes that the interaction between these phases are linked to visibility and acceptance by the majority.

Within the context of displacement, the above described minority concept can be related to new minorities; newcomers and their descendants. However, during co-construction, the majority and old minority dynamics must be considered, and any impact this relation would have on minorities as a whole. According to Nihal Eminoğlu, new minorities in this regard relate to three different social situations; the first being a group of people that finds themselves in a minority situation after a change of border. The second refers to pre-existing groups that acquire a minority conscience and demand equal rights at a later stage such as persons with diverse sexual orientations, persons with disabilities, etc. The third group refers to newcomers and their descendants<sup>724</sup>. Eminoğlu questions the

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<sup>722</sup> Kokkali, *art.cit.* p. 10

<sup>723</sup> Akgönül Samim, "Minorité et visibilité: Quelques pensées préliminaires", p. 4

<https://akgonul.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/minoritecc81s-visibilitecc81s-samimakgoccc88nucc88l.pdf>

<sup>724</sup> Eminoğlu, *art.cit.*, (Thesis), p. 272

designation of descendants of newcomers as minorities as they were born, raised in one place and have never migrated. Her point supports the critique of the categorization of the displaced as immigrant, refugee, or asylum seekers. These divisions, as well as minority or majority categorizations are ineffective during the process of community co-construction, and perpetuate otherization, paving the way for power relations and competition for dominance.

As a minority, the individual decision whether to align politics and practice with the interests of the majority or the minority interests, mirrors individual approval of the heteronomy of the state. Akgönül highlights that all social groups need an 'other' as a single criterion of belonging. Calling attention to remote otherness, fear of the 'other' based on false stereotypes, and, 'the otherness of proximity'; groups who are close but seen as threatening. He argues that the dominant majority, particularly national and religious groups, hate those who they know well<sup>725</sup>. The way newcomers are perceived and treated is a combination of this perspective; fear developed around fabricated stereotypes are materialized through policies and their treatment once they become more familiar in proximity. Today, a consideration of the conscious 'majority' discourse with internalized norms and values of the plutocracy must go beyond excuses of ignorance or orientalism, and should highlight the historical relations of oppression as well as the structural injustices that feed into majority-minority relations.

The minority question perpetuates the distinction of 'us versus them', 'local versus outsider', 'long-term resident versus newcomers' as a constant reproduction of otherization that is manifested in the form of prejudice, discrimination and systemic inequalities against specific groups. Going beyond this conceptualization, community co-construction following forced displacement, particularly in the peripheries, should be a platform for imagining creative alternatives to maintaining minority-majority dynamics. The Displacement Triggered Community Co-construction Framework (CCF) encourages imaginaries beyond these given categories and advocates that power relations be set so

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<sup>725</sup> Akgönül, *art.cit.*, (Islamophobia, Muslimophobia...), p. 7

as to co-construct more autonomous democratic alternatives beyond the heteronomy of the center. Through direct democracy, the new minorities in the peripheries of power are empowered to engage in decision-making processes, minimizing marginalization and the risk of radicalization.

As products of hierarchical and patriarchal systems, minorities are not the simply passive recipients of majority oppression, but are capable of oppressing others. Minority dominance in countries of origin can be seen within the Alevite-led Syrian regime or the Pashtun dominance in Afghanistan, which is also reflected in power relationships within refugee and migrant flows into the northern Mediterranean.

The CCF suggests that alternatives in governance should not be restricted by the continuation of categorization of people, which perpetuates structural injustices. The social transformation process triggered by displacement must consider minorities as distinct groups; a source for social imaginaries for alternatives and equal partners in a co-construction process.

Amin concludes that “all changes tending toward real social transformation, even radical reforms, have resulted from struggles waged by what, in electoral terms, may appear to be ‘minorities.’ Without the initiatives of such minorities, the motive force of society, no change is possible. Such struggles, engaged in by such minorities always end up when the alternatives proposed are clearly and correctly defined by carrying along majorities and may by universal suffrage receive ratification, which arrives after - never before - victory<sup>726</sup>”.

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<sup>726</sup> Amin, *art.cit.*, <https://monthlyreview.org/2011/10/01/the-democratic-fraud-and-the-universalist-alternative/>

## **SECTION 2 - Considering municipalist principles and meta-integration as a framework for displacement-affected communities**

### **2.1. Consolidated Framework for Displacement Triggered Community Co-construction**

The importance of autonomous and anarchist initiatives in community-based responses to forced displacement has been discussed in Part 1 - Chapter 1 and Part 2 - Chapter 1, emphasizing how essential their role is in feeding into social movements and change. The studied areas in the northern Mediterranean region provide good examples of how some autonomous and anarchist spaces work within the context of constant mobility and community regeneration. With the analysis of concrete examples of municipalist practices in Spain, Turkey and France, as well as the examination of the meta-integration process in displacement-affected communities in Greece and Italy, a framework for a co-construction of new communities emerges. This framework has the potential to offer an alternative platform for organic intellectuals in their respective communities, connecting with other struggles in a larger network of solidarity. Aware of the narrow room for maneuver that communities have when developing a different narrative (between coloniality of power and colonized minds), the framework encourages the adoption of alternative political practices that are adjusted for constant community regeneration as seen in autonomous spaces. Both in Italy and Greece, commonly perceived as transit countries, 'temporariness' has become a permanent phenomenon, and traditional governance practices do not meet the needs under current circumstances.

Considering similar situations in other contexts as well, this framework offers a common language and a platform to share practices toward a shared vision. In this regard, the framework is not a formal and restrictive recipe to follow, but provides a basic direction, encouraging creativity, free thought, and possibly a common ground for a socio-political struggle. Advocating for a sense of shared responsibility among all inhabitants using a solidarity approach, the framework has been developed using an intersectoral and integrated view. It brings together a matrix of concepts that do not necessarily follow linear

logic, but require a simultaneous multi-dimensional analysis with an understanding of interconnectedness. The equal importance of all the elements of the meta-integration process and the municipalist principles are emphasized in the framework, recognizing that the complexities of the socio-political conditions of a specific location may not allow their immediate realization. Therefore, it should be considered that the framework must be gradually implemented, providing temporal continuity.

In the utilization of this framework there are two essential tipping points<sup>727</sup> that call for attention. The first tipping point is the scale; the threshold of the number of persons that allows for direct participation and representation where they have a room to voice their opinion and discuss. The second one is the crucial point of change from vulnerability to resistance as per the anatomy of displacement, described in Part 1 - Chapter 1. In both cases, the group dynamics and continuous dialogical process play a crucial role in order to assess the moment of critical mass, when a group turns the corner for collective action in the peripheries of power.

Such place-based and people-oriented community initiatives provide a fertile platform and scale for collective action. The concept of community well-being must be perceived with all its contradictions, mindful of the difficulties that will be faced. The meta-integration process can help with ways to mitigate these challenges. This is manageable due to its small scale, which allows for the direct participation of all inhabitants. Through face-to-face interactions in assemblies, the community's vulnerabilities can be assessed and transformed into a matter of collective struggle. The framework does not lay out a final point of arrival as it argues that it is specific to each community, space and time, based on concrete everyday life conditions and practices. Any rigid and unadaptable structure would hinder the efforts as they would require policing to enforce the structure. The intersectoral and integrated view refers to an organic interconnectedness among diverse

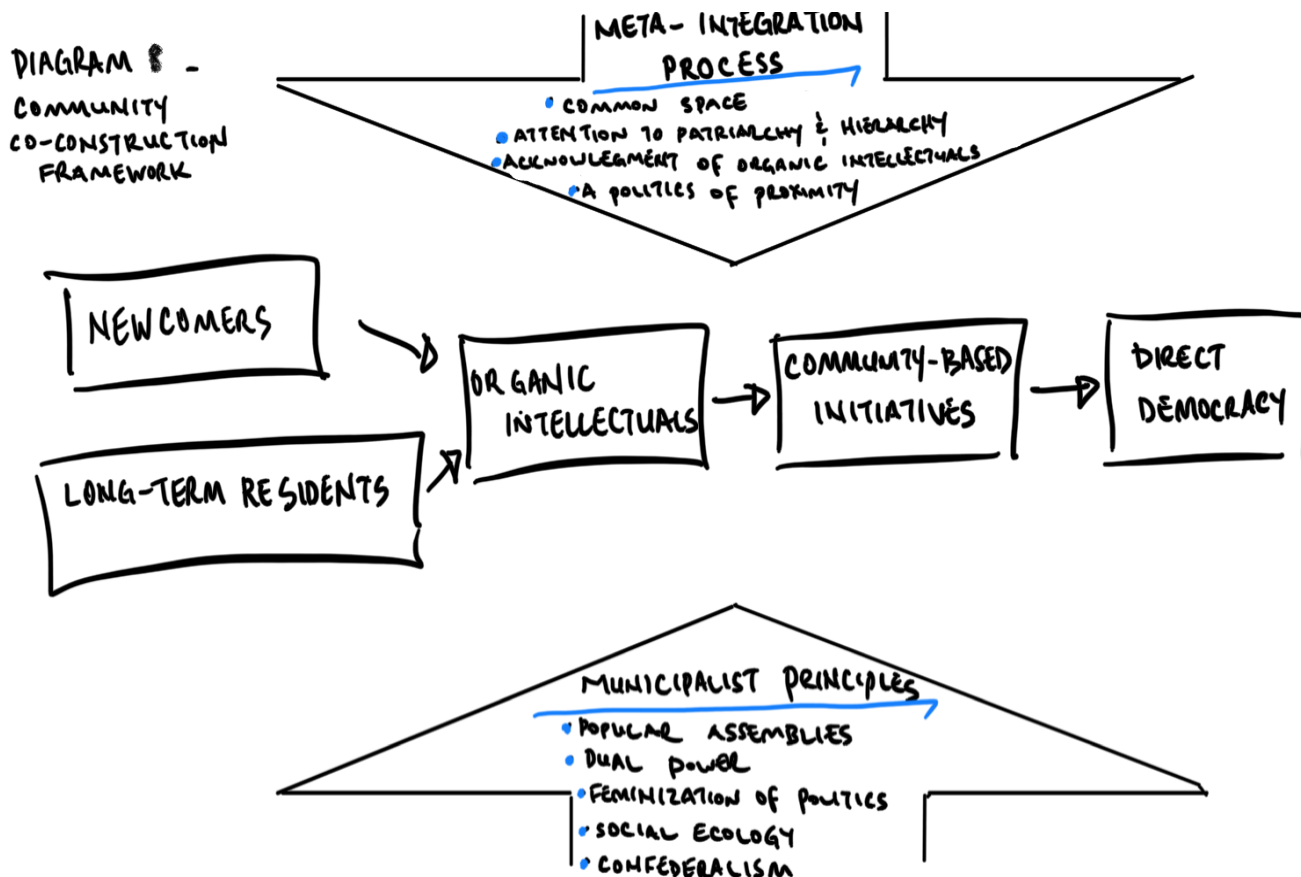
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<sup>727</sup> Gladwell Malcolm, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, New York, Hachette Book Group, 2002. p. 324. In this book, Gladwell points out the moment of critical mass, the threshold, that events turn the corner.

topics and argues that community concerns should not be categorized, addressing any one specific group.

Consequently, encouraging the local inhabitants to elaborate on a meta integration process through the principles of municipalism is a natural segue to the main arguments made in this thesis on displacement, integration, and local governance.

The visual representation of the framework does not follow a hierarchical order. Therefore, any single element should not be seen as stage that operates on its own, but be considered as an integral part of the entire framework. Note that organic intellectuals can emerge from both newcomers and long-term residents, facilitating a process of meta-integration toward a projection of a collective future, utilizing the municipalist principles.





The meta-integration process refers to a genuine dialogue with the consideration of people, places and their stories. Using the critique of the mainstream concept of integration<sup>728</sup>, it explores possibilities beyond integration where the communities are formed in the peripheries of power. It calls for specific attention to avoid reproducing the hierarchical and patriarchal power relations that can follow forced displacement. The process embraces the notions of ‘the commons’ and ‘commoning’ that have been central to the discussions on autonomous spaces in the northern Mediterranean countries. Due to its aim of developing a community of equals and direct democracy in the context of forced displacement, the meta-integration process is of crucial importance in creating a common space. As per the diverse nature of geographic, human and political landscapes, the process works on the premise that conflictual situations are natural and often present. In addressing the potential conflict situations, Diagram 9 consolidates the steps in a conflict transformation process<sup>729</sup>.

DIAGRAM 9 - CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION PROCESS



SOURCE: GABRIELLA YATES, 2004

<sup>728</sup> Discussed in Part 1 - Chapter 2.

<sup>729</sup> The chart was developed by Gabriella Yates in 2004 during her work with the author in Kosovo.

The identification of common ground where multiple narratives are shared is essential as it facilitates mutual understanding and restores respect. A genuine dialogue, particularly at times of vulnerability when people are removed from their fixed positions, introduces new ideas and encourages people to explore different options.

A common space is important for a face-to-face interaction and acknowledgement of people who easily become numbers during and following forced displacement. They become the subject of aid distribution and the clients of social services for organizations and authorities, without faces, clustered in groups as per their legal status. Popular assemblies in this regard play an important role. While they are organized in different ways in different places, the assemblies provide the opportunity for people to express their concerns, views and potential solutions. They take place in settings including camps, camp-like situations, rural and urban areas, ensuring that people are able to speak and listen.

Particular attention is given to the feminization of politics at this very early stage where women and marginalized groups, including persons with diverse sexual orientation have equal space ensuring that the conditions are appropriate so as to facilitate their involvement, and an active role in decision making. The assemblies embrace the concept of social ecology and pay attention to the relations of power and privilege. The embedded power relations and roles between actors (e.g. refugee camps that are administered by refugee organizations), based on territorial connection to a place, may lead certain groups to perceive these assemblies as unnecessary or a threat to their authority, and therefore adopt strategies to dismantle them.

It is at this particular point that the autonomous initiatives and organic intellectuals become essential in a co-construction process. As the objective with the development of dual power is not try to take over the power but balance it through direct representation, it is essential to cooperate and be ready to take responsibility. The experiences in Italy and Greece have shown that in displacement-affected communities, the creation of

common spaces is often led by the long-term resident activists embracing newcomers, where community practice is initiated. The exposure and tolerance for multiple narratives, regardless of whether they may present drastically opposing views, helps with mutual understanding and builds respect for others. Considering multi-layered efforts of and for the displaced persons, every action has an underlining aim moving it towards creating a politics of proximity, leading to community practices for direct democracy. In this regard, the municipalist principles offer a perspective that goes beyond the norms of the nation-state.

The popular assemblies, which are fundamental elements in municipalism, have the potential to develop an informed and conscious community of solidarity that can critically question, analyze, propose alternatives and assume an active role in matters that concern their everyday life. Confederalism, in this capacity, may not be directly linked to the municipal institutions as some groups may not have direct access to the institutions, but instead form a network of autonomous initiatives. Although the concept of confederalism in Bookchin's explanation is conceived as a network among established municipalities, displacement-affected communities could use this logic as a transitional phase. The cooperation among anarchist and autonomous initiatives in Greece and Italy are good examples where long-standing struggles embrace newcomers and adjust their scope with changing conditions. The occupations and squats play a particular role as people have a non-possessive/relational connection to these autonomous spaces, which acknowledge human dignity and rights regardless of their temporary nature.

In the process of co-construction following forced displacement, the feminization of politics and social ecology become fundamental principles for collectively targeting the structural injustices that are regenerated through rooted hierarchical and patriarchal relations. Ultimately, a progressive socio-political transformation process that is triggered by forced displacement has the potential to weave in these principles in a movement that is in search of viable alternatives as well as redefining and redesigning relations for a community of equals.

## **2.2. Comparative analysis of the studied areas in the context of the CC framework**

While this research has observed forced displacement related developments and explored theories and examples in five countries of the northern Mediterranean region, a qualitative study was carried out with a focus on specific local responses over the last five years in Greece and Italy. Two urban settings; Thessaloniki, Greece and Palermo, Italy with autonomous initiatives, and two semi-rural areas Kilkis, Greece and Sutera, Italy were studied. Other cities such as Athens, Greece, Rome and Turin, Italy were also visited and observed in order to better understand the impact of the scale of the habitats and possible variations in different geographic areas.

The selection criteria for the studied areas sought examples of locally led activism creating autonomous initiatives and spaces which had played a significant role in local responses in the respective countries. Two local autonomous initiatives in Thessaloniki and Palermo were selected as examples of local responses in urban settings where temporal continuity in social movements are observed. The two small towns, Sutera and Kilkis, where the local response was led by the municipalities in close cooperation with the community and local organizations, were chosen as representative of community mobilization, particularly in areas where depopulation of long-term residents has been predominant. In all cases, displacement has inspired continuous community regeneration with ongoing influx of refugees and migrants as well as emigration faced due to socio-economic difficulties. Therefore, they represent a prototype of communities in the peripheries of power that are the concern of this research. They are places of fluidity, precarity, and heterogeneity that have been subject to a major economic downturn in recent years, and primarily transitional areas with long history of population movements.

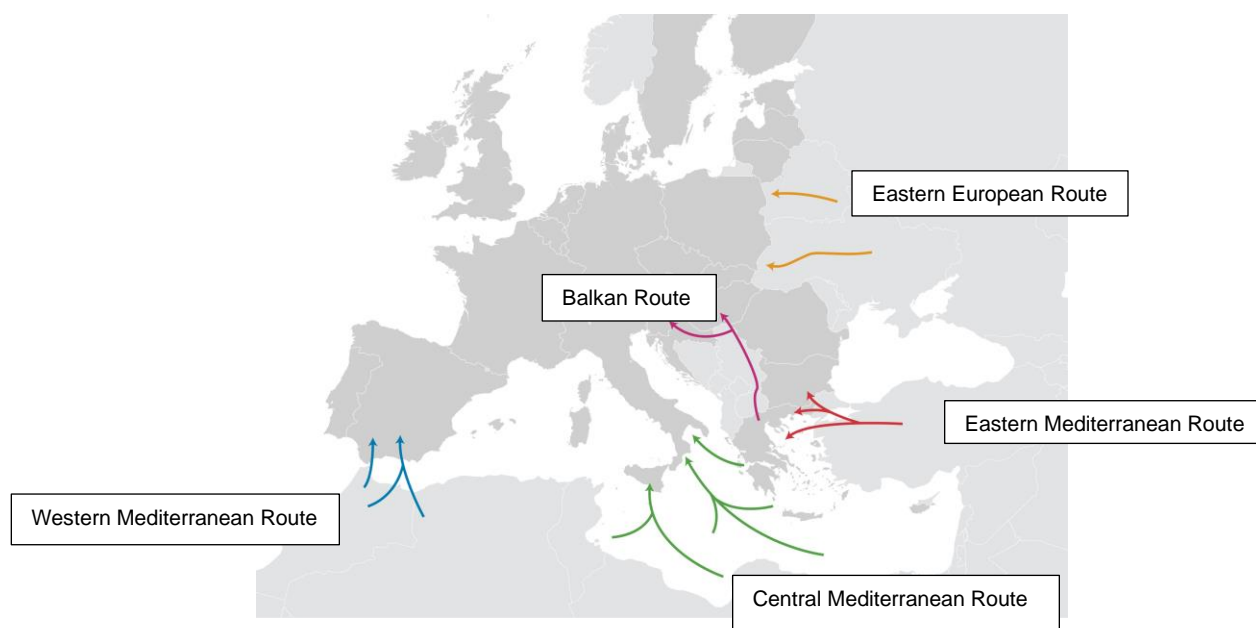
In addition, their relationship with the colonial history of Europe has been different than other countries in the region such as Spain and France, with a more critical view toward Europeanness and Eurocentrism, as they have been subject to both aspects of colonialism throughout their history. Finally, a long-standing political culture and grassroots

solidarity has been a determining criterion for the selection. The analysis compares the observations, literature and collected data through interviews against the elements of the framework.

## 2.2.1. Studied areas

### Geographic landscape (rural/urban)

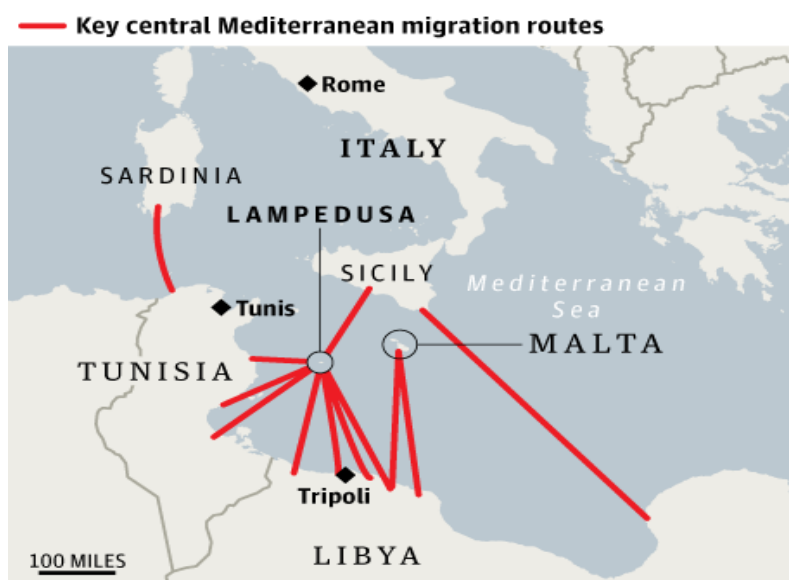
The refugee/migrant entry to Europe is determined by geography. The selected areas represent critical geographic positions, which place them in crucial spots in the recent influx. Palermo and Thessaloniki, as the main cities in their respective regions, have been main destinations and secondary arrival points following the eastern and central Mediterranean crossings. In both cases, these two cities are the largest hubs in their respective regions in the eastern and southern EU borders, with the exception of Malta and Cyprus, and sit closest to northern Africa and the Middle East.



Source: Frontex (crossings); International Organization for Migration (deaths)<sup>730</sup>

<sup>730</sup> Frontex and International Organization for Migration, <https://www.google.fr/search?q=mediterranean+sea+crossings+migrant+routes+map&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=kgNydE XwPG2Y6M%252C7xcSt3EG1u9bSM%252C &vet=1&usq=A14 -kQN->

In the case of Italy, according to Frontex, the illegal crossings through the central Mediterranean route are conducted primarily from Libya to Lampedusa or Pozzolo, and from Tunisia to Trapani<sup>731</sup>. Upon the arrivals, following the first processing and registration, newcomers are transferred to the reception centers in Catania (Mineo), Caltanissetta, Agrigento (Villa Sikania), and Messina (ex Caserma Gasparro). These 12-hour highly risky and dangerous crossings take place under difficult conditions in overcrowded boats. This has been one of the main causes of more than 15,000 migrant deaths recorded since 2013<sup>732</sup>. The cost of crossings from Libya to Italy range between \$750 and \$3,500 per person, although the price is often determined by the mercy of smugglers and desperation of their clients. In 2017, Italy's finance police discovered that clandestine crossings from Tunisia to Sicily took less than four hours with speed boats, and cost between €2,000 and €3,000 per person<sup>733</sup>.



734

Sicily has undergone many occupations due to its importance as a crossroads in the Mediterranean, reflected in the island's demography as well as its cultural diversity.

[jT7ttVnGJnsrdx6MqvbgiwATw&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj3ubC4wqbrAhWKTBUiHSmBCcUQ9QEwAHoECAEQHg&biw=1600&bih=671&dpr=1.2#imgcr=T8FW9UyWMDRkIM](https://notassobremigracion.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/image009.png)

<sup>731</sup> European Commission - Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), "DG ECHO Daily Map: Refugee Crisis, Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes", 3 March 2017

<sup>732</sup> Carney Megan A., "When Politicians Turn Immigration Into a 'Crisis,' Entire Societies Suffer", *Common Dreams*, 30 January 2020

<sup>733</sup> Tondo Lorenzo, "The €8,000 ticket: the migrants crossing the Mediterranean by yacht", *The Guardian*, 14 September 2017

<sup>734</sup> COMECE, The Catholic Church in the European Union, "Key central Mediterranean migration routes".  
<https://notassobremigracion.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/image009.png>

Having experienced emigration for decades, this recent influx is not shocking for long-term residents who actively seek ways to adapt and continue with their lives. While Sicily is a primary destination for newcomers in the central Mediterranean route due to its geographic vicinity, it is the intention of most newcomers to move on to the mainland and continue their journey into northern Europe, where they believe they will find more work opportunities and a better quality of life. In Palermo, as an urban area with an estimated population of 663,401<sup>735</sup>, 2.2% of the population is registered as having recently arrived from outside of the EU<sup>736</sup>. While it is considered a place of transit, in 2018 Palermo had 20,619 non-EU citizens legally residing (0.6% of the total at a national level), mainly from Bangladesh (19.5%), Sri Lanka (13.8%) and Ghana (9%)<sup>737</sup>.

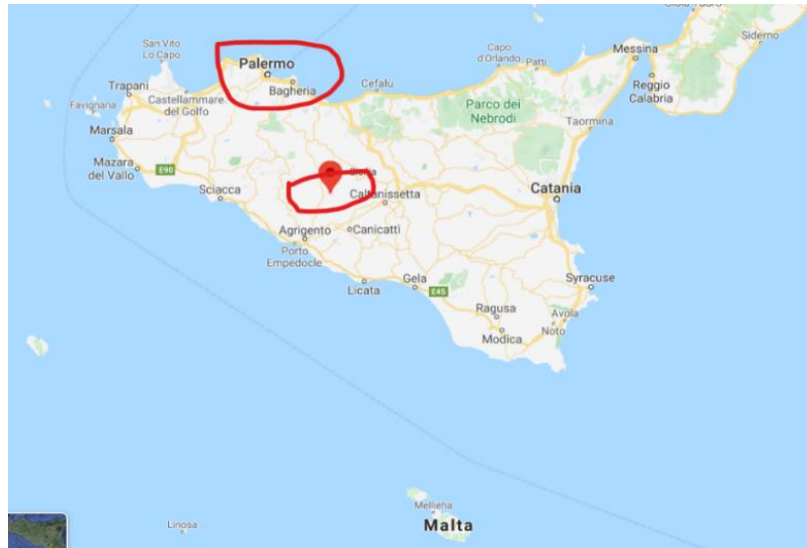
Sutera, on the other hand, is an inland hill town, which has been experiencing significant depopulation for many years as the younger generation leaves to study and work elsewhere. Most of the town is populated by the elderly with limited possibilities for business or agricultural work. The town is better known by general public in recent years with the SPRAR program, in addition to being on the pilgrimage route between Palermo and Agrigento. It is also a transitional location as most who arrive will eventually leave, with only two families over the last five years deciding to stay.

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<sup>735</sup> Città Metropolitana di Palermo, "La classifica dei comuni della Città Metropolitana di Palermo ordinata per popolazione residente", *tuttitalia.it*, 1 January 2019

<sup>736</sup> Ministero del lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *La presenza dei Migranti nella Città' Metropoitana di Palermo*, Roma, Anpal Servizi, 2017, p. 1-46

<sup>737</sup> Ministero del lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, *The Presence of Migrants in Metropolitan Cities - Executive Summary*, Roma, Anpal Servizi, 2018, p. 1-36



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In the case of Greece, the islands of Lesbos, Kos, Chios and Samos have been subject to a major influx due to their vicinity<sup>739</sup> to Turkey. Between the closest points, the crossings take 25-35 minutes while it may take approximately two hours between farther points with the cost varying between US \$500-600. Thessaloniki, along with Athens, has been one of the main destinations in the mainland. As the main city in northern Greece, Thessaloniki also attracts people crossing land borders from Turkey. With an estimated population of 812,166<sup>740</sup> in 2020 Thessaloniki is one of the main transit points in northern Greece.



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<sup>738</sup> Google map, Sicily, Palermo, Suteria.

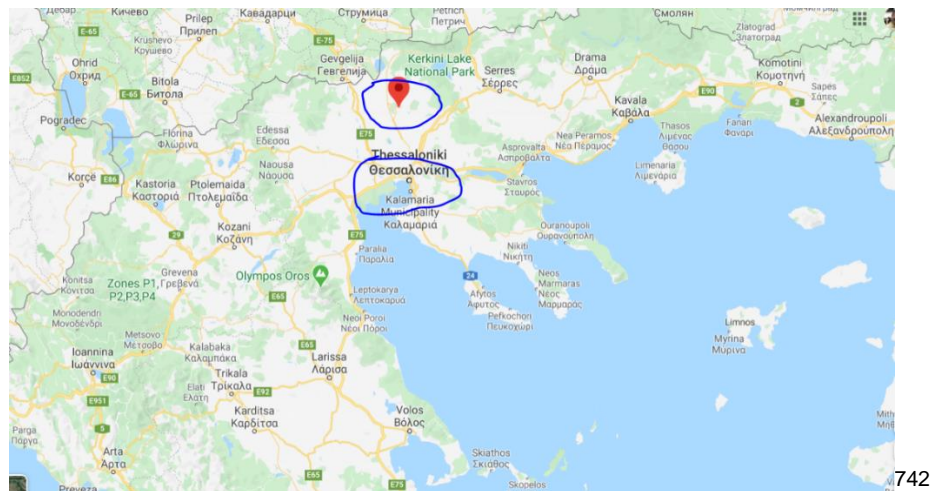
<sup>739</sup> Distance to Turkey: Lesbos: 14 Km; Chios: 7.3 Km; Samos: 2 Km; Agathonissi: 19 Km; Farmakonissi: 11.3 Km; Kos: 6.3 km.

<sup>740</sup> World Population Review, "Thessaloniki population 2020", *World Population Review website*, 2020

<sup>741</sup> Balkan route, <https://www.dw.com/en/slovenia-serbia-and-croatia-move-to-close-migrant-route/a-19102872>



Kilkis is located in a critical point between Thessaloniki and the Idomeni border crossing, which has been a main gate for the Balkan route until the main route was blocked late 2016. Although the numbers decreased significantly, crossings still take place, finding alternative routes. Kilkis, with its 1-hour distance to Thessaloniki, is a semi-rural town with wheat fields and a gold mine. It was affected by the refugee/migrant influx due to its vicinity to the Idomeni border crossings. As the newcomers are mostly aiming for the northern European countries, both Thessaloniki and Kilkis have been transit-areas for many on the move in 2015-16. The restrictions on the Balkan route and border crossings prevented many people from continuing with their journeys, instead they were obliged to stay for an extended period, waiting for possible solutions.



In these cases, the geographic positions of these towns have played an important role both as regional hubs while awaiting further movement or border crossing points to continue with the move.

<sup>742</sup> Google map, Thessaloniki-Kilkis.

## Human landscape: newcomers, long-term residents, humanitarian and community workers

The externalization of EU borders has resulted in a number of bi-lateral agreements being made, including the EU-Turkey, Italy-Libya and EU-Nigeria agreements, and has changed political contexts significantly. Oikonomakis argues that all the actors involved had to shift their strategies as a result of this political change. Focusing on the situation in Greece, he states that prior to the EU-Turkey agreement the focus was on providing assistance for those who were in transit, which gave a considerable space for non-state actors to operate. After the agreement, this focus shifted to integration, working with people whose movements are restricted and were compelled to remain in the country for extended periods of time. This was a turning point for Greek policies with the state taking more control of the situation, limiting the space for autonomous groups. Similar restrictions have been seen during the Salvini period in Italy between June 2018 and September 2019, where grassroots and local responses were targeted and criminalized by the central government.

The geographic vicinity of local communities and activists to the day-to-day struggles of the newcomers from sea crossings, dealing with basic needs at arrival and understanding asylum procedures, puts them into the position of sharing a burden. The rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea have become one of the most important settings for grassroots actions with rescue boats such as the *Mediterranea* actively working with newcomers in need of assistance. According to Megan Carney<sup>743</sup>, the criminalization of aid workers and activists as well as daily experiences of long-term residents has led to chronic stress and uncertainty, affecting their sense of security and well-being. Such an assessment goes along with the notion of displacement-affected communities, where the communities can also be displaced without undergoing any physical removal as their relationship to reality changes.

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<sup>743</sup> Carney, *art.cit.* <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/01/30/when-politicians-turn-immigration-crisis-entire-societies-suffer>

The people working directly with the newcomers at the community level and the reception centers experienced significant amount of stress due to the changes in government policies and budget cuts. As their workload increased and staffing levels decreased, the high levels of responsibility meant that many social workers faced chronic stress and depression.<sup>744</sup> Despite their genuine efforts, an increasing number of people became irregular and ended up in detention centers, waiting for return.

Sicily in general, and Palermo specifically, present an interesting example of community regeneration in an urban setting, as only 7% of the newcomers in Italy are currently in Sicily<sup>745</sup> and most migrants tend to move to the north. While there are some populations such as Bangladeshi community who have settled in Sicily over the last decade, the majority of the migrants, such as young men from African countries have plans to move on to other countries. Ballaró, one of the most popular neighborhoods in Palermo, has been revitalized through community regeneration in recent years. The run-down city center, which was central to mafia activities between the 1950s and 1980s, changed character and identity with the arrival of migrants. Starting with Bangladeshi migrants in the late 1980s, followed by African and other groups from Indian subcontinent as well as the Balkans and the Middle East, Palermo city center, the Ballaró in particular has become home to many migrants. For the last 10 years, approximately 29,000<sup>746</sup> long-term residents of Palermo have left while over 30,000 migrants (without counting the unregistered inhabitants) have arrived, changing the demographics significantly. It is important to note the power of culture and heritage in such demographic change, where a historic market in the Ballaró neighborhood has become the center for newcomers<sup>747</sup>, who found a common space, and a sense of familiarity in this central setting. As opposed to the general trend of newcomers moving to the geographic peripheries and suburbs, in Palermo, migrants are located in the center, however they continue to remain in the peripheries of power.

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<sup>744</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>745</sup> Statista Research Department, "Distribution of immigrants in Italy as of April 2020, by region", Statista website, April 2020

<sup>746</sup> Statista Research Department, "Number of immigrants who arrived in Italy from January 2016 to April 2020", Statista website, April 2020

<sup>747</sup> Merelli Annalisa, "The center of Sicily's biggest city was emptied by the mafia. Now it's being reclaimed by migrants" *Quartz*, 21 June 2016

Although most migrant groups do not engage in politics despite their long-term presence in Palermo, their presence is seen as a threat to mafia control. It is interesting to note that whilst this system of control is understood and respected by long-term residents, migrants are less willing to submit, breaking a repressive traditional social practice. The positive aspect of this demographic change through migrants was substantiated by mayor Orlando stressing that Palermo is a multicultural city and its inhabitants constitute its harmony today, presenting a counterbalance to presumed mafia domination.

The multicultural nature of newcomers and constant change in demographics has also been observed in Greece. For example, the caseload in Greece had a mosaic of backgrounds in the summer of 2016, which included asylum seekers from Syria (54%), Afghanistan (27%), Iraq (13%), Pakistan (3%), Palestine (2%), and elsewhere (1%). During the crossings at the Greek Turkish border in early 2020, the asylum seekers primarily comprised Afghans, Pakistani and Moroccans<sup>748</sup>. A neighborhood setting and solidarity similar to Ballaró is seen in Exarcheia, Athens, as well as in smaller pockets in Thessaloniki. *Ms. Angelidou* (an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common in Theesaloniki) stresses that the awareness of the newcomers' struggle, and acts of solidarity, are mostly restricted to middle class citizens in Greece and they are less present in Thessaloniki as it is 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the size of Athens and less cosmopolitan in its demographics. *Mr. Gannoum* (an INGO worker in Thessaloniki) stated that prolonged displacement with a centralized decision-making, leaves people in a state of ambiguity, living in places that are isolated from local communities, forcing to seek solutions on their own. The lack of opportunities and difficulty in covering even the most basic of needs can result in petty crime, feeding into right wing anti-migrant rhetoric. Even if few people engage in such criminal acts, the entire group of newcomers is easily blamed, paving the way for further marginalization. This negative public opinion of newcomers has played a role in (local) elections, leading to a change in governance, as seen in the Greek elections in 2019.

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<sup>748</sup> Koyuncu Huseyin, "Yunan sınırına akin eden göçmenler kim: 4 soruda mülteci krizi", *Euronews*, 3 March 2020

Regarding the gendered aspect of the human landscape in population movements, male dominance continues its influence on gender-based power relations in the new place, where the restriction on women is applied with the rationale of respecting traditional cultural values. *Mr. Gannoum* stresses that he often witnesses such gender dynamics with the majority of his caseload being from the Middle East. He underlines that the upbringing of men in many countries in the region conditions them for specific gender roles and prevents them from engaging in dialogue to change these roles. While *Mr. Gannoum* shared his observations of Islamic and Christian newcomers regarding their independence in Greece, the control over Christian Nigerian women in Italy presents a different reality, revealing that the problem is more patriarchal than religious.

The shift from a humanitarian focus to community well-being requires an engagement and negotiation with other traditional actors, therefore, it requires a different set of skills in bringing groups together to seek solutions. It requires a change in position, possibly finding creative ways to extend autonomous spaces to local institutions. In this regard, using municipalist principles during the process of meta-integration may provide a framework for an integrated and intersectoral approach.

Although the central governments of Italy and Greece have followed a conservative path in their work with newcomers, there are also positive examples. Roberto Savio in his opinion paper “Immigration, Lot of Myths and Little Reality<sup>749</sup>” indicates that 2.4 million immigrants in Italy have contributed €130 billion, 8.9% of the country’s GDP. Also owning 9.4 % of the Italian companies, immigrants give €11.5 billion to the system, more than they cost according to National Pension Agency (INPS)<sup>750</sup>. In addition, various Italian cities such as Riace, as well as other autonomous initiatives, have offered models of a co-construction process. Presenting an example for the revitalization for depopulating and abandoned Italian towns, Riace, with the leadership of its mayor Domenico Lucano, has created an environment for newcomers and long-term residents to repopulate the town

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<sup>749</sup> Savio Roberto, "Immigration, Lot of Myths and Little Reality" *Inter Press Service*, 17 July 2018

<sup>750</sup> National Pension Agency quoted in Savio, *art.cit.* <http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/07/immigration-lot-myths-little-reality/>

with housing and employment opportunities for irregular migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers from countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia.<sup>751</sup> Government programs (such as SPRAR) have brought vitality to abandoned towns such as Sutera, Italy and Kilkis, Greece, including economic incentives as the assistance money is generally spent locally for rent and food supplies. Further, initiatives such as *Villa Mondeggi-Florence*, *Contadinazioni* in Campobello di Mazzara-Sicily as well as the *Refugee Village for Freedom-Athens* are solidarity-based cooperative alternatives that offer small but concrete possibilities of cooperation between newcomers and long-term residents.

The role of newcomers in the everyday life of communities has also been welcome in many areas, such as providers of cheaper labor in certain fields including elderly care, child care, domestic work, restaurants, street vendors. A genuine human connection between caretakers and the elderly have been noted by Italian social workers<sup>752</sup>. Migrants constitute a significant percentage of the local inhabitants in some small towns such as Sutera and Forli (where they make up 20% of the population), however, they remain in the peripheries of power and political engagement.

#### Political landscape (local and central governance)

The refugee and migrant influx to Italy and Greece since 2015 has put additional pressure on society following austerity measures that created a particular political landscape. The insecurities and precarious conditions that are faced by all inhabitants created empathy, especially among the long-term residents who welcomed newcomers and offered assistance to the best of their ability. However, prolonged waiting periods for possible solutions and continuing waves of newcomers have had a significant impact on the relationships at the community level where ambiguity and temporariness have become a permanent phenomenon for those facing such challenges on a daily basis.

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<sup>751</sup> Fossi Federico, "Wim Wenders inspired by integration model set by idyllic town in Calabria" *UNHCR*, 22 March 2010

<sup>752</sup> According to Valentina Pellegrini in Sutera.

While the popular reaction to anti-austerity movements have led to changes in governments in Greece, Spain and Italy, the reform process in France generated a widespread reaction, including the *gilet jaunes* and *gilet noirs*. Turkey, housing the largest refugee population in the world, has experienced substantial political turmoil, gradually restricting fundamental freedoms and rights with significant centralization of power.

The mass influx of refugees and migrants through the eastern and central Mediterranean routes until 2016 has slowed down with stricter border controls and enforced regulations including limited relocation to the other EU member states, and 'encouraged' voluntary return from Greece to Turkey as per the EU-Turkey agreement.

The secure borders concept has been a dominant discourse with increased funding allocation to specialized agencies [funded by the EU], including operation Poseidon, Frontex and the Rabit<sup>753</sup>. Tsitselikis' states that the EU borders are not threatened, but crossed by individuals with valid reasons. Through the security policies developed in this context are aimed at international organized crime groups who function as smugglers, the enforcement of these policies is undermining refugees' right to move<sup>754</sup>.

Following the mass influx to Europe in 2015 and 2016, a series of measures were taken by the EU as well as by Greece and Italy and other individual states. Whether such actions were in line with fundamental human rights and dignity is questionable; however, these measures decreased the number of arrivals, leading the EU to claim that the 'crisis' was over in the beginning of 2019.<sup>755</sup> The application of the Dublin agreement was sidelined by many member states, refusing or imposing restrictions to refugee reception in their respective countries. Migrants and refugees currently in Greece and Italy are stranded between the possibility of legally moving to the other EU countries, and trying to find ways to prevent being returned to their countries of origin or a safe third country. In between

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<sup>753</sup> European Commission, "Frontex and the RABIT operation at the Greek-Turkish border", Memo/11/130, 2 March 2011

<sup>754</sup> Tsitselikis Konstantinos, "Refugees in Greece: Facing a Multifaceted Labyrinth", *International Migration*, 2018, p. 1-18

<sup>755</sup> Squire Vicki, "As EU stresses the migration 'crisis' is over, Italy makes hundreds of migrants homeless" *The Conversation*, 8 March 2019

these options, there are numerous displaced persons who have exhausted the legal channels, but remained determined to continue with their journeys in any way possible, often through risky and illegal border crossings. Greece and Italy, as the main entry points to the EU have continued to face the influx in different waves while both experience political turmoil.

In Greece, following the governments led by Pasok and New Democracy, as well as short term transition governments, the Syriza party came to power in 2015, stemming from the last wave of anti-austerity movements. As Syriza struggled with imposed austerity measures as well as major influx of migrants and refugees, it faced difficulties to keep its promises to its supporters. The local elections that took place in 2019 resulted in the loss of local governance in major cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki, eventually leading to the loss of the general elections later in the year to the center-right party, New Democracy. The new government has immediately targeted the squats to 'restore law and order'<sup>756</sup>. A new law on refugees and migrants was introduced in late 2019, making it more difficult to claim asylum. This systemic assault on newcomers further pushed people into illegal status in the country. The refusal of the EU members states to share the burden led Greece forming controversial plans to build 'prison' [detention] camps for migrants, according to Helena Smith<sup>757</sup>.

Italy has seen the fall of seven governments<sup>758</sup> during the decade since austerity measures began. The arrival of the right-wing party, Lega, into the coalition in 2018 initiated a series of enforced anti-migrant refugee policies, which led to the Salvini decree<sup>759</sup> in December 2018. This Decree, a new Law on Immigration and Security, discarded a unique policy of humanitarian protection status, leaving thousands of people

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<sup>756</sup> King Alex and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou Ioanna, "Inside Exarcheia: the self-governing community Athens police want rid of", *The Guardian*, 26 August 2019

<sup>757</sup> Smith Helena, "Greece says it's 'reached limit' as arrivals of refugees show no sign of slowing", *The Guardian*, 16 December 2019

<sup>758</sup> Governo Italiano Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, "I Governi dal 1943 ad oggi", The website of the Italian government, January 2020

Sept 2019 – today (Conte II); June 2018 to Sept 2019 (Conte); Dec2016 to June 2018 (Gentiloni); Feb 2014 to Dec 2016 (Renzi); April 2013 to Feb 2014 (Letta); Nov 2011 to April 2013 (Monti); May 2008 to Nov 2011 (Berlusconi).

<sup>759</sup> Decree Law 113/2018



out of the protection system, and forcing them on to the streets. An introduction of new special permits with a narrower group<sup>760</sup>, the Salvini decree limited the rights of the asylum seekers, and allowed the government to transfer funds from reception and asylum request processing facilities to repatriation camps. Lorenzo D'Agostino reported that this decree meant that tens of thousands of vulnerable asylum seekers lost their right to two-year residency permits and integration services in Italy<sup>761</sup>. Those who lost their permits also lost their right to work, and their right to access facilities that have services, in short; they were left in dire conditions without any recourse from the legal system.

Since 2015, most of the discussions regarding forced displacement through the Mediterranean routes have focused on management of arrivals (border controls), hotspots<sup>762</sup> and reception centers/temporary accommodation schemes, under a view that the situation was temporary. This was based on policies and programs enduring for a long period which featured relatively slow, lengthy and heavy administrative procedures. Accountability for the use of public funds (as often used by officials, the European taxpayers' money) has been instrumentalized by a paternalistic humanitarian and development system setting hierarchical power relations at various levels.

For instance, newcomers who arrive in Italy by boat go through a lengthy process<sup>763</sup>; typically spending their first two days in initial arrival facilities known as hotspots, mostly concentrated in Sicily, where identification procedures take place. Those who have a legitimate basis to claim asylum are entitled to a place in the SPRAR (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) system. The SPRAR system, which has provided basic services to many newcomers, was altered by the Salvini decree. With the Salvini administration, procedures were changed and services made available only to people

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<sup>760</sup> This group covers victims of domestic violence, trafficking, and severe exploitation; those with serious health issues; those fleeing natural disasters; and those who commit acts of civic valor.

<sup>761</sup> D'Agostino Lorenzo, "New Italian law adds to unofficial clampdown on aid to asylum seekers". *The New Humanitarian*, 7 December 2018

<sup>762</sup> In May 2015 the Commission introduced a new 'hotspot' approach in order to assist Greece and Italy in coping with the sudden dramatic increase in irregular migrants arriving at their external borders. The hotspot approach has ensured that most of the arriving migrants in 2016 were properly identified, registered and fingerprinted and their data checked against relevant security databases.

<sup>763</sup> See Diagram 10.

who were granted a special permit, a process that can take several years. The Law transformed the SPRAR system to a system of protection of refugees and unaccompanied minors (SIPROIMI), excluding asylum seekers and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection status from the second-line reception centers. In this regard, most asylum seekers and migrants are channeled to the CAS centers (*Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria* - Extraordinary Reception Centers). These centers, mostly private sector run hotels and apartments approved by local governments, also found funding significantly reduced under the new regulations. This semi-privatization of services has become big business in Sicily, according to *Mr. Pandiscia* who has been working with the reception centers in Sicily. With the high number of rejections, government policies increasingly push people to CPR (*Centri di Permanenza e Rimpatrio* – Repatriation Centers) and CIS (*Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione* – Identification and Expulsion Centers). People are left with an ambiguous status and are forced to seek solutions that fall outside of the legal system in order to remain or continue their journey. In 2018, MSF reported that around 10,000 migrants and refugees were living in inhumane conditions in informal settlements in Italy because of inadequate reception policies<sup>764</sup>. The new changes in policy has aggravated the situation for thousands of newcomers.

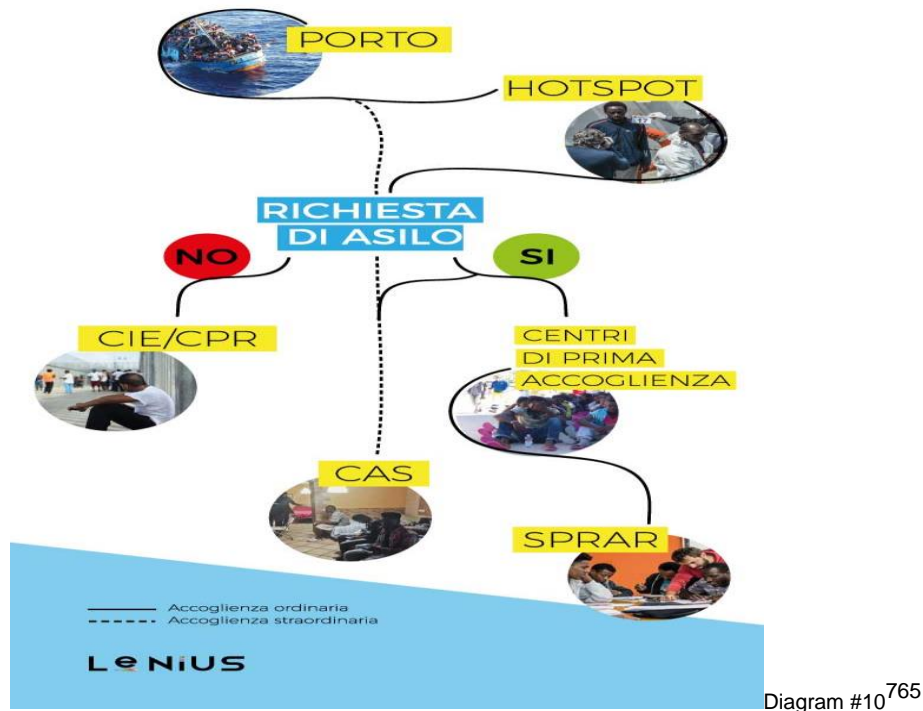
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<sup>764</sup> Medecins Sans Frontieres, "Report - Migrants and refugees on the margins of society", MSF website, 8 February 2018



## COME FUNZIONA IL SISTEMA DI ACCOGLIENZA IN ITALIA

#infoLenius



In 2019, Italy also passed a law criminalizing humanitarian rescue boats in the Mediterranean Sea, fining them up to €50,000. The mayors of the cities that welcomed and tried to facilitate the newcomers' adaptation were put under pressure by the central government to conform with Salvini policies regardless of local impact. While the mayors of Palermo, Naples and Florence were publicly shamed, the mayor of Riace, who had adopted alternative approach to integration systems, was arrested and removed from his position. Accusations against mayor of Riace were dropped in 2019, without charges. In addition, Italy decided not to adopt the 2018 global compact for refugees and migrants, isolating itself from global action for the rights of migrants and refugees<sup>766</sup>. Despite the

<sup>765</sup> Lenius, "Il sistema di accoglienza dei migranti in Italia, spiegato per bene", Lenius website, 7 January 2020

<sup>766</sup> TPI, "Global Compact, il governo sospende il patto Onu sull'immigrazione", TPI.it, 11 September 2019

damaging influence of the Salvini decree on the rights of newcomers, it is interesting to note that in late 2019 the newly elected government did not take any action to abolish or amend any of these policies<sup>767</sup>, although it was observed that the pressure on local governments and civil society organizations decreased.

In Greece, the Ministry of Migration Policy was set up in 2015, tasked with managing refugee reception. The First Reception Service is in charge of those who arrive at the five hotspots in Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos<sup>768</sup>. The Regional Asylum Offices and Asylum Units register and examine asylum applications. Following the registration process, asylum seekers are referred to the asylum service. Those do not fulfill the requirement for asylum are referred to the police and begin a removal procedure.

Delayed processing of asylum applications in the hotspots has overcrowded the islands, leading to a number of problems, including deteriorating conditions in the camps. With complicated asylum procedures and possibilities for future movement unclear, few people are able to obtain residence or work permits. Similar to Italy, those who are considered irregular and illegal can be placed under administrative detention for up to 18 months and deported. Tsitselikis stresses that the 2017 decision of the High Administrative Court of Greece that 'Turkey is a safe third country' provided the legal ground for returns<sup>769</sup>, which set a dangerous precedent and legal basis for future deportations. In his article, "Refugees in Greece: Facing a Multifaceted Labyrinth"<sup>770</sup> he draws the essential linkage between the number of refugees in Turkey and EU-Greek laws and policies on refugees, stressing that potential changes in these numbers and increased influx to Turkey from other regions will require reconsideration of these policies.

The last decade has shown that despite periodic decline in the numbers of arrivals, conflicts and environmental displacement are not slackening. Having faced criticisms on camp conditions, protests by the newcomers, and political pressure by human rights

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<sup>767</sup> Reliefweb, "Italy: Report on Effects of the "Security Decrees" on Migrants and Refugees in Sicily", Reliefweb website, 11 January 2020

<sup>768</sup> According to Greek Law 3907/2077

<sup>769</sup> Tsitselikis, *art.cit.* p. 8

<sup>770</sup> Ibid, DOI: [10.4324/9780429244346-7](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429244346-7)

advocates at the end of 2017, the Greek government began transfers from the islands to the mainland. By the second half of 2019, approximately 10,000 migrants had been moved to mainland Greece<sup>771</sup>. Meanwhile, 2018<sup>772</sup> and 2020<sup>773</sup> witnessed anti-migrant riots led by right-wing groups, including some long-term residents. Continuous ambiguity has added to social and economic discomfort in local communities, while legal uncertainty of the status and movements of the newcomers overshadows relations at the local level.

Under the current circumstances including stricter border controls, and hardening policies and practices, there are more people on the move that fall out of the regular legal processes than those who fit into the criteria set by the governments of Italy and Greece, as well as the international system. In this regard, non-governmental and community-based actors operate in the political landscape to address the needs of people who fall outside of the formal processes. Tsitselikis calls attention to the contradiction of refugee status determination process in Greece, as the selection criterion is based on the country of origin as opposed to the specificities of each case<sup>774</sup>, undermining the main principle of refugee law.

ARCI Porco Rosso in Palermo is one of the community-based groups that plays a crucial role in the political landscape in Sicily. With respect for the dignity and autonomy of newcomers, Porco Rosso offers a common space for anyone who wants to find information, seek assistance or assist those in need. One of their actions, *the Sportello Sans Papier*, inspired by the *sans papier* movement in France, provides support for those who fall outside of the legal system. In close cooperation with a network including *Moltivolti*, *Mediterranea*, the municipality of Palermo and other local community organizations, *Porco Rosso* holds a different view on the notions of power, privilege, authority, the displaced, integration, and governance than mainstream society and the authorities, and tries to put it into practice through their actions. Their model, which is

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<sup>771</sup> Bathke Benjamin, "Hundreds of migrants taken to mainland Greece from overcrowded camps", *InfoMigrants*, 2 December 2019

<sup>772</sup> Reuters, "Asylum-seekers and locals clash on Greek island of Lesbos over migrant crisis", Reuters news website, 23 April 2018

<sup>773</sup> Michalopoulos Sarantis, "Greece expels Nazi group from EU border", *Euractive*, 6 March 2020

<sup>774</sup> Tsitselikis, *art.cit.*, p.4

unique to Palermo and Sicily, acknowledges that the socio-political landscape of their territory has been shaped by the mafia for decades. They have a strong understanding of the power dynamics in Palermo and seem to carefully take this into consideration in their work with the most vulnerable migrants and refugees. Newcomers are welcome to the location of *Porco Rosso* without a condition or a false expectation.

Leanne Tory-Murphy, in her analysis of the *Sportello* states that *Porco Rosso* goes beyond the mainstream approach of ‘hosts’ newcomers as ‘guests’, and instead, treats them “not as beneficiaries but as people who are in different circumstances”<sup>775</sup>. Indeed, *Porco Rosso* exhibits the power of humility and acknowledges difference by listening to marginalized people, “taking non-Europeans’ voices seriously and believing them”<sup>776</sup> and seeking solutions together under the given circumstances. As a community-based organization, *Porco Rosso* is connected with all of the community. They are not trying to solve the problem of others, but enhancing their own as a regenerated community. Tory-Murphy points out that such a practice is a pre-requisite for a project of inclusion and political change to which the *Sportello Sans Papiers* has committed itself.<sup>777</sup>

In Greece, the community-based groups Floxenia in Common (Thessaloniki) and Omnes (Kilkis) have emerged out of struggles in their respective communities. As opposed to solving the problems of refugees and migrants, these entities have also found various ways of addressing community concerns with newcomers also being included in the process of solution seeking. Floxenia in Common has a distinctive approach to newcomers, particularly regarding feminization of politics where the organization, primarily run by women, works for the empowerment of female newcomers. As a role model in their struggle for women’s rights and LGBTI communities, they embrace newcomers, encouraging them to see the gender-based power relations differently and reflect on their everyday life. Ms. Angelidou indicated that many of the female newcomers

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<sup>775</sup> Tory-Murphy Leanne, “The Struggle for Inclusion: a case study of the Sportello sans papiers”, *Agenda for International Development*, 8 July 2017

<sup>776</sup> *Ibidem*. <http://www.a-id.org/2017/07/08/the-struggle-for-inclusion-a-case-study-of-the-sportello-sans-papiers/>

<sup>777</sup> *Ibidem*.

who have been in contact with female managers in Thessaloniki felt more respected and secure as women. *Ms. Angelidou* (an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common) added that “the women have realized that they do not have to be mothers, wives and daughters only, and there are possibilities that they can express themselves in a new environment”. The important aspect of Floxenia’s work is to create a respectful and safe common space for women and children, enabling a transformation process. The extension of their work on the circular economy and waste management for sustainable communities is also linked to community development, where newcomers are embraced.

Omnes, set in the semi-rural small town of Kilkis, has been attempting to bring various elements of community well-being together through growing agricultural products and work on social ecology, embracing newcomers in their activities. The exemplary work of this community-based organization includes vulnerable groups at the Idomeni border crossing, developed a comprehensive feasibility plan on how communities may be able receive newcomers according each one’s capacities. Having had a positive influence on local government in Kilkis, Omnes has also been recognized by the network of Fearless Cities thanks to their approach.

## **2.2.2. Perceptions of displacement, integration and local governance encountered in the research**

### *Displacement and displaced persons*

The perceptions of displacement, integration and local governance are shaped by geographic location, the size of the habitat, the available resources, a place’s history of migration and its inhabitants as well as the presence of autonomous and anarchist initiatives that strive to create common spaces for people to re-energize and feel a sense of solidarity and dignity.

Among the studied areas, the geographically remote areas have been facing depopulation over the last few decades, using the opportunity that displacement has provided to repopulate and revitalize their towns. In the case of Sutera, as seen in many Italian small towns, the SPRAR program allowed them to manage a small-scale program providing a place for newcomers while they waited for their asylum process to be resolved. The genuine exchange between a mostly aging population in these towns and newcomers has been positive, if temporary, subject to clarification of the asylum processes. Almost all newcomers to Sutera continued with their journeys to new destinations, seeking better employment and education opportunities. The exchange of stories of displacement between newcomers and the long-term residents has revealed the longstanding history of migration of Sicily, creating common ground and mutual understanding. The museum in the center of Sutera has a specific section dedicated to migration, stories and illustrations of communication between people from the region and other parts of Europe and the Americas, recalling similar difficulties faced by Italian emigrants not long ago. Although there is a clear understanding that population movement to Sutera would not be continued due to its geographic location and lack of opportunities, the SPRAR program<sup>778</sup> has had a significant presence and acceptance by long-term residents.

A similar experience was observed in Kilkis. In contrast with Sutera, Kilkis is located on the Balkan route close to the Idomeni border crossing and could not ignore the humanitarian crisis at the Greek and Republic of North Macedonian border. In 2015, a local anarchist group, concerned by the inadequate and inhumane conditions at the Idomeni border crossing, started humanitarian activities using their own means and gradually involved local communities. The local group introduced a system to facilitate border crossing before the border was blocked. They tried to channel people into regular camps<sup>779</sup> in order for people on the move to get assistance. A thorough analysis of the

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<sup>778</sup> The program was coordinated by a local organization Girasole.

<sup>779</sup> Two regular military run and one irregular camp run by smugglers, and two settlements.



situation and cost-effectiveness showed<sup>780</sup> that hosting people in towns would be cheaper and more dignified. *Mr. Kamperis* (activist and a local NGO worker in Kilgis), states that in some cases, the refugee population was 3000 in a village with a population of 300, creating anxiety among long-term residents. However, the history of emigration of not only Kilgis but Greece in general has played an important role in understanding the difficulties and engaging with the newcomers. Kilgis welcomed a number of people in their town while they assisted thousands in the camps by the border, overcoming the conservative elements in local government and among public. According to *Dimitris Demertzis*<sup>781</sup>, an economic incentive for the locals was needed in order to maintain refugees in the community and the accommodation scheme was helpful in this sense.

In Kilgis, the continuity of displacement for an extended period has become an accepted norm, and long-term residents have become accustomed to changes. However, the traditional host-guest community dynamics and the power relations with the expectation that newcomers will integrate and abide with the rules of the town remains. Accordingly, the presence of newcomers has been based on a dependency/aid relationship and far from any political engagement. The fact that the town council determines who is allowed to come, favoring primarily families and single women with children, gives a sense of control to long-term residents.

The situation in urban areas presents a significantly different reality and dynamic. Palermo has become a hub in Sicily due to the opportunities offered by an urban environment. While the city as a whole welcomes newcomers and recognizes their presence as honorary citizens, the Ballaró neighborhood has become a symbol of multicultural nature of the city. The neighborhood Exarcheia in Athens is similar, with solidarity initiatives, autonomous and anarchist spaces. The dynamic circulation in these urban settings accepts temporariness as a norm, understanding that people are

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<sup>780</sup> The analysis of capacity to host refugees was useful to show that 6.9 per 1000 could be hosted across Greece. This was picked up by UNHCR and the government and used as a good practice.

<sup>781</sup> The interview took place in Kilgis, March 2019. Mr. Demertzis is a long-term resident and local NGO – Omnes staff, activist, (male, early 30s) worked at the Idomeni border crossing as well as in Kilgis.

constantly searching for better, more dignified conditions. Thessaloniki has become one of the main transition sites, where people wait for their asylum process to be resolved. The history of cities as a home to social movements allow activists to mobilize and embrace newcomers in their struggle, a phenomenon witnessed in Thessaloniki and Palermo, specifically in recent anti-austerity and anti-globalization movements, which was not the case in smaller towns such as Sutera and Kilkis.

One important aspect of urban settings is the increased presence of displaced persons who have exhausted all legal means to make their claim and are excluded from formal services. At this point, anarchist and autonomous initiatives become active and define displacement and the displaced differently to nation-state driven mechanisms. While the formal system does not consider any political engagement before citizenship, which may take years, informal settings, by their very nature, are political and are capable of working with the newcomers in solidarity.

There are differences in the way displacement is treated in urban and rural settings in both Italy and Greece, in part due to size. Despite a long history of migration and an empathic position toward newcomers, the long-term residents do not see themselves as displaced, their connection to the territory, identity and heritage is possessive. Such a perception encompasses implicit power and privilege relations regardless of the antagonistic stand that anarchist and autonomous initiatives have against authority. These unequal power relations find a new balance in the peripheries of power where there is a genuine interest and willingness to engage in a co-construction process. Floxenia in Thessaloniki and Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo, among many other initiatives, manage to carve out much needed spaces that allow people to rethink and redefine these concepts in urban settings.

## Integration

The views on integration in the studied areas vary. Regardless of the term: inclusion; assimilation; adaptation; or integration, most of the communities believe that learning the local language, sending children to school and working are fundamental elements in an integration process, regardless of their political stand. The size of the towns matter in terms of integration efforts, as in smaller towns newcomers are more noticed and their presence is linked to the government-led programs. In larger cities newcomers can blend in more easily and avoid the status question. However, gaining legal status is a top priority for all newcomers, as the first step for gaining access to basic rights and services. The feeling among the newcomers vary, from *Ms. Radi's* (a newcomer from Iraq) reluctance to learn the language and engage in social activities out of her immediate circle despite having spent three years in Thessaloniki, to *Ms. Mia Farzat* (an NGO worker with country of origin Syria) who makes a significant effort to work and engage in social life. In both cases, their relationships with others seem to be restricted to work colleagues as their interaction with mainstream society is significantly limited. Finding enough income to survive creates a market for cheap labor making newcomers the preferred labor force for local businesses and long-term residents, creating an informal economic circle. As the focus has primarily been on newcomers during the recent influx, including Syrians, Afghans, Sudanese and Iraqis, efforts of previously arrived groups such as Chinese, Pakistani, Turks, Kurds, Moroccans, and Libyans have not shown promising results of integration and acceptance. Ethnic origins make a noticeable difference in long-term residents' response to newcomers. Many interviewees considered Albanians to be well integrated. *Ms. Angelidou* argues otherwise, due to their absence from any political process or integration due to the geographic vicinity of their country of origin.

Regardless of the position of the long-term residents on integration, language learning is considered very important either for integration or in order to facilitate communication in the context of solidarity movements. Despite the recognition that most newcomers are in transit, they are expected to learn the local language in order to survive, as it takes an

average two to three years for their cases to be resolved. On the other hand, newcomers would rather not learn either Greek or Italian, as they believe that they will not need these languages once they have left, and hence show more interest in learning English.

In all circles, whether formal nation-state driven programs or autonomous spaces, integration is a well-regarded concept as the discussions are often about how to improve and find better ways of interacting. 'Integrating into what' remains an overall and unanswered question by many. Meanwhile, the migrant and refugee expectation that aid will continue and high and unrealistic salary expectations creates discomfort among long-term residents, many of whom have suffered from harsh austerity measures and trying economic conditions in recent years. Not being aware or understanding the precarious situation that many people face in local communities has an impact on the relationship between groups. In this regard, the realization and approach adopted by Kilkis creating a self-reliant community and economy which would absorb the refugee population is worthy of note. They use the term inclusion as opposed to integration and believe that integration is an illusion. UNHCR Greece, supporting such local solutions in Kilkis, recognizes a lack of interest in integration as people plan to continue their journey, raising a dilemma regarding how funding is allocated, especially concerning activities that may not lead to the durable solutions; a top priority for funders.

### Governance

Governance, in terms of decision making and the management of public goods and affairs, is a system through which public institutions, civil society and private actors engage with each other. In the context of this thesis, alternative governance models refer to local democratic and autonomous processes that give all inhabitants the opportunity to be directly involved. Governance of the migrant and refugee influx is a centralized process both in Italy and Greece, in line with these two countries' top-down governance systems. Local and regional democracy in Italy and Greece were deeply affected by the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Both countries have passed through a series of structural

adjustments, making changes in their territorial governance that have implications on democratic practices today. As part of the imposed structural adjustments, a series of economic and institutional reforms were implemented which have had significant consequences for the local and regional authorities. Different measures, including budget cuts, the rearrangement of competences, downsizing and gradual elimination of provinces and the parallel creation of the metropolitan cities played an important role in redesigning the political landscape<sup>782</sup>. Consequently, the way in which the refugee and migrant influx has been addressed was largely influenced by these measures as well as by EU regulations and the Dublin agreement, via central governments.

Both the Italian<sup>783</sup> and Greek<sup>784</sup> constitutions specify that they are unitary states with territorial governance structures composed of municipalities, provinces, regions, and the State. Each constitution respectively refers to municipalities as legally self-governing territorial entities, responsible for the administration of local affairs.

In Italy, in addition to the constitutional provisions, the most important piece of legislation regarding the local authorities is the 2000 Unified Laws on local authorities, which is considered as the backbone of the Italian legal system on local authorities<sup>785</sup>. Usually referred as the 2014 Delrio Act, a series of further reforms aimed at bringing more efficiency and effectiveness into governance practices in Italy through mergers of municipalities, the granting of new regulatory powers to municipalities, provinces and metropolitan cities. In this regard, it is stipulated that the local authorities “carry out administrative functions on their own as well as the functions assigned to them by the state or by regional legislation<sup>786</sup>.”

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<sup>782</sup> Wiene Jakob and Dickson Stewart, "Local and regional democracy in Italy", Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CG33(2017)17 final, 2017, p. 8

<sup>783</sup> Under the 1947 Italian Constitution with amendments over the years.

<sup>784</sup> The Constitution of Greece was elaborated and voted by the 5th Revisionary Parliament which came out of the elections following the collapse of the 1967 dictatorship on July 24, 1974. The Constitution entered into force on June 11, 1975. The Constitution of Greece was initially revised by the 6th Revisionary Parliament in 1986 and was revised for a second time by the 7th Revisionary Parliament in 2001

<sup>785</sup> Wiene and Dickson, *art.cit.*, p. 9

<sup>786</sup> *Ibidem*.

Today, the Italian territorial government consists of the central state administration, 20 self-governing regions, and the local level; a total of 8,006 municipalities of which 10 are metropolitan cities and 93 provinces<sup>787</sup>. More than 50% of the existing municipalities have less than 3,000 inhabitants (and 768 have less than 500). The creation of metropolitan cities and inevitable resource allocation to these urban settings is a pull factor for population movement and has led to the abandonment of small villages, as well as rural life styles, traditional practices and knowledge. One of the aims of the reform process and structural adjustments was to address this fragmentation of depopulating municipalities while merging municipalities and encouraging inter-municipal cooperation. The top-down policy has been problematic for many communities and has led to a significant amount of confusion in the reform process. As the need for effective and efficient resource management and governance practices are obvious, a re-visioning of the traditional construct of provinces under the *Delrio Act* endangers the direct representation of local communities in a large metropolitan structure that gradually overtakes the provinces. There is a fear that provinces will become the suburbs and peripheries of metropolitan cities, being pushed to the peripheries of power as they lose direct contact with administrative bodies.

At the local level, the representative body is the city council with the number of councilors determined by the number of inhabitants; citizens who can legally vote through an electoral process. Councilors serve a five-year term. The municipal council, as the organ of direction and political-administrative control, adopts the most important political decisions affecting the municipality, including the local budget, any agreements with other municipalities, land-development plans, local regulations and internal by-laws<sup>788</sup>. A 2009 legislation on Fiscal federalism set out a number of fundamental functions or obligatory services such local police, early years education, urban management, local road networks and transportation, and environment and social services<sup>789</sup>.

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<sup>787</sup> Among these provinces Bolzano and Trento are considered autonomous provinces within a region of special status. Regarding metropolitan cities, there are those in the regions of ordinary status, including Rome, Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bari, Florence, Reggio Calabria, and Napoli as well as four metropolitan cities, Cagliari, Catania, Messina and Palermo, which are placed in regions of special status.

<sup>788</sup> Wienen and Dickson, *art.cit.*, p. 18

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22

A CoE report<sup>790</sup> from 2017 described that one effect of the *Delrio Act* eliminates direct popular election to provincial bodies, including to the city council, and increases power for the mayors and a restricted number of local officials. Accordingly, there is no citizen representation in the institutional organs of the local entities of the province, and presidents and provincial council members are no longer elected in Italy, eroding democratic practices at the local level. This embedded structural and operational governance model seems to be adopted by civil society organizations, and in some cases social movements, reproducing fragmented but hierarchical structures.

The responsibilities and powers of mayors are exercised under the surveillance and control of a central government agency, the *Prefetto*. Any significant disagreement or digression from the norms of the center leads to serious consequence, as was recently seen with the mayors of Riace, Palermo, Naples and Florence during Salvini's period as Minister of Interior. The extensive and unchecked powers given to metropolitan mayors coupled with weakened direct democracy are of serious concern in terms of governance and democracy at local level.

The mayor of Palermo is a good example in this case, although the shift could easily take place with the change of central and local government. This situation was seen in case of Thessaloniki and Greece where the government changed at both levels in 2019, significantly impacting on refugees and migrant issues. Local governance in Palermo has a significant meaning for the inhabitants. Recalling Sicily's recent history, Mayor Leoluca Orlando has played a significant role in this struggle against the mafia. Aware of the multicultural nature of the city, he led a process in the city which welcomed migrants and refugees, offering them honorary citizenship even though his role had no influence in determining who is granted a residence permit in Italy. In line with his approach, in Palermo after two months of residence all migrants have the right to go to school, access medical care and work<sup>791</sup>.

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<sup>790</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1 - 57

<sup>791</sup> Van der Zee Renate, "He fought the mafia and won. Now this mayor is taking on Europe over migrants", *The Guardian*, 18 April 2017

The 2015 Charter of Palermo (*La Carta di Palermo*) is an exemplary declaration that calls for immediate action to recognize human mobility as an inalienable human right. Referring to specific articles in the Italian constitution, the charter suggests the abolishment of the residence permit and recognition of human mobility as a structural matter, as opposed to an emergency issue. Emphasizing responsibility-sharing from local governance to national and European levels, the Charter stresses the need: to honor fundamental human rights; access to the right to asylum; freedom of movement, including opening routes for safe arrivals; right to hospitality; housing; work; and, health care. Pointing out the economic racism that is perpetuated through people's illegal status leading to labor exploitation without any of the protection that is a requirement for legal citizens, the Charter declares the unescapable responsibility and necessity of participation of all inhabitants (as citizens) in community life regardless of their status. The Council of Cultures in Palermo is a concrete step forward in this direction and the city of Palermo endeavors to fulfill the obligations set out in the Charter in various ways, and its efforts are understood and supported by its inhabitants.

Not long after the 2008 crisis, a long tradition of centralism was to take on a new dimension in Greece with a new reform plan in 2010. The 'Kallikratis Program', aimed to make structural and operational changes in the context of European integration, bringing a new reform process through administrative decentralization to modernize public administration and strengthen citizen participation<sup>792</sup>. This reform has focused on municipalities and regions with a series of measures including: changing territorial structures; competencies; the financial system and relations to the state. The regrouping of what is referred as first and second level local authorities has led to the mergers of municipalities, communities and prefectural administrations, resulting in 325 municipalities, 13 regions, and seven administration authorities<sup>793</sup>.

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<sup>792</sup> Torres Pereira Artur, Mosler-Tornstrom Gudrun, "Local and regional democracy in Greece", *Council of Europe - The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities*, CG/2015(28)8FINAL, 2015, p. 13

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14



With municipalities considered the first level of local governance, the regions form the second level with an intra-regional decentralization role and are responsible for planning and implementing regional policies. The seven decentralized state administrations are headed by a secretary general appointed by the government, and are mainly responsible for town and urban planning, environmental policy, forest policy, migration policy, citizenship and energy policy. They do not have elected representative bodies and exercise delegated state powers.

The municipal council, an economic committee, a quality of life committee, an executive committee and a mayor form the governing bodies of each municipality. The law establishes that municipal authorities manage and regulate all local affairs according to the principles of subsidiarity and proximity, aiming at protecting, developing and improving the quality of life as well as promoting local interests. Municipal responsibilities include eight specific areas mainly comprising the fields of development, environment, quality of life and proper functioning of cities and settlements, employment, social protection and solidarity, education, culture and sports, civil protection, and rural development. With a view to providing better services, municipalities may also exercise state responsibilities been assigned to them by law at a local level. This power has been applied in the use of the security forces, particularly during the refugee and migrant influx.

As per human rights protection and political participation of foreigners, the Immigrants Integration Council allows for the representation of immigrants. According to the Kallikratis program, each municipality should issue a Charter of Rights and Obligations of Citizens and Inhabitants, although in most of municipalities this issue is still pending<sup>794</sup>. Despite numerous efforts to decentralize the system, centralist tradition still prevails in Greece<sup>795</sup>. The 2015 CoE 'Local and regional democracy in Greece' report<sup>796</sup> also indicates that the Kallikratis reform has restricted local government autonomy. As much as the merging of municipalities and inter-municipal cooperation is essential for better use

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<sup>794</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58

<sup>795</sup> Trutkowski Cezary, Hlepas Nikolaos-Komninos, "Training Needs Analysis of Local Government in Greece" Council of Europe Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform report" 2018, p. 19

<sup>796</sup> Torres Pereira, Mosler-Tornstrom, *cit.art.*, p. 1-60

of the resources and governance, the change of scale in municipalities and regions has created distance between citizens and opportunities for direct democracy. Although the EU's aim was to increase citizen participation through their changes in territorial and political governance, instead reforms have tended to create more bureaucratic control with fewer human and financial resources at the local level in Greece. The expected outcome – of a local government responsible for local affairs – has not happened in practice, as local administrations often get discouraged by the lack of competencies and resources to access [EU] funds with its many bureaucratic requirements.

Particularly in times of crisis, constraints imposed by the state undermine the freedom of local governments. This has been seen in the migrant/refugee influx in the Aegean islands where communities have not been empowered to control management practices even if they have been in the frontline of the migration influx for many years. Testimonies in the CoE report highlight that “even simple decisions require a lot of effort: a long decision-making chain extends the time needed to bring a matter to a close and increases the costs.”<sup>797</sup> The example of Kilkis and Thessaloniki is worth noting, where the costs of housing for newcomers significantly decreased when the operation was localized<sup>798</sup>.

Cooperation between the local and central institutions has caused friction particularly during the influx of migrants and refugees in 2015. Continuing waves of migration in 2020 added to the frustration as the role of the state was delegated to local government, resulting in clashes between local communities and security forces in January. Confidence in the central government has been damaged, as communities and local governments did not receive adequate support in times of crisis. The 2015 CoE ‘Local and regional democracy in Greece’ report notes that residents believed local governments are treated as scapegoats to pass the blame when issues are not sufficiently resolved by the central authorities, consequently, “there is a such a

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<sup>797</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47

<sup>798</sup> Floxenia and Omnes websites indicate that local initiatives have provided accommodation respectively for €13.13 and €7.57 per day in 2017.

paternalistic top-down approach to local governments, and the municipalities being autonomous is a myth in Greece<sup>799</sup>”.

Under the imposed austerity measures, local governments have nonetheless managed to coordinate those movements initiated by citizens themselves. For example, social markets were formed by local governments to encourage solidarity between citizens with financial means and those who were in need, a practice that was formalized by the state in 2012. Today, social markets can be found in the majority of municipalities in Greece, both in the urban areas suffering from the intense problem of homelessness, as well as in the peripheries<sup>800</sup>. Many professionals, such as doctors, pharmacists and teachers have offered their services free of charge. The rural municipalities have offered municipal land for cultivation to citizens unable to meet their family’s needs.

The economic dependence of the local government on central government funding<sup>801</sup> is a dilemma as regards autonomy, as local administrations are encouraged to take various initiatives in the interest of citizens despite their finances being controlled by the central administration. It should be noted that structural adjustments attempt to channel countries to be effective and efficient in neo-liberal economic terms with a top-down approach. However, in times of crisis, including austerity measures and migrant/refugee influx, the mitigation of the situation is carried out at the local level, which is greatly hindered by austerity measures. The economic crisis has revealed the difficulties of the centralized decision-making process, as agency emerged at a local level, with civil society organizations, anarchist groups, community associations and municipalities handling their everyday concerns.

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<sup>799</sup> Torres Pereira, Mosler-Tornstrom, *cit.art.*, p. 28

<sup>800</sup> Triantafyllopoulou Athanasia, “Local Government and Citizen in the Period of Crisis in Greece”, *Review of European Studies*; vol. 9, No. 4; 2017 p. 1-10

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1-10

### 2.2.3. Meta-integration potential

The emphasis on the dialogical nature of the meta-integration process is notable in the studied areas where a positive interaction between the newcomers and long-term residents was observed, with the facilitation of intermediary groups and organizations. While some of these facilitating groups and organizations work on the implementation of state-led programs and are consequently constrained in their actions, others have the liberty to attempt alternative approaches and creative solutions that work at the local level. Despite a similar overall aim, a distinction can be made between groups and organizations that are temporarily pulled into salaried aid work to address the issue at a local level, and those who assume this role as a career path and follow the humanitarian crisis as per their respective *raison d'être* and approach. In both cases, the emergence of organic intellectuals was observed, some experiencing more frustration than others, but seeking connections and common ground for solidarity. The distinction is important as a reminder of the role of autonomous and anarchist spaces as a source of creativity and free thought, which could easily be sidelined or undermined by career humanitarian and development workers.

Considering that local communities are in the frontline of the refugee/migrant influx, and the lack of resources to address needs, state-led programs such as SPRAR in Italy and ESTIA in Greece have provided the financial and technical means for local groups and community organizations to work with newcomers. Such programs show the power of coordinated efforts and their effectiveness at local levels, when resources are made available to local governments and groups in a timely manner. They also show that centralized government control and top-down approaches to the implementation of such programs reduce this effectiveness and create a series of contradictions and conflict between central and local governments, and have a negative impact on the people of concern.

In Sutera, where the SPRAR program was coordinated by a local organization *Girasoli* (Sunflowers), a common space was created to facilitate housing, medical care, Italian lessons and psychological counseling for newcomers. This space soon became well known by long-term residents and played a crucial role in joint cultural activities and exchanges between people. The mayor Grizzanti of Sutera led a process bringing long-term residents, local organizations, businesses, newcomers around the SPRAR program, which had a positive impact on the everyday life of a depopulating town in central Sicily. One example of the positive impact was that the local elementary school was only able to remain open, needing a minimum number of students, thanks to the children of newcomers that populated the town. While the entire town could be considered a common space due to its size, the office of *Girasoli* is the heart of the town, where many community activities take place. *Mario Tono*<sup>802</sup> at the museum stated that with the arrival of asylum seekers, the exchange of many multi-generational migration stories of Sutera and Sicily between the aging long-term residents and newcomers created a very human basis of their interaction.

The size of the town (approximately 1300 inhabitants) and the presence of newcomers (average 50 persons) means that it is comfortable experience for long-term residents, who can cope with newcomers. The observations and interviews carried out in the context of this research in Sutera indicated that the presence of newcomers was perceived positively, and in some cases the departure of those whose asylum cases were clarified was saddening for the mostly elderly population. Despite their relatively short stay, and the demographic selection of newcomers (families and single women with children), and the lack of engagement in political life due to the temporary nature of a transit town, Sutera remains a safe space for those in need before they continue their journey. It can be said, therefore, to maintain the classic paternalistic nature of humanitarian aid. While there might be intercultural exchanges between individuals about their respective positions on issues, hierarchical and patriarchal relations do not seem to be addressed, which may be

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<sup>802</sup> The interview took place in Sutera, May 2019. Mr. Tono is a long-term resident and responsible for the museum in Sutera (male, early 60s).

due to the dominant age group of long-term residents, primarily belonging to a high context Mediterranean culture with strong hierarchical and patriarchal elements. As many of those interviewed stated that younger community members do not have a vision for the town and plan to leave for educational or work opportunities, it is quite possible that the repopulation of the town will end along with the SPRAR program. However, Sutura and many depopulated rural and semi-rural areas in the Mediterranean region have the potential enter into a meta-integration process and redefine their positions. This is particularly true at times of crisis causing major displacement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in light of new technological developments, the need to minimize environmental degradation and manage the spread of epidemics.

*Ms. Pellegrini* (an NGO worker in Sutura) stated that beyond the argument of migrant and refugees' contribution to the economy, the rehumanization of newcomers through direct contact helped to reframe relations between Sutura's long-term residents and newcomers, where otherwise they would not be exposed to people with an Islamic background, and may have maintained any ingrained prejudice. The SPRAR program, with all its shortcomings, has played a role in partially overcoming the notion of 'otherization' in a rural Sicilian town. *Mr. Kamperis* (activist and a local NGO worker), in Kilkis also pointed out that such a program (ESTIA) , with the efforts of a local community organization which led a conservative municipality to change its position toward newcomers and engage in a dialogue process to develop collective solutions.

In the example of Kilkis, while the ESTIA program has provided some assistance to work with newcomers, sustainable, social and solidarity economy practices have been explored with specific attention to the environment, under the facilitation of the local organization Omnes. In this regard, Omnes attempts to minimize their dependency on central government support and create a common space for a social solidarity economy, where long-term residents and newcomers find common ground for a joint action as a community.

The presence of organic intellectuals has emerged from the everyday needs in these locations. Local community organizations have assumed the role of facilitation and have managed to bring community resources together. While the benefits of state-led contributions cannot be denied, the localized nature of cooperation work has been the engine at the community level. A variety of reactions to solidarity was observed. In the case of Italy, although there is a network of diverse initiatives, a significant skepticism toward outsiders was noted, which, it could be argued, is a form of parochialism. A sense of being overwhelmed in a potential complex work environment seemed to prevent people from opening up to new opportunities, leading to self-imposed restrictions and isolation, preventing creative outlets and autonomous initiatives from flourishing. It was interesting to note that such creative and inspiring initiatives seemed unaware of similar practices in Turin and Rome in Italy, as well as initiatives in other countries such as Spain, Greece, and France. This could be seen as a side effect of the bureaucratic obligations that come with state-led programs and international funds, which consumes creative energy and channels it into the world of administrative work. If one recalls the abovementioned linkage between organic intellectuals in various layers of the society, it is fair to say that a number of links were disconnected in the studied areas in Italy. While this could be seen as a successful example of self-reliance, it also presents a challenge in solidarity actions across borders, limiting their potential to join forces by uniting.

The rooted belief in the concept of integration, driven by long-term residents, local, national and international organizations sets a significant obstacle when imagining alternatives through the process of meta-integration. Therefore, a shift of perception becomes fundamental if a politics of proximity toward community of equals is to be adopted. Such a shift requires critically questioning the deep belief in temporary nature of displacement, connections to a place with possessive and territorial perspective, and relations of power, privilege and authority. This presents a greater challenge in small towns where the numbers of newcomers are kept small, and rooted notions go unquestioned, as opposed to larger urban settings where the peripheries – as per their nature – do not have a dominant group (with the exception of dominant nation-state

values), and the relation to the place and people are regularly confronted. This is why the link between the peripheries of power and geographic peripheries require autonomous and anarchist spaces to be able to delink the rooted notions of the nation-state, elaborate a new equation of community and politics of equals, redefine and redesign relations in a process of co-construction following forced displacement.

Ultimately, urban areas, and the initiatives such as Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo and Floxenia in Thessaloniki, have more potential to see a process of meta-integration through than rural areas due to the presence of diversity, and the reduced levels of possessive and territorial connection between place and people. Regardless of the leftist stand of the initiatives observed in Italy and Greece as well as other parts in the northern Mediterranean in most cases, horizontal hierarchies and the leading male figures remains the norm, with the clear exception of Floxenia, Thessaloniki.

It was also noted that the traditional heritage and identity arguments have prevailed more in smaller settings where long-term residents maintain cultural values to be hierarchical and patriarchal. Such thinking is also reproduced in urban settings where, particularly among first- and second-generation newcomers, traditional power and privilege relations and oppressive traditional practices are maintained in the name of cultural relativity, as seen in the Pakistani and Indian communities in Palermo and Chinese community in Thessaloniki.

Consequently, the presence of autonomous and anarchist spaces is more likely to find a platform and support in urban settings due to higher population levels in these areas. Given the overwhelming challenges which urban life presents today, repopulating abandoned areas in Europe has significant potential and deserves serious consideration. This may be more of a necessity than a choice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The camp-like situation that was created with the ESTIA program in Syndos also perpetuated dependency among the newcomers and generated frustration among long-



term residents. *Ms. Benelou* (an employee of a local organization in Thessaloniki) stated that centralized procedures did not allow local government and organizations to take actions locally, adding that if people in the temporary accommodation were given the opportunity to take part in cooperative or municipality-led work, including agricultural work, they would be interested.

Given their sense of global solidarity in political action, autonomous and anarchist spaces are often also informal educational settings. Occupations, squats and camps play a crucial role in people's lives and they are not necessarily subject to the charity-based aid mechanism. The encouragement to be actively engaged in solidarity-based action requires political action and responsibility, which constitutes an essential part of this informal education. *Ms. Chabani* (an activist and NGO worker) from Marseille maintains that with alternative paths around which people can organize, there is a momentum for political action and change.

*Mr. Melluso* (Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo) emphasizes the need to adjust to local conditions, stating that Ballaró can be seen as a liberal playground for those who play into it. It is also a safe cultural experience to go and see a world of refugees and migrants, so it brings a lot of people together. Arci Porco Rosso's understanding of structural injustices and its radical stand in addressing these issues gives them the confidence to work with people from all walks of life, including those with liberal or conservative values. Thus, they are comfortable working with people from all institutions and political spectrum while they remain transparent with their political views.

The socio-economic aspect of rural settings leads to major challenges. The loss of local knowledge and practices in rural areas call for attention as many environmental problems have been seen in Italy and Greece. The disappearance of the hillside terraces in the Amalfi Coast and Cinqueterre in Italy has led to major landslides, changing the landscape and causing major problems both to the environment and the production of essential agricultural products. Abandoned rural areas in Greece reduces cultivation and land

management, possibly causing bush fires for many years, further affecting the environment and economy. In this regard, more than a focus on tourism the attention to rural settlements and abandoned villages in the Mediterranean region is needed as a matter of sustainable livelihoods in light of community regeneration. Therefore, a more balanced rural-urban governance could be conceived with all inhabitants to address a number of complexities such communities face today.

While older generations as a whole strongly hold on to the traditional values in these areas, younger generations tend to migrate towards urban settings, seeking better opportunities. Degraded housing conditions, an aging population and external migration make these towns increasingly uninhabitable; in the meantime, investment in housing is made in urban peripheries where the quality of life is disputable. A shift in position regarding the quality of life versus financial gain calls for a more balanced approach, and observations for this research included a significant change in community life with the arrival of newcomers.

A projection for the future as part of the process of meta-integration inspires further exploration of rural and semi-rural local approaches at a time when most of the focus of integration is on urbanization. Marinaleda is important to note for this very reason. The concept of sustainable livelihoods, a major challenge in this period, requires that we redefine and redesign communities, whether in rural or urban settings, with social ecology and feminization of politics in focus. The sense of belonging requires joint shared stories, as clearly expressed by *Mr. Čup*. In this regard, the stories of solidarity and displacement set the common ground for a social transformation process. Table 2 summarizes the potential of the meta-integration process in the studied areas as per the observations carried out by the author.

**Table 2: The potential of the meta-integration process in the studied areas**

	Sutera	Kilkis	Palermo	Thessaloniki	Remarks
<p><b>Common space</b></p> <p>Creating space and tolerance for multiple stories</p>	O	O	O	O	The potential of the creation of common spaces presents a diverse range of possibilities regardless of urban or rural settings and/or community generated or state –led initiatives.
<p><b>Attention to patriarchy and hierarchy</b></p> <p>Being conscious of not reproducing hierarchical and patriarchal structures</p>	NAW	NAW	PO	PO	Urban settings as per their diverse nature in the peripheries create an environment where patriarchy and hierarchy are more challenged. However, possible repopulation of rural settings may play a crucial role in the near future in addressing this issue as well. Internalized (horizontal) hierarchy and unconsciously-embedded patriarchy are to be surfaced and addressed during this process.
<p><b>Multiple narratives</b></p> <p>Acknowledging the presence of organic intellectuals at all levels and seeking cooperation</p>	NAW	O	O	O	Acknowledgment of organic intellectuals and overcoming a dogmatic ideological stand appears to be possible both in rural and urban settings. In Italy, there seems to be a tendency to keep a distance and internalized hierarchy binding even in leftist circles. Autonomous/anarchist spaces present a different reality.
<p><b>Projection for a collective future</b></p> <p>Adopting a politics of proximity - direct democracy</p>	NAW	NAW	O	NAW	The rooted belief in the concept of integration / inclusion sets the parameter of power relations between long-term residents and newcomers. This is observed across the board with the exception of autonomous/anarchist spaces in the peripheries of power. A projection for the future remains at an individual level if a shift in perception is not made. A projection beyond nation-state encourages people to seek creative alternatives.

**Observed:** O

**Partially observed and more elaboration is needed:** PO

**Needs more attention and work:** NAW

#### **2.2.4. The applicability of the municipalist principles in the studied areas**

Autonomy is a key to a social transformation process and is a driving force during displacement, despite the paternalistic systemic control that perpetuates a culture of dependency. As urbanization gains momentum and the scale of governance enlarges in metropolitan cities, management becomes more complicated, distant and mechanical, containing people into small circles of existence away from democratic processes. M. Bookchin argued for liberated cities, towns and neighborhoods, governed by open popular assemblies, which confederate to challenge parochialism, encourage independence, and build a genuine counter-power to currently dominant institutions<sup>803</sup>. The concept of municipalism tries to break down the larger scale to ensure people's direct engagement in a democratic process, and encourages the rooted relations of structural injustices to transform through direct involvement.

The municipalist principles as introduced by M. Bookchin and colleagues, and the efforts to implement this theory through Fearless Cities across the globe, as well as the Marinaleda example in Andalusia, show some of the possibilities of direct democracy in action in various cultural and political contexts. These experiences also raise the question of the applicability in the context of displacement-affected communities. Alternatives and inspirational initiatives in collective self-management in the Mediterranean region also indicate the possibilities in various periods in history that fed into social struggles today.

The focus of this research has been several studied areas in the northern Mediterranean region. It has been observed that some of the municipalist principles are being applied in small circles while others could be further explored through the process of meta-integration. The overarching challenges across these areas are the often-uncontested perceptions of displacement, displaced persons, the notion of integration as well as the rooted belief in the presence of the nation-state as the ultimate governance body to organize the society. As long as these parameters are viewed uncritically by communities

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<sup>803</sup> Tokar Brian, "The liberatory potential of local action", Degrowth, 25 September 2019.

during their everyday lives, the applicability of municipalist principles may not be seen as relevant. Consequently, it is the recognition of the autonomous initiatives with their diverse and creative outlets that set the ground for a bottom-up and self-instituting emergence of local governance capable of collective self-management.

Popular assemblies, in their various formats, have taken place in all studied areas. In Palermo the presence of the *Consulta delle Culture* (Council of Cultures) is specifically targeted to allow immigrants to have a platform to share their views with the municipal council and influence local policies. The newcomers who do not have clarified legal status find a similar platform in informal settings, such as at the premises of Arci Porco Rosso, where they have the opportunity to discuss issues concerning their lives, and meet other interested community members. Moltivolti is another community-based initiative that offers a working and meeting space for assemblies on various scales to take place. The possibility of direct communication between civil society organizations and the municipality allows for a constructive exchange in order to address issues of concern to the community. Such an organic linkage between community-based groups and the municipality allows for the organization of neighborhood assemblies and a chain of communication, as seen in Ballaró.

In Thessaloniki<sup>804</sup> neighborhood assemblies have played an active part in community life as part of a long tradition of popular revolts in Greece dating back to the WWII period. In recent years, the Stekis<sup>805</sup> have been the heart of communities organizing for anti-austerity movements. It is interesting to note how Greek society, perceived as increasingly individualistic among many interviewed, has the agency to organize and form solidarity in times of crisis. This has been seen across Greece during austerity measures, as well as the refugee/migrant influx since 2015.

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<sup>804</sup> Recluse Alias, "In Greece, as the state collapses, the neighborhoods organize - An interview with a member of the Athenian assembly movement", libcom.org, 19 December 2014

<sup>805</sup> A Greek term commonly used to describe a familiar place in which to socialize.

The *centri sociali* have played a similar role for decades in Italy, and have inspired a number of initiatives at the neighbor level. The importance of popular assemblies becomes more obvious at times of crisis where the decline of the nation-state and the economic system creates significant uncertainties that allow other modes of organization and relations to become possible<sup>806</sup>. When communities are forced to leave behind their norms and practices through displacement, and rational state-led guidance is not provided or is not as irrelevant to everyday concerns, people assume a more active role in decision making and action. This is when the neighborhood assemblies become crucial, however they need to produce concrete results. Recluse points out that the lack of concrete victories emanating from neighborhood assemblies is a source of discouragement, creating a feeling of defeat that is very acute at the present time<sup>807</sup>.

A close link with a local governance is essential to make outcomes concrete. Establishing a communication channel is fundamental for allowing communities to see their views reflected in decision-making and concrete results. In this regard, the conceptualization of local governance cannot be top-down, but must set out organic links with grassroots groups, embracing and respecting the views of the communities. Ms. *Benelou* (an employee of a local organization in Thessaloniki) stated that regular assemblies bringing newcomers and long-term residents together would help everyone to understand local conditions better as well as each other's concerns. She stressed that this understanding would build a more realistic and sustained solidarity among residents and lower unrealistic expectations, as they come to see that they share a community life, regardless of their origin. While assemblies have taken place in almost all cases observed for this research, it is important to note that none of them held the decision-making power, as advocated by municipalist principles.

As a concept, social ecology was present in Kilkis and Thessaloniki even if it is not framed in this same manner. Local community groups, who have been working with the

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<sup>806</sup> *Ibid*, <https://libcom.org/library/greece-state-collapses-neighborhoods-organize-interview-member-athenian-assembly-movemen>

<sup>807</sup> *Ibidem*.

refugee/migrant influx, focus on sustainable community practices with particular attention to local resources and waste management. The structure of the local community organization Omnes pays particular attention to avoid hierarchies in their work environment. For example, they have ensured that all colleagues working under the same project receive the same flat salaries regardless of their position, as they see their work as a team effort. Their interest in sustainable livelihoods has led them to analyze their natural environment and work with the available resources in relation to the needs of society. In this regard, they have been working with the local community to develop a circular economy and have also focused on waste management. For example, noting the excessive use of plastic straws, led them to introduce wheat stems as organic environmentally-friendly straws, as Kilkis and the surrounding region produces a significant amount of wheat. In line with the extensive coffee consumption in Greece, the group is also working on the collection of coffee grounds, which are then turned into heating pellets. Using the available technology at various collection sites in Greece, they have created a model of waste management based on collective self-management.

The concept of social ecology becomes essential to establish a social solidarity economy where rural/urban as well as center/periphery relationships are redefined. The example of Contadinazioni in Sicily, creating an agricultural-based work environment, honors the rights and dignity of the laborers regardless of their status. *Ms. Benelou, Ms. Angelidou, and Mr. Kamperis* (local NGO workers who work with newcomers in Thessaloniki) independently highlighted that Greece had the resources and places for people to come and work in rural settings, to the mutual benefit of all. However, rural solutions are neither valued by newcomers nor facilitated by governments. Nevertheless, small initiatives such as Refugee Village for Freedom in Athens offers inspiration where forcibly displaced persons, cultivate a small farm independently, producing and selling their products following the principles of collective self-management. As these attempts are isolated, they might be seen as unsustainable. Yet, they are aligned with a similar philosophy of the non-hierarchical, environment-oriented, collective municipal structure seen in

Marinaleda, where the municipalization of land and self-management is able to meet the fundamental needs of its inhabitants.

There is skepticism of the possibility of such an approach being implemented in Palermo. *Mr. Melluso* (Arco Porco Rosso in Palermo) stressed that the laws and the territorial governance in Spain is different than Italy and municipalism may require a different approach in their case. *Mr. Kamperis* (activist and a local NGO worker) from Kilikis holds a pessimistic view on the current dominant political mindset with rigid and centralized structure. While he believes in the grassroots action driven by local inhabitants, *Mr. Kamperis* expresses concerns as to whether it could be implemented in the Greek context, as people are increasingly focused on individual wellbeing and reluctant to cooperate. Increased interest in collective solutions only in times of crisis raises the question of embedded system-driven values on societal governance in a capitalist society. According to *Mr. Kamperis*, the municipalization of unused land would face significant resistance in Kilikis as most landowners reside outside of town and would not relate to the potential benefits that the community may perceive, even though much of that land could be utilized to minimize external dependency and eliminate subsidies, which are burdens for the central government.

While these reflections represent the valid views of activists in struggle in their respective countries, it is essential to note that the struggle for the rights and municipalization process in Marinaleda was not a smooth process, but required decade-long consistent organized action. Although the Spanish system of governance is one of the most decentralized in Europe<sup>808</sup> this decentralization process has not been free from tensions. There have been different conceptions of autonomy by the various autonomous regions and central government, as most recently seen in the 2019 Catalan crisis. Andalusia has dealt with issues surrounding structural poverty for decades, and developed its coping mechanisms and struggles accordingly. While the concept of social ecology challenges

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<sup>808</sup> Cools Marc, Verbeek Leen VERBEEK, "Local and regional democracy in Spain", Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CG (24)6FINA, 20 March 2013, p. 16



hierarchical relations, it also highlights the emerging necessity of human existence in an Anthropocene-style interaction with the natural environment, impossible in the current circumstances. Therefore, its applicability is closely linked to how society prefers to organize itself, adjusting to territorial and political governance.

The feminization of politics presents a number of challenges as it targets historical patriarchal relations. Although it takes on different forms in different cultures, patriarchal relations and gender roles are commonly observed in displacement-affected communities. Even the statistical reporting of women and children constituting the majority of the refugee populations globally has implications of women's understated role as the main caretakers of children. The concept of 'head of households' in official documents has long perpetuated the belief that men are family decision-makers. In regards to the presence of patriarchal relations, the situation in the studied areas was not an exception. Rooted traditional relations both in Italy and Greece based on specific gender roles are rarely questioned and are culturally internalized. Even if neo-liberal economic relations force both couples to work, women's role as the caretaker at home remains a praised and accepted norm. While women joining the workforce is no longer a taboo, concerns around equal pay are often sidelined. Managerial and senior positions are often held by men, while women play a very active role in field work. This was observed extensively among the international, national and local entities, including leftist groups.

The gender issue is not seen as a priority in working with displacement-affected communities as it is not perceived as a fundamental need. The issue of gender equality is often a thematic topic as opposed to an issue of structural injustice, which affects how it is addressed by communities. Among all of the cases observed, unless it was a specific gender-focused organization or project, only the Thessaloniki example considered feminization of politics in every aspect of their work with newcomers. The empowerment of women and opportunities in a new place was explored together with activist women from Thessaloniki, not in terms of assistance but as a joint struggle for change. In

Palermo, while the leading figures appeared to be men, the presence of women was quite predominant in engaging with the community affairs. *Ms. Gianguzza*, (Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo) frustrated with the position of women in Ballaró, stated that patriarchy was everywhere and affected all, whether long-term residents or newcomers. She added that domestic violence and violence against women in general is predominant in the Italian culture and Italians are not sensitive to it in migrants and refugees. In regards to people with diverse sexual orientation, either in the field of humanitarian and development fields or among refugee/ migrant groups, rights and dignified community involvement continue to be taboo. Consequently, while some exceptional examples have been observed, the principle of feminization of politics appears to present a major challenge, as gender roles are very much engrained in present cultures.

The concept of dual-power, with its reconsideration of hierarchical and patriarchal power relations and privileges, becomes essential on various levels in the framework. Internalized hierarchical tendencies and partial parochialism observed in the Italian cases can be challenged with newcomer's assumed active political role in local governance. For example, the historical power relationships with the mafia, which have been predominant in Sicily since the 1950s, have gained a different meaning with the presence of diverse migrant communities who do not perceive or submit to these norms. In the new equation, when the status issue is resolved, the authoritative relationship with the government can be subject to a similar reaction.

Community regeneration has the potential to bring diverse approaches to governance as long as the politics of equals remains an important element. Indeed, this could be one of the main reasons that local organizations make an effort to help people secure legal status and transform their temporary situation to a more permanent status, obtaining legal rights to engage in politics under the current legislation. Alternatively, in terms of people without legal status the struggle of *gilets noirs* in France is a good example of groups that are politically engaged in a struggle for basic rights; in solidarity with other movements such as *gilets jaunes*, they develop a dual power that the government could not ignore.

Although it is not an institutionalized, in the sense of M. Bookchin's reference, displacement-affected communities, the establishment of popular assemblies can support the development of dual power. The crucial element in this process is to recognize that it cannot happen in isolation and it cannot ignore social ecology and feminization of politics, which fundamentally address the relations of power and privilege.

The applicability of dual power principles in the studied areas is closely linked to levels of solidarity with other initiatives and groups within the respective countries as well as international solidarity across existing borders. The absence of information regarding similar solidarity initiatives perpetuates the feeling of isolation and marginalizes the criteria for success, with the norms of the nation-state continuing to dominate.

The efforts to bring diverse forces together as communities of equals through the practice of a politics of equals and proximity are defining elements of dual power. Given the communication technology that is available today, this is more possible than ever before.

Although it is not an internationally organized action, Portugal's attempt to legalize migrants in its territory in April 2020 in light of the Corona pandemic inspired other political entities in Europe, including a similar call by the French left<sup>809</sup> to legalize *sans papier* as and discussions in the Italian parliament. This primarily strategic move was welcome in the height of the pandemic, where the self-isolation, social distancing and cleanliness were crucial but challenging for the underprivileged, particularly forcibly displaced persons. As the numbers of illegal migrants in Portugal and France are relatively low, countries like Turkey would have a very different position on this issue. Regardless, the development of dual power can be a balancing power both locally and internationally, applying political pressure for systematic assurance of human rights and dignity.

The concept of confederalism, which is essential for dual power in municipalism, could be explored as per the territorial governance structures of both Greece and Italy. The shift

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<sup>809</sup> Ramiro Joana, "Faced with Coronavirus, Portugal Is Treating Migrants as Citizens — We Should, Too" *Jacobin*, 2 April 2020

from a top-down decentralized model to a bottom-up direct democracy model is applicable in both countries as they both constitutionally recognize the autonomous nature of the municipalities. The applicability of confederalism among municipalities may take the form of initiatives like Fearless Cities, however, it may be better to locate such initiatives outside known nation-state borders, potentially using European institutions as a platform.

The framework that has been developed through this research presents a combination of elements that emerge through observations and interviews in the studied areas as well as the empirical data collected through previous field experiences. While the applicability of the framework depends on the cultural context, it is essential to consider culture as a dynamic notion where assemblies of people who are forcibly displaced become the makers of a new culture and write their own narratives. Their wide-ranging knowledge, skills and willingness to continue their lives in a dignified manner becomes a driving force for displaced people regardless as to whether their will and power is acknowledged by the center. Finding themselves in the peripheries of power, they must redefine and redesign relations in this new culture where they have a limited room for movement between the coloniality of power and colonized minds. Cognizant of the influences of power, privilege and authority, contemporary solidarity movements, regardless of size and duration, must reflect on the notions of displacement and its role in triggering change in order to play an active role in the process of change. Therefore, the framework may prove a useful tool for communities to delink and co-construct a new way of life, paying specific attention to fascistic and totalitarian tendencies that deliberately limit their room for movement.

### **2.3. A critique of the Displacement Triggered Community Co-construction framework (CCF)**

The framework was conceived with the consideration of specific conditions following forced displacement where displacement affected communities recognize the transformative essence and opportunities for social change that is part of seeking

collective solutions. The framework explores the consolidation of a newly introduced process of meta-integration, which emerged from a thorough analysis of the notions of displacement and integration, and the theory of municipalism which has been hitherto implemented in communities focused on long-term residents, with relatively limited exposure to population movement. Thus, the framework might be perceived as irrelevant for communities unwilling to question critically existing dominant norms as well as relations of privilege and power. In this regard, it is essential for communities to self-assess whether a willingness for change is present. As one of the objectives of the framework is to work towards creating a community of equals, the fundamental dilemma of accepting equality with 'others' may be a burden for those living under the dominant neo-liberal value system, where people and communities may be reluctant to engage or choose to withdraw from the process.

The critique of the framework is done with the focus on its fundamental elements. These considerations include: the presence and acknowledgement of people; forcibly displaced persons, places; the commons in the peripheries of power, the stories and aspiration of the people for collective alternatives to the existing structure. The framework refers to possible alternatives that target structural injustices. In this framework, 'otherness' is seen as a natural and equal part of the process of co-construction, distanced from systemic strategy of marginalization and discrimination.

The framework allows displacement-affected communities to develop a common understanding: that forced displacement disorients both newcomers and long-term residents to various degrees and places them in a vulnerable situation, where they experience displacement by force whether they have been forced to move or not. The territorial connection of long-term residents to a place may prevent them from engaging in a dialogue on equal terms, as they may feel a sense of ownership of the place as well as rights conferred by citizenship. Regardless of their social status and class affiliation, long-term residents may take a rigid position and engage in identity politics in the name of protecting their culture, heritage, identity, and economic interests. Thus, the reluctance

of long-term residents to consider themselves displaced persons may hinder the process of dialogue on equal terms.

As there is an engrained belief in top-down governance and 'one-man' leadership in mainstream society, a bottom-up and community-based approach may not be embraced by communities in the first instance and may be dismissed as utopic and time consuming. Depending on the depth of trauma and difficulties experienced by specific groups in displacement, the emergence of organic intellectuals and confidence building in their role and the process may be a lengthy process. The dilemma of temporariness in one place may influence the active engagement of people and make them reluctant to take responsibility and action. This combined delay and constant community regeneration, may lead to frustration among community members who would like to see change occur more rapidly, and they may not perceive the benefits or the opportunities provided by a collective future with people on the move. In this regard, solidarity among organic intellectuals is imperative as their role as facilitators is essential to the process.

A sense of belonging is closely linked to the efforts made to integrate, predominantly for the descendants of immigrants. The values of the dominant-culture are expected to become the new norms for newcomers. The idea of peripheries of power and geographic peripheries is a challenge to integration; the framework assumes that commonalities are found in the struggle of people for a collective dignified life. Hence, the ability to imagine alternatives beyond integration and the notion of the nation-state requires a particular environment, one that can be found in peripheries of power. The overpowering reproduction of traditional regroupings and relations has the potential to weaken the framework as most newcomers and long-term residents are conditioned to find short-term solutions. For some of the newcomers, as seen in Palermo and Thessaloniki, the regrouped communities have set their own hierarchies in place and re-established traditional power relations that see new processes as a threat. From a nation-state perspective, blaming newcomers draws the focus away from systemic issues. The state may enjoy a deep rooted and often uncontested confidence in their own system, which

may prevent communities from questioning their relationship to the dominant culture. As a consequence, there are influential forces that prefer to maintain a measured distance between the center and periphery, encouraging more individual rights, freedoms and solutions when seeking alternatives.

Community regeneration requires continuous change and adaptation, which may not be feasible for many communities. Learning to live with ambiguity and develop a governance model based on this reality may not be preferred or an option that is easily accepted.

The framework could be useful tool for communities interested in creating collective alternatives to target structural injustices. While it offers a general way forward, it does not provide a specific roadmap that can be implemented with immediate effect. The framework in its entirety needs to be further tested before more precise conclusions can be made. It was not the author's intention that the framework act as a roadmap, however, many such tools have already been produced by specialized entities and experts and may be useful for this purpose. Some of these tools include the IOM Migration Governance Framework and the CoE's 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance.

Creating autonomous spaces in an environment where relationships are shaped by the norms of the center is a challenge and a difficult path for many to choose. In this regard, the participation of people in the process goes beyond attending an event or a implementing a project, rather it is a constant attempt to carry out direct democracy. As there are no set recipes or known experiences at this scale, it is crucial to experiment ensuring that small and marginalized groups have representation, through personal contact. The time-consuming aspect of direct representation might be problematic for many working people.

One factor that is essential to consider but that has not been addressed by the framework is the economic aspect that would sustain such a lengthy process. While there are interesting examples that could be explored, a social and solidarity economy needs to be further elaborated alongside the conceptualization of this framework. This is crucial if

people are to work together over the long-term and ensure that all are involved, with a minimum level of economic stability. While Marinaleda is a good example, the size of the town, its geographic location and the lack of population movement needs to be taken into consideration. Although the dominant capitalist economic model may not appreciate this framework, nonetheless, the need to see wellbeing beyond economic interest is emerging, through anthropocenic ways of engaging with the natural world.

The presence of communication and language skills as well as cultural capital play an important role in accessing information and knowledge. Seen in the context of integration, this may easily become a way of exhibiting power as newcomers may require lengthy periods of time to obtain the requisite language skills to be able to negotiate, and even then may never be able to reflect fully on the cultural implications that are inherent to language. Language is not just about words but the way a culture thinks and operates; it is more than an exchange of words, but is rather a means of achieving mutual understanding in order to reframe relations. In this regard, while there is the expectation to learn the language of the dominant group, a genuine interaction between groups should consider the option of exploring other languages and their way of thinking in order to understand each other better in defining the relations during the process of co-construction. In Greece and Italy, all individuals who were interviewed viewed language as an important element for integration and participation in solidarity movements despite many participants, who consider these countries as transitional, not wanting to learn the language even if they are offered the opportunity to learn. The danger of the process of co-construction being shaped by the language of the dominant group remains. While the framework raises this issue, it does not suggest a way forward on how to establish effective communication. Cognizant of the importance of common language, the framework calls attention to the subtle power inequalities that accompany the use of a specific language.

As political engagement is closely linked to citizenship, people on the move focus their energy on the meeting their daily survival needs and may perceive any political



engagement as a waste of time. In addition, historical mistrust may exist between community members from different geographic regions, due the shadow of colonial history reembodyed in race and class relations. Engaging in a collective process may be unsettling for some as a dialogue process may surface where actors may change depending on their move to another destination, which requires a shift in perspective, and a different view of collective wellbeing. Despite their effectiveness in such a process, the reputation of anarchist and autonomous initiatives among mainstream cultures may also prove a limitation in their involvement in co-construction.

While municipalist principles may be applied in various areas, municipalism as a form of governance may face certain challenges depending on the legal structures in any given country. As much as the framework encourages people to vision a world beyond the nation-state, communities may self-impose restrictions depending on their confidence in the paternalistic relation to the state. The right to enter and remain in a country is managed at the central level, and a progressive process carried out at local level may be interrupted by decisions at the central level, potentially presenting challenges. The main philosophy of the framework of focusing on imagining alternatives to the nation state makes the impositions of the nation state insignificant; however, under current structures the relevance of the state and its current practices are the reality that needs to be faced.

In the geographic landscapes studied for this thesis, communities are familiar with population movement and have developed coping mechanisms to deal with it over the decades. The changes in human landscape and demographics will have an impact on the political landscape, with the new generation of immigrant families engaging in politics. In this regard, the process of meta-integration may provide an opportunity for exploring alternatives and working towards the creation of a community of equals.

Understanding displacement and integration from a different perspective allows one to work with these notions in a more coherent manner, and seek solutions beyond what is typically presented. Enhanced interaction and dialogue, particularly for younger

generations, brings a different dimension to the concepts of time and space, temporary and durable, redefining political engagement and participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Conclusions for Chapter 2

The overall strategy of nation-states and international organizations focusing on security and border control of population movements creates a specific framework using a top-down approach. Although the autonomy of local governments is set out and encouraged in the constitutions of most of the Council of Europe member states<sup>810</sup>, the regulations regarding population movements have been subject to central government policies, from border crossings to humanitarian assistance, as well as various durable solution scenarios.

In Greece and Italy, the widely-accepted role of the nation-state regarding displacement related issues has been inadequately addressed in recent years, raising questions on how fundamental human rights and dignity of displaced persons are honored. Tsitselikis and Agelopoulos<sup>811</sup> stress that bi-lateral agreements to keep the displaced people out of the EU, including the EU-Turkey agreement, have been seen as problematic from their inception in that they perpetuate the instrumentalization of the human rights of migrants and refugees and act against the Geneva Conventions and the European Convention on Human Rights. The failure to take on a share of the burden by many EU countries led to a sense of abandonment in Greece and Italy.

Policies that have been put forward in recent years deliver subliminal messages of otherness and otherization, shaped by fear and dominance in terms of race, class, gender and geographic origins. In addition, the mainstream expectation that newcomers must feel grateful, fit in and find their place in the existing system remains dominant. In some

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<sup>810</sup> See the European Charter on Local Self-Government (1985) ETS no. 122

<sup>811</sup> Tsitselikis Konstantinos, Agelopoulos George, "Temporary Migrants and Refugees in Greece" in Pitkanen Prikko, Haykawa Tomoko, Schmidt Kerstin, Aksakal Mustafa and Rajan S. Irudaya (eds), *Temporary Migration, Transformation and Development Evidence from Europe and Asia*, London and New York, Routledge, 2019, p. 131-140

cases, this 'fitting in' has resulted in newcomers finding small pockets within mainstream culture, and in others it has led to the creation of 'container communities' according to Stephen Castle<sup>812</sup>.

With the consideration of displacement as an opportunity for social change as well as the acknowledgement of the diverse nature of communities, specifically in urban settings, creating common ground for a process of co-construction requires a markedly different perspective; one that examines and challenges the relations of power and privilege among long-term residents and newcomers, as well as fetishized concepts of integration and the top-down neo-liberal approach to local governance. The studied cases in Greece and Italy showed that non-institutional and autonomous initiatives and spaces are crucial starting points for solidarity-based actions, where displacement is linked to community development. However, their platform for a political engagement has been limited or non-existent, even for those participants who may be considered as fully integrated into mainstream culture, with a few notable exceptions such as the Council of Cultures in Palermo. In countries of transit such as Italy and Greece, people do not invest their time or energy on politics and do not take risks, preferring to remain invisible. The government, long-term residents and newcomers, all consider the situation to be temporary; a subtle disconnection in political engagement.

Tsitselikis and Agelopoulos<sup>813</sup> state that Greek society is fragmented on the issue of immigration. Although many are positive, particularly about refugees, a minority maintain a xenophobic position. While the focus is on recent newcomers and the ongoing influx, those migrants who have been in the country over a longer period remain outside of the political realm. This impacts society as a whole, as in the struggle to retain skilled laborers as a result of austerity policies.

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<sup>812</sup> Castles, *art.cit.*, (Understanding Global Migration....), p. 1565 -1586

<sup>813</sup> Tsitselikis and Agelopoulos, *art.cit.*, p. 134

The focus on recent newcomers as transforming demographics is common in the region. Annalisa Camilli, in her analysis<sup>814</sup> of the history of immigration in Italy, points out that in Italy third-generation immigrants (such as Chinese) are transforming demographics yet people are fixated by the newcomers and the supposed threats they present. The lack of political involvement – as long-term residents or citizens – raises questions about the potential conditions of newcomers, even if their status is regularized. In many countries, despite fulfilling obligations and facilitating an orderly, regular and legal arrival for newcomers, the issue of basic rights, freedoms and historical structural injustices are not being addressed, as newcomers are expected to blend in and find their path mirroring that of other citizens. However, their ‘otherness’ remains an obstacle in engaging in political processes, preventing them from entering the arena of decision-making.

In this regard, the popular assemblies from neighborhoods to districts, cities as well as action groups, are able to embrace all inhabitants and encourage people to take part in decision making. Marinaleda’s mayor, Sánchez Gordillo states that popular assemblies create a platform for people to think, discuss and decide about the present and the future with the commitment so the others do not interfere and determine it for them<sup>815</sup>.

The initiatives led by local communities and local governments have been more human and dignified utilizing the limited resources available. Although sporadic, these examples offer inspiration to displacement-affected communities that have been drawn a network of solidarity. For many who are challenged by the nation state-approach, municipalism provides an opportunity, particularly in the peripheries of power, where people fall out of the scope of the nation-state. M. Bookchin’s municipalist principles provide an alternative path with the anthropocene’s balanced relationship with the natural environment, while the example of Marinaleda lays out a possibility of working with the precarious conditions of newcomers.

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<sup>814</sup> Camilli Annalisa, "La lunga storia dell'immigrazione in Italia", *Internazionale*, 10 October 2018

<sup>815</sup> Sanchez Gordillo, *op.cit.*, p. 86

Although the legal systems do not present obstacles in Greece and Italy, the dominance of neoliberal practices in the political landscapes may cause challenges during the implementation of a municipalist approach. Aware of the potential challenges under a nation-state, the use of such a framework offers an alternative, particularly in times of crisis, where the response time of large entities is lengthy and focus on marginalized groups minimized. For example, the recent discussions on the central government COVID-19 pandemic guidelines on measures required (social distancing, sanitary cautions, access to work and basic needs) make no reference to the conditions and difficulties faced by vulnerable groups, including refugees and migrants as well as the money poor. It is in times like this when the effectiveness of local governance is increasingly relevant as people are removed from their habitual norms.

While the municipalist approach presents an alternative path, the general public as well as local groups, hold deep rooted beliefs: in displacement as physical movement; the displaced as guest; the expectation of integration; and, the unquestioned presence of the nation-state. Thus, any change cannot be led either by central government or by populist mainstream society. It must be generated through the bottom-up creation of autonomous spaces which are then linked to local governments to become politically relevant.

Such a movement of the people questions the belief in the nation-states' exercise of power by any means, to exist and protect its national integrity. It further encourages a shift from a statist approach, imagining beyond the nation-state, which sets a different power dynamic from the center. Their lack of interest in obtaining state-like power, coupled with the creation of a people-centered dual power of the peripheries is what presents a challenge to the center and rooted structural injustices. As the direct democracy model may be perceived as an existential threat to the nation state, it is often portrayed as unstructured, marginal and utopic. On the contrary, as Finley<sup>816</sup> argues, spontaneous revolts, the organic relationship between autonomous spaces, social

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<sup>816</sup> Finley Eleanor, From Here to There: Global Revolution to Transcend Capitalism and the State", *Academia*, p. 1 - 8

movements and local communities are in fact well-coordinated, communitarian responses to the encroachment of state power.

Despite communities being accustomed to representational democracy and fast-pace result-orientation in decision-making, there remains significant aspiration for community-led egalitarian solutions and direct democracy. Thus, the potential for meta-integration exists. These aspirations may lead to the creation of new ways forward and municipalist principles will be essential, particularly as they challenge hierarchical and patriarchal relations through the feminization of politics and social ecology. The process of socio-political transformation requires an appreciation more of a process-oriented approach rather than quick results, which are costly in terms of the loss of rights and freedoms and discards the concept of a community of equals.

At a time when population movement toward urban settings is on the increase, with most of the focus on urban solutions, a shift in perception of how to organize and govern, with the depopulated areas in mind, is worth exploring. In the case of Sutura, municipalist principles, with popular assemblies and a focus on confederalism with the surrounding towns, are important to develop a strategy to address depopulation. Therefore, more balanced rural-urban governance could be conceived with all inhabitants to address a number of contemporary complexities.

The observations and interviews in both rural and urban settings have highlighted the importance of solidarity networks as working in isolation hinders the impact of creative solutions and the goodwill of the local initiatives and people, leading to pessimism among organic intellectuals. Given the complexity of larger concerns today, individuals gather around a specific topic of interest, turning it into the topic of their struggle, often being satisfied with passing a policy or reforms in legislation. Reformist attempts to deal with specific topics rather than systemic issues as a whole dismisses the revolutionary nature of the struggle. The municipalist approach goes beyond a philosophical argument and

offers a chance to address these growing concerns with a dynamic and revolutionary spirit.

Thus, a place-based and people-oriented approach emphasizing municipalism engages in the problems of the community as a whole, decided by the community members through popular assemblies. Balance is needed between urbanization, quality of life and access to resources and a great amount of flexibility needs to be shown. As sustainable development is an effective and efficient use of internal dynamics and is driven by internal forces, it is essential to pay attention to understand the changing nature of these internal forces through displacement, acknowledge the value in otherness, and work towards the creation of a community of equals.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a continuation of the economic, social, military, gender and class-based violence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with an increasing assault on the environment. Brian Toker<sup>817</sup> warns that with the current trends of human activities in relation to natural world increasing climate disruptions will have an impact at a larger scale. As climate crisis has historically affected the most vulnerable peoples, and this will cause extreme deprivation on a global scale. Marinaleda's mayor, Sánchez Gordillo<sup>818</sup> underlines that people's indignation against this violence is vital for rebellious resistance and political action. A projection for the future as part of the meta-integration process provokes the exploration of rural and semi-rural alternatives at a time when most of the focus is on urbanization and urban solutions. With the example of Marinaleda in mind, the concept of sustainable livelihoods in a community of equals requires that the relations are redefined and redesigned, whether in rural or urban settings, with social ecology and feminization of politics in focus.

These are the settings where vulnerability is mobilized and a movement of the people leads to social change. The foreseen transformation pays particular attention to

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<sup>817</sup> Tokar, *art.cit.*, (The liberatory potential of local action) <https://www.degrowth.info/en/2019/09/liberatory-potential-local-action/>

<sup>818</sup> Sánchez Gordillo, *op.cit.*, p. 33, 75

dogmatism, as this would paralyze the revolutionary struggle undermining co-existence of ideas. As every local struggle has an international aspect in its nature and is not the inheritance of any political party, it essentially emerges from the everyday practices of communities. Sánchez Gordillo emphasizes that “as long as it is local and as long as it is concrete, we can change society”. He further concludes that an activist against local injustice “is infinitely more internationalist than a hundred books and a thousand international solidarity treaties.”<sup>819</sup>. With the consideration of historical power relations between the center and peripheries, and referring to Rancière’s view of democracy as a constant struggle against oligarchic tendencies in society, the relationship between the governed and those who govern<sup>820</sup> is questioned. Recalling the main question of this thesis regarding progressive dynamic governance, it is this shift to self-governance that brings a transformative process to life, and municipalism is a path worth exploring.

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<sup>819</sup> *Ibid*, p. 135

<sup>820</sup> Baiocchi, Connor, *art.cit.*, p. 89-100





## General Conclusions

*“Every daring attempt to make a great change in existing conditions, every lofty vision of new possibilities for the human race, has been labeled Utopian.”*

- Emma Goldman

The relations of power, privilege and authority between the Global North and Global South have maintained their essence even as they have changed their forms over centuries. Having found a new set of norms under neo-liberal economic structures, nation-state plutocracies, across the board, have continued to extract natural resources while benefiting from cheaper labor forces overseas.

Just as uncontrolled urbanization, consumerism, precarity and depoliticization have become dominant elements in most parts of the Global North, so have militarization, environmental degradation, poverty and unsustainable livelihoods come to dominate the Global South with conflicts, disasters, and human suffering. The continued coloniality of power at a global scale has transmitted the deep-rooted beliefs of ethnic superiority from the colonial era back to the homeland of [ex] colonial powers. Here, stereotypes of the Global South, embedded within structural injustices, have led long-term residents and the authorities to ignore the ‘third world’ conditions in which people live in the peripheries of the ‘first’ world. The historical relations of oppression have become reflected in the contemporary world, and have perpetuated structural injustices, widening the gaps between the rich and the money poor, pushing large groups of populations, including marginalized groups such as refugees and migrants, into the peripheries of power.

Dogmatized through the formal education system and a sense of what it means to perform good [legal] citizenship, people living precarious lives under neoliberal economic policies and structural adjustments have seen a gradual loss to their civil rights. While fear of lowering income levels, standard of living and further loss of rights has become a norm among working people in the northern Mediterranean region, the implicit message by the

center that 'no alternatives exist for change' has also become common. Challenges to this message and a struggle to find alternatives are often dealt with through an excessive use of force by governments. The 2015 refugee/migrant influx into Europe was not a surprise, and nor will be the data-supported likelihood of a rise in future displacement due to climate change, disasters, conflicts, scarce resources and economic inequalities. However, these have added to political concerns regarding security and stability as well as to whether nation-states will be able to address such challenges effectively. Under constantly changing conditions and insecurities of recent times, centralized but equally fragmented governance models are being challenged through social movements.

By bringing two current phenomena together, displacement and governance, this thesis aimed to go beyond the existing mainstream discourse of how displacement and the displaced are perceived and treated, offering enhanced definitions for both phenomena to constitute the basis for future actions. Furthermore, it offered a critique of integration, and examined collective self-management and a governance model following forced displacement, emphasizing the role of organic intellectuals in a process of socio-political transformation in co-constructing communities. This thesis stressed the need to rethink dysfunctional governance models that are essentially undemocratic, as well as oppressive traditional practices which alienate and marginalize specific groups.

With people in a state of constant mobility, the concept of community has gained a more temporary, virtual and fluid meaning. Populations appear estranged while at the same time pushed to be unified within imagined borders. The Chinese artist and political asylee in Germany, Ai Wei Wei, reflecting on the migrants and refugees crossing the Aegean Sea, points out that coping with humiliation and suffering becomes the only way to survive for displaced persons. He stresses that as such humiliation has become common for the displaced, creating deep wounds in humanity and inherited values. Consequently, as migration increases, one has to come to terms with the fact that it is not whether we want to live with 'the other' anymore, but how we live with that otherness, recognizing its value for ourselves.

While centralized nation-state solutions appear to be well-established within the international humanitarian system and certainly dominate discussions in the field, there is a danger of absolutism and values imposed by the same structures that declare people on the move illegal, illegitimate, and unworthy of protection. The international legal system, while promoting fundamental human rights and dignity, is restricted by the funding and value system of nation-states and their respective ideologies. The mandates of the international organizations concentrate on control and regularization of population movement through border protection and many do not hesitate to compromise human rights and dignity in the name of national interest, integrity and sovereignty of their member states.

The idea of durable solutions is in essence individualist, sidelining any form of collectivist, progressive, social transformation. Current responses to forced displacement are often conducted under financial and time constraints, pushing an imperfect conclusion, and regenerating a vicious cycle of dependency. If one could but focus on these individual attempts comprising numerous progressive projects and programs, they could be appreciated for their attempts at addressing such issues. However, as a whole, there are major systemic concerns. The neoliberal globalized system had caused increasing inequality and structural injustices that are rarely addressed by governments. Politics is influenced by the values and norms of the center while those in the peripheries are treated as the subjects of plutocracy, with its educated class (serving as a buffer zone) justifying and rationalizing its existence and practices.

Discontent with inequalities and injustices both within societies as well as between humans and the natural world have reached an alarming point; large numbers of people are protesting and seeking fundamental changes to the status-quo. Social movements across the globe are flourishing, with periodic peaks building up on previous movements, despite the dismissive attitude of the center. In the Mediterranean region, numerous local autonomous initiatives in Greece, Spain and Italy have managed to embrace newcomers making them part of their struggle against structural injustices. Despite autonomous

spaces and initiatives being dismissed by conventional political circles as the temporary politics of disorganized groups, this thesis argues that they provide creative alternatives for social and cultural change capable of replacing politics by going beyond political parties. Forced displacement triggers the potential for social change, and newcomers, engaging in a politics of equals, play a crucial role in community co-construction.

This research underlines that nation-states are unable to address the problem of forced displacement in its entirety, even as they are increasingly challenged by both demographic and cultural changes that emerge from population movements. With due consideration of human rights and dignity, the experiences in the Mediterranean region indicate that the response to displacement is more effective at a local/community level where actions are collective, self-managed, and autonomous in tight networks, using a horizontalist approach. The ability to shift the perception of displacement, integration and governance opens up opportunities for creating alternative ways of addressing displacement-affected communities. Given the precarious conditions of people in the peripheries, there is a genuine need to reconnect with one another as communal and collective beings. Therefore, a community's size, its access to and management of local resources and ability to make decisions involving all of its inhabitants are fundamental elements for direct democracy. This is similar to the emphasis made by Arturo Escobar, as he points out the necessity of "relocalization of many activities [the production of food, energy, and other basic human needs to the most local level possible], the communalization of social life, [and] the reinvigoration of collective decision-making"<sup>821</sup> for direct democracy.

Such processes require extensive dialogue, collective political consciousness and being able to imagine a reality that is beyond the nation-state. Experiences in the studied areas indicate that the ability to negotiate and consider new alternatives beyond those given, and see past visible boundaries, does not compromise a person's strong political views.

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<sup>821</sup> Great Transition Initiative, "Interview with Arturo Escobar: Farewell to Development", February 2018. <https://www.greattransition.org/publication/farewell-to-development>

Exploring possibilities in seeking solidarity is essential for momentum and survival of social movements. The acknowledgement of organic intellectuals in layers of society and building alliances is crucial for this very reason.

#### - **Regeneration of communities in times of displacement**

Forced displacement in all of its aspects has become a closer reality for many due to increased drivers of climate change, disasters, epidemics, violent conflicts and scarce resources. As mobility increases, changes in demographics and culture become inevitable. A deeply held belief in the temporary nature of displacement has proven to be irrelevant, with the average duration of protracted displacement currently at 20 years. However, the policies and actions planned by nation-states are still developed with a temporary mindset; lengthy bureaucracies and outdated policies do not address the needs of the displaced. This consequently inhibits local development processes designed by central authorities from adequately addressing local responses to displacement.

In community regeneration, how 'local' is defined makes a significant difference. Discussions of the possessive and territorial connection to a place and people, based on arguments of original settlement, historical inheritance, identity, heritage and culture of the majority do not have the same significance in geographic peripheries where inhabitants are systematically pushed to the peripheries of power and subaltern positions. The 'regeneration of communities' does not allow one single group to dominate, under the rule of 51%. With the presence of multiple and dynamic identities and narratives in intercultural settings, the imposition of the nation-state and plutocracy remain the norm, even if it does not reflect the real conditions in the cultural context.

Although it may take place at an individual level, forced displacement is not an individual(ist) act, as it has strong community elements. The analysis of the anatomy of displacement (as discussed in Part 1 - Chapter 1) allows individuals and groups to understand their position in various phases and find common ground for dialogue. This

dialogue revolves around forming a political community where vulnerability is mobilized, from victimization and resilience to resistance and political action, as displacement is seen as an opportunity for a process of social transformation.

The political community, in the sense of Rancière's definition of political, works towards creating a community of equals, emphasizing that equality is not a goal to be reached, but requires constant effort. Equality does not have a fixed arrival point where it becomes a 'substantial form as a social institution'<sup>822</sup>, but is a collective action by all inhabitants to adjust themselves to dynamic elements and changes in communities. This process of political engagement encourages the mobilization of vulnerability, overpowers the glorification of resilience and liberates the imagination of communities. Neocleous refers<sup>823</sup> to resilience as a mechanism for policing the imagination, and "attempted colonization of the political imagination by the state".

With constant mobility, the regeneration of communities has become a norm, particularly in urban peripheries. Mostly representing the precariat, Aijaz Ahmad refers to the peoples of the periphery as the collective agent for revolution in our time and emphasizes the importance of social movement as the imperative mobilizing form<sup>824</sup>. Thus, any social movement and future projection must consider community regeneration and the constant and dynamic nature of culture, heritage and identities. A transformative reaction to change is closely linked to the questioning of norms, traditional practices and the creation of many and diverse ways of existing.

#### - **Beyond integration (Meta-integration)**

Perceptions of forced displacement are socially and politically constructed. These perceptions constitute the basis for policies, and influence how displaced people are treated under the nation-state. Centralized governance has the power to shape what

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<sup>822</sup> Baiocchi, Connor, *art.cit.*, p. 96

<sup>823</sup> Neocleous, *art.cit.*, <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/commentary/resisting-resilience>

<sup>824</sup> Ahmad Aijaz, introduction to Amin Samir, *Only People make Their Own History: Writings on Capitalism, Imperialism and Revolution*, New York, Left World Books, 2018, p. 30

people think and want as well as who they trust, fear and blame. The deep-rooted belief in the importance of integration of newcomers, together with an inability to imagine anything outside the dominant logic of nation-state, perpetuates the relationships of power, privilege and authority.

As international efforts attempt to make population movements more regular, orderly and safe, the closure of borders by nation states, leaving forcibly displaced people in unacceptable and precarious conditions, is an assault on human rights and human dignity. Those who manage to cross the borders (regardless of their status or duration in one place) are expected to fit into the norms of the new location, irrespective of the terminology applied, be it integration, inclusion, assimilation, etc. The concept of integration, referring to heteronomy in the practice of a dominant group over other groups based on their social, economic and political power, often remains unchallenged.

Challenging the concept of integration raises a number of questions which need to be addressed from the perspective of peripheries. Therefore, this analysis – even as an intellectual exercise – must also reflect on the political position of the people in the peripheries of power. This research concludes that integration remains an unsubstantiated and abstract concept held by the center, impacting government policies with minimal benefit for the people in the peripheries. It has been noted that precarity has increased among the general population in Greece and Italy due to economic downturns and austerity measures. Newcomers, concerned with legal status and daily survival, are pushed to the peripheries of power, reduced to mere service providers with deteriorating basic rights and working conditions.

Sharing similar living conditions, the precariat in the peripheries develop specific coping mechanisms and build separate communities where their interactions with the majority community are limited to the marketplace, schools and occasional cultural activities. As there is a lack of time, space, and in some cases political will to engage in a dialogical



process, the norms set by the center continue to dominate, defining the parameters of socio-political relations.

Consequently, efforts to guide newcomers to fit into a structure which does not even function for long-term residents perpetuate a system that feeds into the continuity of structural injustices. Integration becomes problematic when the norms internalized by people in the peripheries primarily benefit the center, norms that are embedded in formal education and labor expectations of what makes a 'good citizen'. Good citizens engage in 'good governance' in a neoliberal world with capitalist value systems, maintaining the status-quo and existing power relations based on hierarchy and patriarchy. Good governance efforts today come dangerously close to maintaining the coloniality of power which administers the delicate 'balance' between the plutocracy and the people in the peripheries through its educated class. With the constant change of demographics in the peripheries triggered by displacement, integration becomes an illusion: a fetishized concept that the paternalistic and hierarchical relationship with the center would like to maintain through the state apparatus.

This research concludes that integration based on fitting into a specific norm designed by the center does not nourish community wellbeing for displacement-affected communities, maintaining calculated separation between groups. Populations engaged in representational democracy are conditioned by the false concept of the rule of the majority, which alienates community members from everyday democratic practices. While mainstream institutional responses offer a preconceived framework of integration which intend to reach durable solutions but are only able to address small numbers, the collective knowledge and agency of people in the peripheries of power and in autonomous spaces (including occupations and squats) are producing working alternatives.

Although the concept of integration in policy terms is applied to those who have already been granted legal status in a given country, integration strategies are being introduced in Greece and Italy to accompany prolonged asylum procedures which are meant, in their

essence, to be short-term solutions. While it is not openly declared, there seems to be a subtle acceptance of protracted displacement in the current environment. During the interviews undertaken for this thesis on the topic of integration, it was noted that integration efforts break down established solidarity among people who have already developed social networks and support systems in their places of displacement. Accordingly, many displaced persons choose to stay, regardless of the poor conditions in camps and camplike situations, in order to maintain social ties and solidarity among people under similar conditions. These support systems are seen to be more secure in the long-term than short-term humanitarian assistance programs which oblige newcomers to integrate into an unfamiliar environment. Integration, in its essence, lacks the elements of constructing together and projecting a collective future on equal terms as newcomers are expected to fit into existing structures. The Co-Construction Framework (CCF) put forward by this research fundamentally addresses the need for dialogue for co-construction and introduces the principles of municipalism as a local governance model.

The Mediterranean region, with its history of emigration and immigration, has shown considerable hospitality to newcomers at a local level. There is also a tendency among forcibly displaced people to move to areas which have demonstrated a lack of hostility to newcomers. However, the long-standing possessive and territorial relationship of long-term residents to the place where they live is still dominant and shapes the parameters of community relations, particularly on the concepts of who is 'local' and the what extent newcomers are entitled to rights. While land ownership impacts the discussion in rural communities, in urban peripheries the concept of ownership takes on different meanings. Property ownership dominance has been overcome through the municipalization of the commons and commoning process (such as Marinaleda) and occupation or use of the commons by the community as a whole, as seen in Palermo, Athens and Thessaloniki.

The meta-integration process presents a platform for social imaginaries in a co-construction process after forced displacement. This is also a platform where concepts and relations are reconsidered, redefined and redesigned by local community members.

By introducing the concept of meta-integration, this research underlines the importance of the process without suggesting that there is a defined point of arrival, but as an existentialist need to bring about a process of social transformation. Considering the influential forces of the coloniality of power and colonized minds which uses integration as a tool to control and manage newcomers, the meta-integration process offers four specific elements needed to support dialogue on equal terms, emphasizing the fluidity and dialogical aspect among these elements. These elements are: the importance of common spaces (places); attention to non-reproduction of patriarchy and hierarchy (stories); the acknowledgement of organic intellectuals (people) in layers of society; and a politics of proximity in the struggle for a collective future (aspirations). Particular attention is given to avoiding the use of any specific language as a tool of power and privilege, but rather used to effectively share stories and memories of the displaced persons.

In the present manifestation of the integration of forcibly displaced persons, there are inherent power relations between groups, entitlement as per a possessive relation to place, and the notion of integration into the local. There is a semantic but also concrete shift from hostility to hospitality in the first response, which turns into hostility in prolonged and dependency-based relations between long-term residents and newcomers. The meta-integration process challenging these approaches, encourages the opportunity to imagine something that is beyond the parameters of the nation-state at local level, based on everyday lived experiences, with diversity of ideological and political stands in the peripheries.

#### - **Organic Intellectuals**

The role of organic intellectuals is key to steering the meta-integration process. The places they work, stories they tell and their role as changemakers in the social change process function to expand solidarity networks. Due to their fundamental and structural

ties to diverse classes<sup>825</sup> the emergence of organic intellectuals is closely linked to groups and communities becoming self-conscious entities. The importance of multiple narratives and dynamic identities that are emphasized in the process of meta-integration is revealed through the facilitation of organic intellectuals, thus marginalized people gain a rightful place in discussions and decision making.

In the process of meta-integration, the essential link between the common space, peoples and their stories in relation to the environment comes to the fore as a constant process of dialogue within and between communities, where these individuals play an organic and pivotal role with a genuine interest in social change, regardless of their position in the system. Automatic exclusion by potentially likeminded persons, due to an affiliation with an international organization or an anarchist initiative, harms the joint struggle in a social movement. Organic intellectuals may arise from diverse backgrounds, and exclusion based on a staunch 'purity test' reduces the possible impact and use of resources, as well as building on the existing forms and transforming with a realistic approach.

While this thesis focuses on a process of co-construction after forced displacement, it also acknowledges the essential role of organic intellectuals in various phases of displacement, linking the emergency, post-emergency and development phases. Aware of varying political stands and organizational positions, the efforts to overcome divisions and reach out to other organic intellectuals is an important step during a common struggle against structural injustices. Consequently, a process of meta-integration can cultivate the social imaginaries of displacement-affected communities and channel them into local governance. Organic intellectuals are able to facilitate this process during this research, rejecting dogmatic impositions and revealing creative alternatives. In addition, the need to learn the language of a place emerged as an important issue, as it can create an inherited relationship of power and privilege. The language of communication, how it is selected and how it is used, including whether the official language is a condition for a process of community co-construction, all need to be reconsidered in meta-integration.

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<sup>825</sup> Crehan, *op.cit.*, p. 128-156

Experience shows that organic intellectuals taking part in autonomous initiatives are systematically marginalized, and many have become introverted and protective in their actions. In some cases, they are even heavily criticized by the members of the same movement, due to their presumed divergence from a dogmatic ideological stand, such as seen in anarchist groups in Greece. Accordingly, international solidarity and building networks beyond national borders becomes more important than ever.

- **Collective self-management in the process of socio-political co-construction**

Community co-construction after displacement is a pedagogical process where a switch from heteronomy to autonomy takes place in practice. Learnings from this research indicate that autonomous and anarchist spaces are areas for creativity where alternatives emerge. These spaces feed into social movements, as alternative experiments which build on each other, embodied in a local structure and strengthened through networks of solidarity. The relationships between long-term residents and newcomers take on a different dimension in places where they both engage in social struggle. While organized political action among local groups is not widespread in rural and semi-rural areas, urban settings are more fertile for social movements. However, the experience in Marinaleda, Spain also shows that when the commons are municipalized in a semi-rural location, significant opportunities for collective self-management are possible.

In Greece and Italy, collective self-management has been avoided by mainstream society despite it being a usual practice in small pockets where struggles have historically taken place with substantial theoretical and practical components, including labor movements, anti-austerity measures, university occupations, movements for the homeless, and local development initiatives. In many of these places, political actions have also received the support of long-term residents, positively affecting their relations with newcomers. In particular, communities that have experienced displacement, including emigration or a previous influx of migrants and refugees, seem to understand and cope better with the current migrant/refugee influx. It was interesting to note that these communities both in

Greece and Italy tend to blame the policies of their governments' and the EU more than the migrants and refugees. Having faced significant economic difficulties in the last decade, the concerns of the long-term residents are focused on survival and leading dignified lives, which many understand is not only challenged by the arrival of migrants and refugees, but by larger structural causes.

In a rapidly changing world, adaptation to change has become a condition for survival as communities are forced to develop coping mechanisms and constantly reinforce modes of inter-dependency. It must be recognized that people in the peripheries face precarious conditions. The process of meta-integration, facilitated by organic intellectuals, can adopt collective self-management as a principle, as seen in the working examples of anarchist initiatives and autonomous spaces. The commons and the process of commoning are essential elements that embody the struggle. Collective self-management as an autonomous act goes beyond nation-state driven discussions on unity, and argues the importance of finding meaning in *being in common* as opposed to the need to become a *common being*, as eloquently elaborated by Jean-Luc Nancy and Siraj Izhar<sup>826</sup>.

Borrowing the concept of temporal continuity by Ma Mung, the author emphasizes the continuity in struggles and social movements that often emerge from short-lived anarchist and temporary autonomous experiences. Despite their 'temporariness', there is a continuity in struggle against structural injustices and a projection towards the future. Thus, these inspirational examples of collective self-management and direct democracy pave an alternative path for creating a new narrative.

#### - **A new cultural narrative on displacement and its governance**

A new narrative determines the parameters of the response and the approach to displacement-affected communities. In this new narrative, the perceptions change regarding displacement, the displaced persons and integration. Social imaginaries

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<sup>826</sup> Izhar, *art.cit.*, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2017/05/recovering-community-part-i/>

expand beyond the nation-state, and autonomous spaces and creative outlets are not marginalized as irrelevant thoughts of the few.

With these changes in perception, the way society is organized is revisited and envisioned in a clear and respectful balance with the natural world, not as an option but as an essential element. This new organization is born out of autonomous and anarchist spaces allowing creativity to emerge and influence social movements, in turn leading to direct democracy using municipalist principles.

A comprehensive response to forced displacement moves beyond institutional problem solving, with non-institutional responses often operating more effectively, using their own logic. Non-institutional actors<sup>827</sup> work with larger numbers, at times with unfortunate consequences, but often make efforts to protect vulnerable individuals. Declared as illegal and irregular by the institutional response, at a community level they are often seen to work to honor human rights and dignity in a more pragmatic manner. While protection is a fundamental element in any institutional framework, flexibility and adaptability become essential for survival, which is more possible by non-institutional approaches. As the fundamental necessity for protection is well understood, the way in which it is applied and the conceptual frameworks that shape protection policies call for reconsideration, preferably looking beyond Eurocentric values.

Population movements and people's search for better opportunities elsewhere have been a constant feature throughout human history. In this context, the critical question in constructing lives after displacement is whether this search for a better life has been driven by the idea of individual achievement to maintain a certain standard of living, or gaining civil liberties and rights with the concept of collective wellbeing and quality of life, in balance with the environment. This question must be seriously considered by long-term residents and newcomers alike.

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<sup>827</sup> Non-institutional actors include those out of the non-profit industrial complex, anarchist and autonomous initiatives, smugglers, community members, etc.

Capitalizing on the experiences of anarchist and autonomous spaces and initiatives as well as the results from direct democracy and the conditions and political landscape today, Murray Bookchin's municipalist principles offer an inspirational path forward. Such a path cannot be dogmatic and restrained into one specific form of struggle as seen in current national and intergovernmental practices. While acknowledging the existing world system and role of nation-states, it cannot be denied that the corporate nature of states and its inability to address structural injustices, maintaining deep rooted hierarchies and patriarchy, has a detrimental impact on displacement-affected communities.

A new narrative must bring together many separate narratives of local communities, taking into account the constant regeneration of communities and the multiplicity and dynamism of identities and stories. Technology has the ability to bring communities together in the region and beyond and already existing networks, as seen in the Fearless Cities network, can be the basis for such solidarity networks.

#### **- Future perspectives on displacement and local governance**

Future predictions regarding forced displacement vary, but most focus on the governance of population movement in urban areas, as the UN estimates that 68% of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050<sup>828</sup>. Such an assessment points to a trend in human mobility while also setting the parameters for solution seeking, which is primarily urban. The growing size of urban peripheries, with their existing structural injustices, requires a new type of governance that is local, self-managed and practices direct democracy, distancing itself from the rule of the plutocracy.

In the collective responses to forced displacement examined in part in this thesis, many of the elements of co-constructing communities already exist. Contending with poor conditions or facing a perilous struggle to leave these settings are concerns for groups

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<sup>828</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050", 2018, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>



who become vulnerable due to displacement, as well as those who are displaced due to their vulnerability. Both of these aspects of vulnerability have significant implications on the politics of population movements and structural causes that produce and reproduce vulnerabilities. A much-needed shift must be gradual, internalized, and digested to be sustained, with consideration of long-term impact. Accordingly, a process of co-construction should be followed in the peripheries following forced displacement, with a cooperative nature and lacking status-based distinctions or categorization of community members.

Tahir Zaman advocates that the skills of local community members, including both long-term residents and the newly arrived, should be utilized in building cooperatives to address their needs at an early stage. Zaman rejects the categorizations of 'humanitarian' and 'development' and 'host' and 'guest' that predicates contemporary humanitarian responses<sup>829</sup>, considering cooperatives a more meaningful and dignified solution to the humanitarian crisis today. Zaman's views on the insignificance of such a categorization is closely aligned with the arguments made by the author in this thesis, which are not widely shared among the professionals in the field at this time.

In this regard, small meaningful initiatives heading in the same integral direction will constitute essential parts of a process of change, where the language of dialogue must not be dominated by traditional nation-state powers. In the peripheries, as no central power has yet been established with the domination of one specific group, scenarios that reach beyond the idea of integration will determine the next phases. Accordingly, local political consciousness will have to devise its own self-managed response mechanisms and gradually re-shape commonly shared values with the idea of horizontality. In addition to urban-focused arguments, with the policies that target structural injustices and available technology, semi-rural and rural areas in the northern Mediterranean region provide important examples of community-co-construction. Autonomous initiatives in Greece, Spain and Italy have managed to combine multiple struggles in both urban and

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<sup>829</sup> Bennett, *art.cit.*, p. 9

rural settings. The examples providing momentum to the Right to the City movement today are worth expanding to rural and semi-rural settings, where collectivization of the commons in the municipal context and co-construction of communities and new institutions through municipalism after forced displacement present an opportunity for social change.

The Mediterranean region is home to a number of inspirational examples of local initiatives for community co-construction. Human rights and dignity play a central role in this process, which is not necessarily tied to an institutional path.

Acknowledgment of the 'other' is key for starting dialogue to create a community of equals. In this transformative process, the historical oppressions and injustices are put into the spotlight, allowing populations to make their own history and heritage, rather than force them into the single narrative of a nation-state. The recognition that people on the move are not victims or vulnerable cases but courageous people seeking change and a more dignified life, is an important step in addressing displacement and displaced persons and projecting a collective future. The Displacement Triggered *Community Co-Construction Framework* (CCF) lays the ground for communities to explore the next phase in their lives and connect with larger networks.

Today, with close to a quarter of a billion people currently migrating, of whom over 70 million are forcibly displaced, and considering also the predictions of up to a billion additional forcibly displaced persons due to climate change and environmental degradation, current perspectives and modus operandi in addressing such population movement has to go beyond a nation-state framework. Numerous academics and professionals in the field of humanitarian work urge alternatives and significant changes to minimize human suffering and destruction of the natural world. The Community Co-construction Framework, with all its background arguments, offers a path forward and furthers extensive dialogue on the topic of displacement, encouraging a shift in

perspective for new cultural narratives underpinning social change which emerge through a conceptual shift within communities.

*To be hopeful in bad times is based on the fact that human history is not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand Utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.*

*Howard Zinn*

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The bibliography of this thesis is a compilation of extended sources that have influenced the author and have been utilized in the writing of the thesis. With the overall topic *From Population Movement to Movement of the People*, it includes sources in three thematic areas; displacement, integration and governance. However, they are presented in alphabetical order in four separate sections as primary, secondary, organizational websites and multimedia sources as intersectionality and integrated aspects of these topics are emphasized throughout the thesis.

The process used to locate the sources was driven by the three main topics though professional exchanges with colleagues, printed materials, media review, other academic studies in the field, field notes of the author as per field visits and observations, workshops, conferences and extensive on line academic research. The primary sources include up-to-date media coverage, the reports of the predominant organizations, first-hand data provided by competent authorities (official sources) and reporting from the field both by the author and the practitioners and grassroots organizations.

The secondary sources consist of books, academic articles, and research papers that offer extensive insight and data on the topics discussed in this thesis. Further the websites of the predominant organizations in the studied fields have been regularly consulted in order to monitor the progress and approaches of these organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Council of Europe, government websites, and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center.

The multimedia sources primarily include lectures, speeches and interviews by authors and academics in university settings, research institutes as well as conferences. The bibliography offers a substantial number of sources in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Turkish within the limitations of this research. The author acknowledges the availability of a significant number of invaluable sources that could have further enriched this thesis, however, understands the needed limitations of such an academic study.

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# **Annexes**



## Annex I: List of colleagues consulted

No	Name	Date and location of the consultation / exchange	Brief background	Gender / age
1	Arif Muharremi	Pristina	Country of origin Kosovo and has been displaced and returned in 1999 – Community engagement	Male Early 40s
2	Meriç Özgüneş	Thessaloniki	Community based response / institutional response	Female, Late 40s
3	Mariola Andonegui	St Millan, May 2017	Activist, educator – depopulation of rural and semi-rural areas in Spain	Female late 40s
4	Aintziane Eguilior Mancisidor	Bilbao. Nov 2016 Dec 2016	Government official, long term resident depopulation of rural and semi-rural areas in Spain urban immigrants	Female early 50s
5	Alessio di Giulio	Fontecchio	Long-term resident, NGO worker, activist. Depopulation of rural and semi urban areas, migrants	Male early 50s
6	Julian Civiero	Fontecchio	Long-term resident, artists, activist Depopulation of rural and semi urban areas, migrants	Male early 50s
7	Gerard Delanty	Lisbon, May 2018	Academic from the UK regeneration of communities,	Male
8	Filipa Neto	Lisbon	Government official regeneration of communities, gentrification	Female
9	Filipa Bolotinha	Lisbon	Long-term resident, activist, NGO worker regeneration of communities, gentrification	Female
10	Francesco Calzolaio	Venice, Italy	Long term resident, activist, local business owner	Male mid 50s
11	Patrizia Vachino	Venice, Italy	Long term resident, activist, local organization representative	Female mid 50s
12	Feruccio Ferrini	Ravello	Major hazards, disasters, depopulation migration	Male, early 60s

13	Vincent Fraschina	Marseille, March 2019	Long-term resident, activists, educator, artists, Hotel du Nord network member	Male early 50s
14	Julie de Muer	Marseille, March 2019	Long-term resident, activists, Hotel du Nord network	Female late 40s
15	Spyros Tsovilis	Strasbourg	Former CoE staff	Male late 50s
16	Malcolm Cox	Strasbourg	CoE staff	Male late 40s
17	Olaf Köndgen	Strasbourg	CoE staff	Male early 60s
18	Gianluca Silvestrini	Strasbourg	CoE staff	Male late 50s
19	Jenna Shearer Demir	Strasbourg	CoE staff	Female late 40s
20	Behzad Yagmaghian	USA	Long-term resident, academic	
21	Federica Manzetti	On line with Riace	Journalist	Female
22	Jenny Otting	USA	Academic	Female late 40s
23	Mathias Ripp	Germany	Academic and heritage expert	Male mid 50s
24	Ángel Portolés Górriz	Spain	Academic	Male early 50s
25	Ed Carroll	Lithuania	Community activist	Male mid 50s

## Annex II: List of the interviewees in the field (semi-structured interviews)

No	Name	Date and location of the interview	Description / Background
1	George Tyrikos	Lesvos, August 2017	Mr. Tyrikos (male-late 30s) is a long-term resident in Lesvos, folklorist, local business owner who has worked with migrant / refugee influx with NGO "Agkalia" since 2015.
2	Theodoros Alexellis	Lesvos, August 2017	Mr. Alexellis is a UNHCR staff based in Lesvos in 2017 (male -mid 30s).
3	George Chatzinakos	Thessaloniki, March 2019 and follow up meeting on- line	Mr. Chatzinakos is a long-term resident, (male, mid-30s) academic, geographer and an activist.
4	Mara Angelidou	Thessaloniki, March 2019 and follow up meeting on- line	Ms. Angelidou is an activist, NGO worker - Floxenia in Common, (female, mid-30s) who has been directly working with the refugee / migrant influx since 2015.
5* <sup>830</sup>	Mia Farzat	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Ms. Farzat is an NGO worker and a newcomer from Syria (female, mid 30s) who has been in Greece since 2015 with her family.
6*	Nafisa Radi	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Ms Radi is a newcomer from Iraq (female, mid 30s), single woman with children who has been in Greece since 2016, and waiting for family reunification.
7	Alexandria Benelou	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Ms. Benelou (female, late-30s) is a long-term resident, and employee of a local organization that works with displaced communities in Syndos.
8*	Wafaa Hadawi	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Ms. Hadawi is an NGO staff, (female, late-30s), activist, originally from Palestine who arrived to Thessaloniki by her choice to work with Floxenia in Common.
9*	Symos Papazoglou	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Mr. Papazoglou (male - early 60s) is a local community member and a market vender.
10	Mathilde De Riedmatten	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Ms. De Riedmatten (female, mid-40s) is a protection officer at the UNHCR Thessaloniki office.
11	Misel Gannoum	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Mr Gannoum (male early 30s) works with an INGO. He is long-term Thessaloniki resident of Syrian-Greek origin.

<sup>830</sup> (\*) refers to pseudonyms used in order to respect the privacy of some of the interviewees.



12	Charalampos (Haris) Tsavdaroglou	Thessaloniki, March 2019	Mr Tsavdaroglou is an academic (male, late 40s) specialized in urban commons.
13	Stefanos Kamperis	Kilkis, March 2019 and follow up meeting on- line	Mr. Kamperis is a long-term resident (male early 30s), activist and works with a local NGO, Omnes. He has worked at the Idomeni border crossing as well as the housing program in Kilkis.
14	Dimitris Demertzis	Kilkis, March 2019	Mr. Demertzis is a long-term resident and local NGO – Omnes staff, activist, (male, early 30s) worked at the Idomeni border crossing as well as in Kilkis.
15	Maria Isidou	Athens, April 2019 and follow up meeting on- line	Ms. Isidou (female - mid 40s) is a local community member in Exarcheia, Athens.
16	Panagiotis Tzannetakis	Athens, April 2019	Mr. Tzannetakis (male, late 30s) is a long-term resident, activist, works with the NGO, Human Rights 360, and affiliated with Omnes in Kilkis.
17	Eleni Takou	Athens, April 2019	Ms Takou is a long-term resident, local activist (female late 30s), an NGO worker Human Rights 360.
18	Lucio Melandri	Athens, April 2019 and follow up meeting on- line	Mr. Melandri is the head of UNICEF, Athens, (Male, mid-50s) who has been working with humanitarian operations for over 25 years.
19*	Giuseppe Nola	Sutera, May 2019	Mr. Nola is a long-term resident – local business owner (male late 40s).
20	Calogera Ingrao	Sutera, May 2019	Ms. Ingrao is a long-term resident – local business owner (female mid 40s).
21*	Vittorio Nola	Sutera, May 2019	Mr. Nola is a long-term resident, a high school student (male - late teens)
22	Mario Tono	Sutera, May 2019	Mr. Tono is a long-term resident and responsible for the museum in Sutera (male, early 60s).
23	Carmelina Lombardo	Sutera, May 2019	Ms. Lombardo is a long-term resident – local business owner (female mid 60s)
24*	Valentina Pellegrini	Sutera, May 2019	Ms. Pellegrini (female, early 30s) is an NGO worker for Girasole who has been working with newcomers under the SPRAR program.
25*	Fade Garba	Sutera, May 2019	Ms Garba (female early 30s) is a newcomer and single mother from Nigeria. She had been

				in Sicily for less than a year and was waiting for her status to be cleared.
26	Diego Pandiscia	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Pandiscia works with an INGO (Male, early 30s), specialized in working with newcomers, particularly unaccompanied minors.
27	Fausto Melluso	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Melluso (male - early 30s), is a long-term resident of Palermo, activist, founder of Arci Porco Rosso and a member of the municipal council.
28	Elisa Bonacini	Palermo, 2019	May	Ms. Bonacini is a long-term resident – academic and heritage specialist (female late 40s).
29*	Chris Okoro	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Okoro is a newcomer from Nigeria (male early 20s) and he is affiliated with Arci Porco Rosso.
30*	Amadou Gassama	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Gassama is a newcomer from Gambia (Male early 20s), a resident of Palermo for the last 3 years and affiliated with Arci Porco Rosso.
31*	Mahmood Jadoon	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Jadoon is a long-term resident (male, early 40s) with the country of origin Pakistan. He is a street vender and has had legal residency in Italy over 12 years.
32	Giulia Gianguzza	Palermo, 2019	May	Ms. Gianguzza is a long-term resident, (female late 20s), author, activist and works with Arci Porco Rosso – Sportello Sans Papier
33*	Mamadou Koffi	Palermo, 2019	May	Mr. Koffi is a long-term resident (male - early 60s) in Palermo whose country of origin is the Ivory coast. He has been in Italy for 30 years and works with an agency that deals with asylum seekers.
34	Valentina Grillo	Palermo, 2019	May	Ms. Grillo is a long-term resident (female – mid 20s) and works with the European Asylum Support Office.
35*	Salomon Ayensu	Turin, 2018	November	Mr. Ayensu is a newcomer from Ghana (Male mid 20s), inhabitant of Ex MOI.
36*	Samuel Musonge	Turin, 2018	November	Mr. Musonge is a newcomer from Cameron (Male mid 20s), inhabitant of Ex MOI.
37	Teresa Viola	Turin, 2018	November	Ms. Viola is a volunteer community worker (female, early 60s), long term resident who works with Ex moi.
38	Antonella Romeo	Turin, 2018	November	Ms. Romeo is a writer, editor and an activist (female early 60s) based in Turin.

39*	Benjamin Barbosa	Turin, November 2018	Mr. Barbosa is a newcomer from Guinea Bissau (male late 20s), inhabitant of Ex MOI.
40	Guglielmo Micucci	Rome, October 2017	Mr. Micucci is a long-term resident (male late 40s) who has worked with humanitarian work over a decade and currently works with Amref Italy.
41	Lodovico Mariani	Rome, October 2017	Mr. Mariani is a long-term resident (male late 40s) who has worked with humanitarian work over a decade and currently works with Amref Italy.
42	Sabrina Ciancone	Fontecchio, October 2017	Ms. Ciancone is a long-term resident, mayor, activist (female, early 50s) who has been working with depopulation, community revitalization and migration possibilities.
43	Valeria Pica	Fontecchio, October 2017	Ms Pica is a long-term resident, academic, activist (female, late 40s) who has been working with depopulation, heritage, community revitalization and migration possibilities.
44	Samia Chabani	Marseille, March 2019	Ms Chabani (female, late 40s), is an activist, NGO worker and a long-term resident who works with immigrant communities in the northern district of Marseille.
45	Prosper Wanner	Marseille, France	Mr. Wanner is a long term resident, (male early 50s) activist, academic, expert for the Faro Convention and coordinator of the Hotel du Nord cooperative
46	Blanca Miedes	Huelva, April 2018	Ms. Miedes is a long-term resident, activist, academic (female late 40s)
47	Manoli Garcia	Huelva, April 2018	Ms Garcia is a long-term resident, activist, community worker (female late 40s)
48	Gaia Redaelli	Cordoba	Ms. Redaelli is a long-term resident, academic, NGO worker, activist (female late 40s) works on urban and community regeneration.
49	Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo	Marinaleda, April 2018	Mr. Sanchez Gordillo is an activist and mayor (male late 60s)
50	Eleanor Finley	Vermont USA, October 2019	Ms. Finley is an academic, (female early 30s) specialized in municipalism, a member of the Institute for Social Ecology.
51	Brian Tokar	Vermont USA, October 2019	Mr. Tokar is an academic, (male late 60s) specialized in municipalism, a member of the Institute for Social Ecology.

52	Fuat Özdođru	Online Turkey 2017, 2018, 2019	Mr. Özdođru is a UNHCR staff based in Gaziantep, Turkey (male early 50s) who has been working with the refugee situation over 25 years.
53	Branislav Ćup	Pristina, Kosovo April 2018	Mr. Ćup is a long term-resident (male Mid 30s) with the country of origin Bosnia and has been in Kosovo for 15 years.
54	Hüseyin Güvercin	Ankara, Turkey and follow up 2018 and 2019 meeting on- line	Mr. Güvercin is a long-term resident, NGO worker (male Late 40s) who has been working with displacement over 20 years
55	Stefan Buljat	St Denis, Paris November 2019	Mr. Buljat is a long-term resident (male- early 40s) who works with Migrantour, Seine-St-Denis
56*	Rachid Touati	St Denis, Paris November 2019	Mr. Touati is a long-term resident (male- late 20s) who works with Migrantour, Seine-St-Denis



## Annex III: Semi-structured interview questions

### Displacement

1. When does your displacement end? What are the conditions that would make you feel settled? What kind of changes (positive or negative) have you experienced during displacement, other than the physical location?
2. Do you believe that it is worth putting in an effort to connect with people in this place and engaging in a genuine relationship to build solidarity, in this temporary situation? What would be the value of this?

### Integration

3. At what point would you feel that you are from here, or an important part of this community? When would you feel that this is your new home? Do you feel or want to be accepted here?
4. Would you find more comfort fitting into an already existing rooted set of rules, and identify yourself with the norms of this place or, would you be more interested in designing new norms that accommodate all who live here? Do you have, or should you have, the right to be part of such process? What would it take to engage in such process here?

### Governance

5. As a member of a society, what would be an ideal political setting for you to actively engage in in decision making processes that directly concern your daily life here locally and / or in your next destination? Does the size of the community matter?
6. As facilitators and change-makers, how could you envision more democratic relations between groups (host and displaced; national and local) here? Where do they currently meet (socially, intellectually, physically) to elaborate on such democratic process? Where might there other be opportunities to meet? What impact would you have in this effort (e.g. right to the city)?



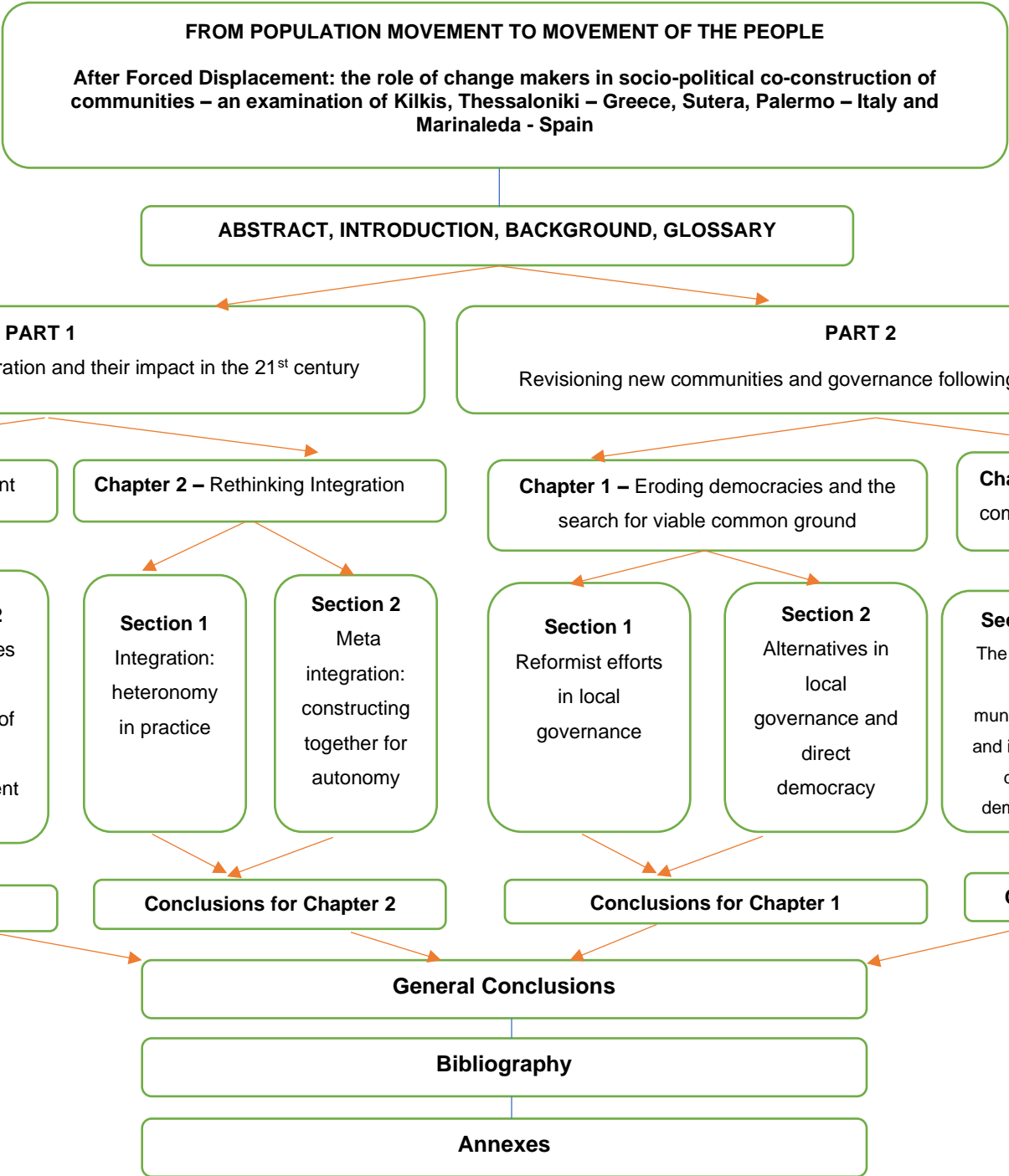
#### Annex IV: List of events (conferences and workshops)

N	Date	Title of the event
1	7-8 December 2016	COMUS Workshop: Importance of community participation and active citizenship, working with stakeholders, capacity for sustainable development and improved quality of life – Tbilisi, Georgia <a href="https://rm.coe.int/16806f543b">https://rm.coe.int/16806f543b</a>
2	26 – 27 April 2017	COMUS Workshop: Scenarios on Housing Rehabilitation and Funding Possibilities in Community-Led Urban Strategies – Sibiu, Romania <a href="https://rm.coe.int/comus-regional-workshop-n-6-scenarios-on-housing-rehabilitation-and-fu/1680713d84">https://rm.coe.int/comus-regional-workshop-n-6-scenarios-on-housing-rehabilitation-and-fu/1680713d84</a>
3	17-18 May 2017	Places without People: the Stories left behind - Faro Convention approach and Rural Settlements - St. Millán (La Rioja), Spain <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion">https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion</a>
4	2-5 October 2017	The Faro Convention approach and democratic socio-economic models for community engagement - Tbilisi, Machkhaani (Signaghi), Georgia <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion">https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion</a>
5	9-12 October 2017	Community involvement in a post-disaster revitalization – Fontecchio, Italy <a href="https://rm.coe.int/the-faro-convention-in-research-action-community-involvement-in-a-post/168074f911">https://rm.coe.int/the-faro-convention-in-research-action-community-involvement-in-a-post/168074f911</a>
6	15-16 November 2017	The Faro Convention Approach and Urban Regeneration – Vilnius, Lithuania <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion">https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion</a>
7	24-25 May 2018	The Faro Convention and Regeneration of Communities – Lisbon, Portugal <a href="https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion">https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention-promotion</a>
8	28-29 September 2018	Conference on Culture Against Disasters Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters – Ravello, Italy <a href="https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-international-conference-on-culture-against-disasters-pr/16808e5c3f">https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-international-conference-on-culture-against-disasters-pr/16808e5c3f</a>
9	16-17 November 2018	Strategie partecipative per i Musei. Opportunità di crescita. ICOM Italia – Turin, Italy <a href="http://www.icom-italia.org/eventi/convegno-strategie-partecipative-per-i-musei-opportunita-di-crescita-le-registrazioni-integrali/">http://www.icom-italia.org/eventi/convegno-strategie-partecipative-per-i-musei-opportunita-di-crescita-le-registrazioni-integrali/</a>



10	17 June 2019	Le dispositif d'accueil et d'intégration des étudiants en exil, M. Smaïn LAACHER – Strasbourg, France
11	18-19 September 2019	Workshop on Human Rights approach in Disasters: Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in Disaster Risk Reduction – Baku, Azerbaijan <a href="https://rm.coe.int/apcat-2019-08-report-on-the-workshop-on-inclusion-of-vulnerable-groups/1680989756">https://rm.coe.int/apcat-2019-08-report-on-the-workshop-on-inclusion-of-vulnerable-groups/1680989756</a>
12	5 October 2019	Changement globale et migrations environnementales Festival International de Geographie, Saint-Die des Vosges, France
13	5 October 2019	Les migrants internationaux, nouveaux acteurs des dynamiques agricoles francaises. Festival International de Geographie, Saint-Die des Vosges, France
14	18 October 2019	Churchification of Islam in Europe UNISTRA, Strasbourg, France
15	25 October 2019	"Guests or Hostages? Syrian "refugees" in Turkey and Turkish-EU relations". UNISTRA, Strasbourg, France
16	21-22 November 2019	Workshop on Economics of alterity, tourism and hospitality, Saint Denis, France
17	4 December 2019	Histoires syriennes – table ronde et projection cinematographique, UNISTRA, Strasbourg, France
18	7-9 July 2020	Faro Convention Discussion Series, On line

**Annex V**



## Résumé de la thèse en français

### Introduction

La condition humaine au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle est de plus en plus façonnée par le déplacement sous toutes ses formes, en particulier pendant la pandémie actuelle où des populations du monde entier ont été éloignées ou bloquées dans leur contexte habituel. L'aspect forcé du déplacement, couplé avec la vulnérabilité qu'il génère, est crucial à pour une remise en question critique des normes enracinées et des alternatives imaginées. Ce qui était à l'origine conçu comme un état temporaire pour les personnes déplacées est devenu, dans la plupart des cas, un état d'existence prolongé. Dans ces circonstances temporaires, la lutte des personnes se déplaçant dans l'objectif d'avoir une vie digne se confronte à un dilemme entre la croyance enracinée en le système des États-nations et l'aspiration à l'autonomie, souvent motivée par l'idée de droits et de libertés individuels. En conséquence, les mouvements de populations, une activité humaine naturelle qui a façonné l'histoire de l'humanité, sont considérés comme faisant l'objet d'une régularisation ou d'une légalisation, tandis que les personnes déplacées sont de plus en plus stigmatisées, marginalisées, déshumanisées et victimisées.

Se fondant sur les multiples récits alternatifs des luttes et des mouvements de solidarité en marge du pouvoir, cette recherche propose de dépasser l'objectification de l' « autre » et tente d'établir un terrain commun pour la « réhumanisation », en se dirigeant vers une communauté d'êtres égaux. Bien que ces multiples récits de solidarité n'aient pas été aussi visibles dans la sphère publique, les initiatives communautaires autonomes à l'origine de ces récits ont honoré les droits de l'homme et la dignité, en essayant de surmonter la « marginalité » dans leurs luttes. Cette thèse soutient le caractère crucial de l'impact des initiatives autonomes et alternatives et des mouvements sociaux qui ont des effets multiplicateurs sur le changement social et qui méritent une attention particulière, malgré le mépris dont ils font l'objet de la part des États-nations.

En fonction de la cause initiale du déplacement, la catégorisation des personnes détermine leur statut dans leur nouveau lieu de résidence et génère des préjugés et la dévalorisation attachés à leur statut qui est étroitement lié à la race, la classe, le sexe et la zone géographique d'origine. Achielle Mbembe affirme que ce type de catégorisation détermine la manière dont les personnes, en particulier des pays du sud, sont perçues, reçues et traitées ; une extension de la relation historique de l'Europe façonnée par l'esclavage, la colonisation et l'apartheid<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mbembe Achielle, Rendall Steven, "African Modes of Self Writing", *Project Muse*, v.4, n. 1, 2002, p. 242.

De ce fait, lorsque l' « autre » arrive aux frontières du monde « développé », les vestiges des injustices nées des relations coloniales sont réanimés. Ces relations, façonnées par le pouvoir, les privilèges et l'autorité, s'incarnent dans les rôles d'« hôte et d'invité », souvent avec une approche caritative pour une période temporaire prévue et avec le maintien de la distance avec l' « autre ». Les États-nations, au nom de la protection de l'intérêt commun, de l'intégrité et de la souveraineté nationale, jouissent d'une politique de marginalisation, tout en adoptant avec habileté une approche paternaliste par le biais de politiques nationales et du système humanitaire international.

Les sociétés qui ne parviennent pas à se redéfinir et à s'adapter à l'évolution des valeurs, aux identités multiples et à honorer la dignité humaine sont confrontées à des divisions subtiles, ainsi qu'à des problèmes politiques et sociaux qui affecteront le bien-être général des communautés et prolongeront l'état de vulnérabilité de tous. Une négociation sociopolitique respectant un principe d'égalité est essentielle pour faciliter la transformation progressive<sup>2</sup> des sociétés ; un processus qui peut être initié et nourri par des intellectuels organiques<sup>3</sup>.

Cette thèse explore les possibilités qui émergent à travers un changement conceptuel au sein des communautés où le processus de transformation sociale des mouvements de population devient un mouvement politique, avec de nouveaux récits culturels qui sous-tendent le changement sociopolitique. En examinant les concepts de déplacement, de personnes déplacées, d'intégration et de gouvernance, l'auteur analyse le rôle des intellectuels organiques ainsi que les actions et les conditions permettant aux personnes déplacées de s'engager dans un processus de transformation sociopolitique. En questionnant de manière critique l'approche de l'État-nation en matière de déplacement et de gouvernance, des alternatives possibles sont explorées, avec des exemples concrets de mise en œuvre dans deux pays : l'Italie et la Grèce. En dernière analyse, la proximité de la gouvernance locale, « le municipalisme », s'avère plus pertinente pour les besoins humains fondamentaux et la dignité que le contrôle centralisé de l'État-nation. En conséquence, le cadre de co-construction communautaire déclenché par les déplacements (CCF) offre une voie possible pour créer une communauté égalitaire.

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<sup>2</sup> L'utilisation du concept de transformation progressive de la société a été inspirée par Samir Amin qui fait référence aux éléments nécessaires à la transformation progressive ainsi que par Jurgen Habermas qui propose une riche conceptualisation de la nature et des fondements sociaux du public. Ce concept sera examiné plus en détail dans la thèse, notamment dans la partie 1, chapitre 1

<sup>3</sup> Le terme d'intellectuels organiques a été défini par Antonio Gramsci. Les intellectuels organiques représentent des intérêts différents de ceux des intellectuels traditionnels dans ces couches sociales, en tant que membres de la société civile, y compris les constructeurs, les agriculteurs, les artistes, les artisans, les travailleurs communautaires, les enseignants, les maires, les propriétaires de magasins, les travailleurs journaliers, les femmes au foyer et les maris, ne nécessitant pas de formation théorique. Les intellectuels organiques, en ce sens, dépendent de la couche sociale même qui les génère et forment la politique qui reflète les besoins de la vie quotidienne de leurs communautés.

## Contexte

L'afflux de 2015 a montré qu'en dépit de plusieurs décennies de travail important, l'inégalité mondiale s'accroît au sein des nations<sup>4</sup>, et la réponse institutionnelle aux déplacements forcés n'a pas produit d'alternatives innovantes, car les solutions descendantes continuent d'être imposées avec de légères variations et réformes. Alors que les causes des déplacements forcés se multiplient avec la dégradation de l'environnement, les catastrophes, les épidémies, la raréfaction des ressources et les conflits violents, les personnes déplacées sont confrontées à des restrictions supplémentaires et font l'objet d'un traitement et de conditions indignes. Un cercle vicieux de cause à effet de la crise humanitaire et des cadres inchangés pour relever ces défis a conduit à la présente recherche sur les défis post-déplacement et son potentiel pour plus de justice sociale.

La perception des gouvernements et leur réponse aux déplacements forcés varient grandement selon les échelles de gouvernance, du local au régional, du national à l'international. Comme les États-nations détiennent le pouvoir de décider de l'éligibilité des personnes admises dans le pays, la nature hétéronome du travail avec les personnes déplacées contribue à maintenir leur position de force dans tous les domaines. Cette thèse examine les réponses locales au déplacement, en considérant des approches alternatives et le concept d'intégration, en recherchant des modes de gouvernance plus démocratiques. À cet égard, un changement de perception du déplacement est nécessaire pour reconnaître le manque croissant de discernement (en raison du changement climatique, des conflits, etc.), et pour considérer qu'une situation de crise peut représenter une opportunité d'action politique pour une transformation progressive des sociétés fondée sur les droits humains fondamentaux. Il semble également essentiel de pouvoir s'adapter plus facilement aux conditions variables et minimiser les situations conflictuelles, en passant d'une approche « territoriale possessive » à une approche plus « relationnelle » dans les processus de transformation sociopolitique.

Examinant les différentes phases du déplacement forcé, y compris la préparation, l'atténuation, l'urgence, la post-urgence et le développement, ce travail se concentre sur les réponses et la gouvernance locale dans la phase de développement après le déplacement forcé<sup>5</sup> et soutient que la conception de la phase de développement au niveau local a un impact

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<sup>4</sup> Selon le Département des affaires économiques et sociales des Nations unies : Rapport social mondial sur l'inclusion sociale 2020, l'inégalité des revenus a augmenté dans la plupart des pays développés et dans certains pays à revenu intermédiaire, dont la Chine et l'Inde, depuis 1990. Les pays où l'inégalité s'est accrue abritent plus des deux tiers (71 %) de la population mondiale. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2020-2.html>, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Les phases de déplacement forcé comprennent la préparation, l'atténuation, l'urgence, la post-urgence et le développement. La préparation et l'atténuation visent à minimiser les dommages et à préparer les États aux conditions nécessaires pour répondre

sur les autres phases et niveaux. Outre une recherche de réponses à un certain nombre de questions, cette recherche pose finalement la question principale suivante :

*Quel est le potentiel de mobilisation des personnes déplacées dans un processus de transformation sociopolitique, et comment les communautés peuvent-elles co-construire une gouvernance dynamique progressive ?*

## **Méthodologie**

Afin de répondre aux questions de recherche, cette recherche qualitative - une composition de recherche-action avec raisonnement inductif – a vu le jour avec les observations et réflexions émanant du travail de terrain de l'auteur, suivies de réflexions sur l'afflux de réfugiés/migrants en 2015 dans la région méditerranéenne.

Avec l'hypothèse provisoire sur les possibilités de co-construction des communautés suite à un déplacement forcé et le rôle des intellectuels organiques dans ce processus, les visites sur le terrain ont permis d'avancer dans la phase initiale de la recherche. Cette phase visait à évaluer les tendances dans les principaux thèmes identifiés : le déplacement, l'intégration et la gouvernance locale. Reposant sur une hypothèse basée sur une analyse documentaire approfondie, l'approche de l'étude de cas a été adoptée afin d'explorer et de vérifier les données empiriques et les théories présentées dans la proposition de recherche initiale. Les études de cas sont utilisées pour examiner l'adaptabilité des modèles de gouvernance locale (fondés sur le concept de municipalisme de Murray Bookchin) dans la co-construction de nouvelles communautés suite à un déplacement (forcé), avec un accent sur le rôle des intellectuels organiques dans un processus de transformation sociopolitique.

L'auteur a privilégié une approche anthropologique dans la collecte de données par l'observation des participants et de leur environnement, des entretiens approfondis, des focus groupe et une analyse textuelle<sup>6</sup>. Une analyse documentaire approfondie des sources primaires et secondaires a été effectuée, y compris des textes universitaires, des revues de presse, des conférences en ligne, des sources multimédia, des conférences, des ateliers, ainsi que des documents publiés par des auteurs individuels et des rapports des principales

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aux besoins des personnes déplacées de force. La phase d'urgence fait référence à la première intervention, qui consiste à fournir une assistance de base aux personnes en temps de crise. Dans la phase post-urgence, l'accent est mis sur le rétablissement et l'instauration d'une forme de normalité dans la vie communautaire. Enfin, la phase de développement considère que les communautés poursuivent leurs activités sociales, politiques, économiques et culturelles.

<sup>6</sup> Goldman Roberta and Borkan Jeffrey, "Anthropological Approaches: Uncovering Unexpected Insights about the Implementation and Outcomes of Patient-Centered Medical Home Models", AHRQ Publication, n. 13, 2013, p.2.

organisations qui opèrent dans le domaine, comme indiqué dans la bibliographie. Une approche anthropologique de l'analyse des données a permis à l'auteur de considérer les données dans le contexte de l'intégralité de la thèse. En ce sens, les notes de terrain (y compris les notes descriptives et analytiques<sup>7</sup>) et le codage thématique<sup>8</sup> émergent des champs principaux de recherche (déplacement, intégration et gouvernance) ont été la méthode la plus appropriée pour l'auteur, qui applique largement la méthode de « design thinking » dans son travail. Dans le cadre du développement de la recherche qualitative, cette thèse a utilisé des entretiens et des notes de terrain approfondies, qui comprenaient des entretiens semi-directifs se fondant sur un ensemble standard de questions fournies aux personnes clés interrogées.

**La revue de la littérature** a été un processus continu, avec l'utilisation de livres, d'articles académiques, de rapports d'organisations et d'institutions compétentes, d'actualité issue des médias, de sources multimédia, y compris des conférences en ligne, de publications promotionnelles locales telles que des brochures, ainsi que de l'art de rue et de la musique. Toute la littérature examinée a contribué à améliorer la compréhension des discussions sur le terrain à différents niveaux ainsi qu'à évaluer d'éventuelles lacunes.

Une analyse documentaire approfondie a permis d'élargir la base théorique, conduisant à un examen critique des pratiques d'intégration actuelles. Cette recherche a été fortement influencée par les études postcoloniales, les approches post-structuralistes, les perspectives des droits de l'homme et la théorie du système mondial. Cependant, la recherche, qui s'est concentrée sur l'autogestion collective et la gouvernance locale, a tenté de rassembler ces théories dans le cadre du municipalisme. **Le cadre** utilisé pour cette recherche s'inspire des principes qui émergent du municipalisme et comprend les assemblées populaires, l'écologie sociale, la féminisation de la politique, le confédéralisme et le double pouvoir.

La thèse a été construite en deux parties principales, chacune contenant deux chapitres principaux respectivement divisés en deux sections<sup>9</sup>. Tout au long de la thèse, les arguments théoriques ont été mis en relation avec des exemples de la région méditerranéenne, avec un accent sur les zones étudiées en Italie et en Grèce.

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard H. Russel, *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 5th ed. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press; 2011, p. 389

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 401

<sup>9</sup> L'annexe - I fournit une aide visuelle pour conceptualiser la structure de la thèse.

## **PARTIE - I Repenser le déplacement, l'intégration et leur impact au 21ème siècle**

La partie - I examine des concepts et des définitions bien établis et communément acceptés, et incite les lecteurs à reconsidérer leur position par rapport au pouvoir, aux privilèges et à l'autorité.

*Partie I - Le chapitre 1* explore l'anatomie du déplacement<sup>10</sup> et cherche à établir des points communs entre les résidents de longue durée et les nouveaux arrivants<sup>11</sup> en introduisant une définition améliorée du déplacement et des personnes déplacées. En conséquence, les termes "déplacement" et "personnes déplacées" sont utilisés au-delà de leur signification légale, comme un déclencheur et une étape potentielle dans la bonne direction pour une gouvernance locale égalitaire dirigée par la communauté. À cet égard, le déplacement est défini comme un "changement de position", sous toutes ses formes, dans un processus progressif de transformation sociopolitique, individuel et collectif. Par conséquent, malgré tous les défis qu'il présente, il constitue une occasion pour les individus et les groupes de réfléchir et de prendre des décisions conscientes en vue d'un changement positif, notamment en faisant abstraction des pratiques traditionnelles d'oppression.

Les personnes déplacées sont celles qui participent à ce processus de transformation, quel que soit leur lien territorial avec un lieu, y compris celles qui n'ont pas physiquement quitté leur pays d'origine. Ainsi sont considérées comme des personnes déplacées toutes celles qui subissent un changement de position sous tous ses aspects. Christina Bennett<sup>12</sup> utilise avec précaution le terme de « communautés et d'individus affectés par le déplacement », soulignant que les nouveaux arrivants et les habitants de longue date sont affectés par le processus et doivent travailler ensemble pour une solution commune. C'est la raison pour laquelle elle utilise les termes de nouveaux arrivants, de résidents de longue date et de communautés touchées par le déplacement.

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<sup>10</sup> L'Anatomie du déplacement attire l'attention sur les similitudes conceptuelles qui ont un impact sur les individus et les groupes au moment du déplacement, quelles que soient les causes du déplacement. La reconnaissance des spécificités du déplacement est nécessaire afin d'évaluer soigneusement les points communs pour se rencontrer, développer de l'empathie et favoriser la compréhension mutuelle comme base au dialogue. Il faut donc reconnaître les différentes phases du déplacement : désorientation, vulnérabilité, rétablissement, résilience, résistance et action.

<sup>11</sup> Les résidents / habitants de longue durée sont des résidents établis ayant un lien générationnel avec un lieu et des personnes, ainsi que ceux qui ont passé du temps dans un lieu spécifique dans le cadre d'une vie communautaire et de sa politique, indépendamment des biens matériels (propriété, etc.) ou de la citoyenneté (un statut juridique).

Les nouveaux arrivants désignent tous les individus et groupes, y compris les migrants, les immigrants, les réfugiés, les demandeurs d'asile, les nomades, ainsi que d'autres personnes qui arrivent dans un nouveau lieu par choix ou par la force.

<sup>12</sup> Bennet, Christina, "Constructive deconstruction: imagining alternative humanitarian action", *Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper*, May 2018, p. 9



L'accent mis sur les déplacements forcés est étroitement lié à la capacité de faire un choix, ce qui constitue une distinction importante. Des contraintes externes et inattendues, qu'elles soient naturelles ou humaines, entraînent les conditions préalables au déplacement forcé, souvent pendant une période prolongée. Le fait d'avoir des choix est étroitement lié au privilège et au pouvoir des individus et des groupes par rapport à la structure et aux moyens de mise en œuvre qui permettent de prendre la décision de migrer. La vulnérabilité est un point crucial du déplacement où commence le processus de changement. Avec leurs dimensions culturelles, économiques et sociopolitiques, les concepts de vulnérabilité et de résilience sont influencés par les pouvoirs politiques dominants et sont souvent liés les uns aux autres en temps de crise. La nécessité de faire face à des conditions non désirées et stressantes - et les efforts pour les laisser derrière soi - sont les principales préoccupations des groupes qui deviennent vulnérables en raison du déplacement et de ceux qui sont déplacés en raison de leur vulnérabilité. Ces deux aspects de la vulnérabilité ont des implications importantes sur la politique des mouvements de population et les conditions qui produisent et reproduisent les vulnérabilités, ce qui doit être remis en question de manière critique.

Les personnes déplacées dont les origines, les besoins et les aspirations sont fragmentés, divisés et divers, deviennent vulnérables par leur déplacement social, économique et culturel, et c'est la mobilisation de cette vulnérabilité qui suscite la prise de conscience politique dans les conditions précaires présentes caractérisant ces sujets en marges du pouvoir. C'est là que l'importance des biens communs et de la mise en commun se manifeste et que les individus s'organisent et commencent à mobiliser leur vulnérabilité de manière collective.

Ce processus d'engagement politique encourage la mobilisation de la vulnérabilité, surpasse l'idéalisation de la résilience et libère l'imagination des communautés. Mark Neocleous se réfère<sup>13</sup> à la résilience comme à un mécanisme de contrôle de l'imagination, et de "tentative de colonisation de l'imagination politique par l'État".

Avec le nombre considérable de migrants et de personnes déplacées par la contrainte dans le monde aujourd'hui, les efforts concertés sous l'autorité des États-nations et les intérêts politiques des puissances mondiales mettent le mouvement des droits de l'homme dans une position délicate, affaiblissant sa puissance face à l'atteinte des droits de l'homme par les États-nations et le monde des affaires. Le récit dominant de la guerre contre le terrorisme des deux dernières décennies a sacrifié de nombreux principes inscrits dans la législation sur les

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<sup>13</sup> Neocleous Mark, "Resisting Resilience", *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 178, 2013, p. 3-4

droits de l'homme / déclaration des droits de l'homme, provoquant une « paralysie morale et une lassitude » chez les défenseurs des droits de l'homme, comme le décrit Makau Mutua<sup>14</sup>.

Cette contradiction constante entre les valeurs déclarées et les pratiques des droits de l'homme sur le terrain, associée à l'incapacité de faire face à des défis mondiaux toujours plus importants, utilise la menace à la sécurité et la lutte contre celle-ci comme une justification pour éroder les libertés civiles, établissant ainsi un nouvel ensemble de normes. Dominés par les arguments de la préservation des intérêts nationaux et de l'intégrité nationale, les efforts des États-nations et leurs représentations au sein des institutions internationales sont de moins en moins pertinents dans un monde où les individus vont au-delà de l'idée traditionnelle de « nation pure » et dont le déplacement entraîne un mélange, déclenché par le déplacement, qui façonne les changements à tous les niveaux.

En 2019, avec 7,7 milliards de personnes sur la planète, 4 % du monde était en mouvement. Ces chiffres comprennent 70,8 millions de personnes déplacées par contrainte (41,3 millions de personnes déplacées à l'intérieur de leur propre pays, 3,5 millions de demandeurs d'asile, 25,9 millions de réfugiés) et 245 millions de migrants<sup>15</sup>. En 2018 seulement, il y a eu 28 millions de personnes nouvellement déplacées, dont 10,8 millions en raison de conflits et de violences et 17,2 millions à la suite de catastrophes. Il est essentiel de noter que 61 % des déplacements forcés étaient dus à des catastrophes, ce qui est étroitement lié au réchauffement climatique et à la dégradation de l'environnement.

En 2018, 141 500 réfugiés et migrants sont arrivés en Europe par trois grandes routes méditerranéennes, l'Espagne étant le plus grand point de passage en nombre. La même année, 2 277 personnes ont perdu la vie en mer<sup>16</sup>. Si les chiffres ont considérablement diminué depuis 2015, les chiffres relatifs aux déplacements en Afrique subsaharienne (10 millions), dans la région MENA<sup>17</sup> (2,3 millions) et en Asie du Sud (8,7 millions) indiquent que les mouvements de population en provenance de ces régions se poursuivront dans les années à venir, et que l'Europe reste l'une des principales destinations.

Les réponses au déplacement, principalement dictées par les cadres institutionnels, suivent des logiques et des voies diverses. Alors que d'autres options sont envisagées, cette thèse se concentre sur les observations qui suivent un chemin de nature transformatrice et collective,

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<sup>14</sup> Mutua Makau, "The Crisis of Human Rights – Why TWAIL still matters", Symposium I "(Post-)Colonial Injustice and Legal Interventions" of the "Colonial Repercussions/Koloniale Erbe" event series at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 26 and 27 January 2018

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, Global Report 2018, UNHCR, June 2019

<sup>16</sup> Ce nombre ne concerne que les corps retrouvés.

<sup>17</sup> Moyen Orient Afrique du Nord (MOAN)

en essayant d'engager la société dans son ensemble dans une action politique progressive et solidaire au niveau local. Les résultats de la recherche concluent, dans les cas de la Grèce et de l'Italie, que les approches institutionnelles du déplacement et les efforts pour parvenir à un mouvement de population ordonné, régulier et sûr ont pour conséquence que les personnes en situation régulière basculent de plus en plus dans l'irrégularité même si les procédures officielles sont suivies. Avec l'évolution des politiques, un nombre croissant de personnes se retrouvent en dehors du système juridique et sont contraintes d'être en situation d'irrégularité ; les mesures de sécurité et les externalisations aux frontières poussent une génération de migrants et de réfugiés en marge des sociétés, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de l'Union Européenne.

L'efficacité et l'efficacit  des r ponses internationales et gouvernementales aux afflux de migrants et de r fugi s dans la r gion du nord de la M diterran e ont  t  largement critiqu es, notamment en Gr ce et en Italie, poussant un grand nombre de personnes dans l'ill galit , les obligeant   rechercher des solutions alternatives, souvent dangereuses. Pendant ce temps, les r ponses locales ont obtenu des r sultats positifs malgr  des politiques centralis es restrictives et des r ponses tardives aux besoins r els sur le terrain.

En ce qui concerne leur rapport au pouvoir, aux privil ges et   l'autorit , les personnes d plac es de force sont mieux plac es pour s'engager dans un processus de transformation que celles qui ont  t  d plac es par choix. Elles semblent plus engag es dans les efforts visant   r tablir leur dignit , leur identit  et leur autonomie avec un int r t renouvel  pour une meilleure qualit  de vie.

Dans cette  quation, les personnes d plac es de force ne doivent pas  tre consid r es comme des  tres d munis et vuln rables, incapables de prendre soin d'eux-m mes, mais comme des personnes courageuses, fi res, dignes et dot es d'une identit  forte, qui cherchent des conditions de vie d centes pour elles-m mes et pour leur famille. Les personnes d plac es ne doivent pas  tre infantilis es ou victimis es, mais  tre interrog es sur leurs points de vue et leurs positions au cours du processus de co-construction de leur vie et de leur place dans la communaut .

Si les personnes d plac es de force se voient attribuer la possibilit  et l'espace n cessaires, elles semblent motiv es et ont l'int r t politique d'explorer des alternatives au *statu quo*. Bien que cette volont  d'action politique soit limit e   un groupe relativement restreint d'intellectuels organiques, il existe un grand potentiel de transformation progressive car de nombreuses

communautés affectées par les déplacements partagent des conditions précaires et s'efforcent d'obtenir plus d'autonomie pour restaurer leur dignité.

Afin de se concentrer sur la co-construction des vies et des communautés après le déplacement, le chapitre 1 de la première partie souligne l'importance de la conceptualisation, la compréhension et du traitement du déplacement sous un angle différent dans l'espoir que ces observations soient utiles pour la future gestion du déplacement. Repenser le déplacement au 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle devrait essentiellement embrasser les multiples histoires des mouvements de population en utilisant une perspective historique, y compris l'histoire coloniale de l'Europe.

*La partie 1 - chapitre 2* interroge la notion d'intégration sous un angle qui nécessite une réflexion approfondie.

L'analyse de l'intégration montre que les positions des déplacés (nouveaux arrivants et résidents de longue durée) en fonction de leur relation au centre et à la périphérie, ainsi que les implications de leur alignement sur des tendances hétéronomes et autonomes, finissent par graviter autour des modèles alternatifs de gouvernance locale afin de co-construire de nouvelles communautés après le déplacement. Le rôle des intellectuels organiques dans le dialogue et la co-construction des communautés est exploré, en examinant également la signification de l'intégration pour les communautés. Le principal raisonnement idéologique et politique qui sous-tend l'intégration au-delà des politiques et pratiques d'intégration spécifiques peut se révéler innovant sur le plan individuel, mais ne remet pas en cause le fondement politique de ces actions.

Il est important de mieux comprendre les concepts de centre et de périphérie car ils sont constamment reproduits dans le cadre du système économique actuel à différentes échelles aux niveaux local, national, régional et international. Par conséquent, le terme de périphérie tel qu'il est employé actuellement fait référence à la fois à une zone géographique et à la relation au pouvoir, aux privilèges et à l'autorité. Le centre représente le récit culturel dominant dans les sociétés façonnées par les politiques économiques néolibérales. Il établit les relations sociopolitiques et les normes de fonctionnement de la société. Les relations de pouvoir et de privilège fondent leur existence sur une structure centralisée et hétéronome, établissant les normes et règles sociales, politiques, économiques et culturelles d'une société par le biais de son récit culturel dominant et la promotion d'une politique pour maintenir ce *statu quo*.

Il convient de souligner que les efforts d'intégration actuels, axés sur l'État-nation, ne parviennent pas à créer un environnement juste et égalitaire dans lequel les opportunités

s'épanouissent, sont partagées et contribuent à la création de nouvelles communautés, car ils ne s'engagent pas dans un dialogue interculturel fondé sur l'égalité. Ces problèmes d'intégration non résolus, qui contribuent à accroître l'aliénation et l'isolement par rapport aux processus politiques, combinés à l'accent mis sur les politiques identitaires, détournent l'attention d'une cause commune, à savoir le droit des communautés à l'autogestion et à la prise de décision sur des questions liées à la vie quotidienne, qui concernent tant les nouvelles communautés que le précaire. Dans ce scénario, la reproduction d'un style de gouvernance hiérarchique et patriarcal se poursuit, ce qui profite en définitive à quelques individus et perpétue les relations historiques d'inégalité au niveau mondial et régional.

Alors que l'État-nation semble se contenter d'un tel concept d'intégration, la reproduction de hiérarchies en petits groupes continue de perpétuer les relations de pouvoir inégales et les vulnérabilités des sociétés, en particulier chez les femmes. Elle alimente la systématisation de la victimisation, éloignant les individus de l'action politique et de la vie socio-économique, les maintenant à l'écart des micros hiérarchies créées dans le nouveau lieu. Cette exclusion permet également de poursuivre les relations traditionnelles qui ont été oppressives et protégées par les arguments du relativisme culturel.

S'engager dans un processus de transformation sociale exige des partis qu'ils rejettent l'incitation à s'aligner sur le centre et ses valeurs culturelles fondamentales hiérarchiques et patriarcales, ce qui représente une menace et un malaise pour le centre. Un intérêt réel pour les sociétés égalitaires et des actions pour engager un dialogue fondé sur l'égalité est une étape cruciale vers des structures plus démocratiques, mais nécessite un changement majeur dans la redéfinition et une nouvelle conception de connexions alternatives aux lieux et aux personnes. Un tel processus implique de revisiter les privilèges historiques, de décoloniser les esprits ainsi que de se distancier de l'hétéronomie intériorisée, une tâche qui est nécessaire tant pour les résidents de longue date que pour les nouveaux arrivants. Les déplacements forcés ayant un effet déclencheur, le lien vital entre les espaces communs, les personnes déplacées de force et la présence de multiples récits dans une nouvelle équation aident à surmonter la peur et les préjugés qui séparent les communautés en lutte. Cette étape revêt d'une grande importance pour mobiliser la vulnérabilité et travailler à une plus grande autonomie.

La conception d'alternatives par les individus et une communauté doit conscientiser le processus de co-construction, loin des perspectives eurocentriques historiques dominantes et de la colonisation du pouvoir. Imaginer ce qui se trouve au-delà de ce qui est présenté nécessite un processus de démythification de ce concept fétichiste d'intégration, afin d'ouvrir

un champ de possibilités en dehors des paramètres fixés. La notion d' « imaginaire radical » de Castoriadis éclaire ce processus. En définitive, la lutte des personnes déplacées dépasse l'idée de trouver une place dans une société, mais d'en créer une, dans la solidarité.

Dans la recherche d'alternatives, la discussion passe de la description, de l'analyse et de l'exposition à la création d'un nouvel ensemble de relations et de formes, ce qui nécessite à la fois des actions et la volonté de s'engager dans un processus de co-création, loin des récits dominants possessifs et historiquement liés. Elle envisage en outre une relation plus harmonieuse et plus respectueuse avec l'environnement, sans le séparer de l'existence humaine. La méta-intégration, en ce sens, est considérée comme un projet de redécouverte des points communs entre les peuples, de respect de l'environnement et de compréhension mutuelle dans la redéfinition des relations, et de rejet de la colonisation du pouvoir.

Le concept de communauté dans ce contexte prend une forme transversale avec de multiples affiliations, identités et récits, au-delà des frontières et des définitions traditionnellement connues. Se rendre dans un espace commun sûr et accessible, quelle que soit la durée du séjour, est une étape fondamentale qui génère un sentiment de confort, permettant aux gens d'engager un véritable dialogue avec les autres. Les récits de déplacement sont un moyen puissant de relier les gens, de reconnaître leurs points communs et leurs difficultés, et de créer un sentiment d'autonomie et de solidarité. L'argument de Jean-Luc Nancy et Siraj Izhar<sup>18</sup> selon lequel les individus n'ont pas besoin de devenir un être commun, mais de trouver un sens à ce dernier, s'inscrit bien dans le contexte du déplacement tel qu'il est soutenu dans cette thèse.

Quelles que soient les origines, un processus de socialisation politique et culturelle se déroule dans les périphéries, remplaçant l'individualisme possessif par une capacité à aligner les besoins individuels avec une vision sociopolitique collective qui ne suit pas nécessairement les politiques identitaires connues. Ce processus attire l'attention sur l'émergence de communautés et d'espaces sociaux transnationaux, déclenchée par les déplacements forcés<sup>19</sup>. Dans un processus de co-construction qui suit le déplacement, même si la conscience et l'engagement politiques sont difficiles à trouver, l'accent mis sur les communautés transnationales soulève la question de la transformation sociale dans un cadre transnational. C'est là que les pratiques traditionnelles oppressives enracinées peuvent également être remises en question, parce qu'il est difficile de se cacher derrière une façade de relativité culturelle, les personnes aux apparences conservatrices ne pouvant s'appuyer sur

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<sup>18</sup> Izhar Siraj, "Recovering Community: Remembering the Jungle at Jules Ferry" *Public Seminar - in the spirit of The New School for Social Research, informing debate about the pressing issues of our times*, May 2017. [http://amplife.org/blog/recovering\\_community\\_1](http://amplife.org/blog/recovering_community_1)

<sup>19</sup> Castles Stephen, "Towards Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation", *Sociology*, Vol. 77, no. 1, 2003, p. 27

aucune alliance familiale antérieure de leur lieu d'origine. Par conséquent, un nouveau type de solidarité peut émerger dans les périphéries, en partie parce que les sujets cherchent à répondre aux besoins quotidiens, créant ainsi un nouvel ensemble de normes et de relations, en particulier parmi les jeunes générations.

Étant donné que les personnes régularisées (avec la possibilité d'obtenir des documents de séjour et de voyage) et celles dont la demande d'asile est rejetée vivent dans les mêmes zones des périphéries, une étape cruciale consiste à établir des normes avec les habitants de longue date de ces périphéries, tout en allant au-delà de la solide attente de s'intégrer dans les normes générales. Ce sont ces lieux d'existence multiple et de « marginalisation » qui sont soumis aux contraintes du centre où les individus s'engagent dans un processus de mise en commun et travaillent à la création d'une « communauté d'égaux ». Ce concept central constitue la clé de voûte de cette thèse, qui tient compte des préoccupations relatives à la survie quotidienne et de l'ambiguïté autour du statut qui empêche souvent les personnes déplacées de s'engager dans un environnement susceptible de favoriser les imaginaires créatifs et de donner naissance à des initiatives autonomes pour un processus de transformation sociopolitique.

À cet égard, le concept d' « horizontalité »<sup>20</sup>, qui a déjà trouvé un terrain d'action dans les mouvements sociaux en Espagne et en Grèce, ainsi que dans de nombreux autres pays, devrait être examiné au-delà de la vision marginalisée des communautés de la périphérie, des militants des mouvements sociaux et de la gauche. Il s'agit d'un besoin existentialiste de créer et de se rassembler dans les espaces publics pour s'organiser collectivement afin de construire un pouvoir collectif indépendant des contraintes du centre. Il ne s'agit pas de demander aux autorités locales et nationales de résoudre les problèmes de la société ; c'est un rejet de la hiérarchie et de la représentation par le biais des partis politiques qui met l'accent sur la nécessité d'avoir le pouvoir de prendre des décisions au niveau local pour répondre à ces besoins par la démocratie directe.

## **PARTIE - II Révision des nouvelles communautés et de la gestion à la suite de déplacements forcés**

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<sup>20</sup> Sitrin Marina, "Horizontalism and Territory", *Possible Futures*, January 2012, p. 1-8

La partie II propose la démocratie directe comme terrain d'entente pour que les communautés affectées par les déplacements de population puissent travailler pour une communauté d'égaux et s'engager dans une politique de proximité.

La démocratie représentative ne permet pas de représenter les communautés comme en témoigne l'érosion généralisée des droits et libertés fondamentaux en Europe. Alors que les discussions sur la localisation et la gouvernance locale ont pris de l'ampleur au cours des dernières décennies, des exemples d'efforts réformistes en faveur de la gouvernance locale dans la région méditerranéenne sont présentés, tant au niveau institutionnel que non institutionnel. Reconnaisant les efforts constructifs et significatifs dans les cadres institutionnels, des questions sur la viabilité de ces réformes avec leur approche descendante sont soulevées. Les alternatives en matière de gouvernance locale devraient être pleinement prises en compte en mettant l'accent sur l'autogestion collective. Avec les exemples de mouvements sociaux récents de la région méditerranéenne, l'importance des espaces autonomes est clairement l'élément principal du processus de méta-intégration.

Dans la révision des nouvelles communautés, le choc entre la conceptualisation du temporaire et du permanent génère des contradictions entre l'idéal et la réalité, engendrant constamment comme une crise existentialiste ; la vulnérabilité et la victimisation. La co-construction des communautés suite au déplacement est un acte politique autant que social, culturel et économique. Elle exige une solidarité avec des visions du monde multiples et diverses où le changement climatique, la dégradation de l'environnement et les inégalités socio-économiques sont considérés comme des questions universelles, nécessitant donc un système permettant à chacun d'exprimer ses opinions. Contre toute attente, une tentative de surmonter l'isolement et l'aliénation et de s'impliquer dans les luttes existantes est déjà un pas vers la transformation sociale. Par conséquent, enrichis par de multiples histoires de déplacement et de personnes déplacées, un espace commun et une mise en commun semblent constituer des critères fondamentaux pour la co-construction des communautés et des luttes.

Un processus de co-construction doit être non hiérarchique, non patriarcal, créatif, ascendant, faire partie d'un réseau, tenir compte de la continuité apparente du déplacement, mais valoriser le caractère temporaire des expériences par la régénération de la communauté. Ce processus de co-construction n'est pas basé sur les paramètres et les intérêts des institutions actuelles, mais émerge des besoins de la vie quotidienne et remet en question les relations dominantes de pouvoir, de privilège et d'autorité. Ainsi, la co-construction des communautés



est politique, se référant à des actes qui remettent en cause les relations dominantes en présentant la possibilité de leur rupture, selon la définition de Jacques Rancière.

Dans la recherche d'un équilibre entre le respect des principes des droits de l'homme et le maintien de la dignité des personnes déplacées, la création d'espaces et d'initiatives autonomes sont des expériences précieuses, introduisant des relations horizontales et non hiérarchiques. Par conséquent, la nécessité pour les personnes de converger vers une égalité à l'égard du pouvoir, en explorant les solutions par le biais de nouvelles relations, est le fondement d'une construction sociopolitique suite à un déplacement forcé. Il est essentiel de rappeler le point de vue de Raúl Zibechi sur la création d'espaces temporaires et horizontaux non seulement comme lieux de lutte, mais aussi d'organisation et de résistance. En réclamant la dignité et les droits pour tous par le biais de processus démocratiques, les mouvements sociaux autonomes jouent un rôle de plus en plus crucial dans le contexte mondial, inspirant diverses tentatives de l'Amérique du Sud à l'Afrique du Nord, au Moyen-Orient, en Asie et en Europe, créant des espaces publics pour la participation directe et la démocratie. Samir Amin explique que la démocratie est un processus de transformation culturelle dans lequel les gens se transforment par leurs propres actions<sup>21</sup>. Ainsi, il souligne que les mouvements sociaux, les gouvernements progressistes et les initiatives autonomes, quelle que soit leur taille, doivent créer des espaces pour un processus de dialogue et de participation dans les aspects de la vie quotidienne.

À une époque où la confiance à l'égard des solutions collectives est très faible et où l'individualisme et les solutions individuelles dominent les relations sociales, la recherche d'alternatives encadrées par un état d'esprit collectif présente une série de défis. Ainsi, il s'agit d'un processus qui devrait être mené par les communautés elles-mêmes par le biais de l'autogestion collective et de la démocratie directe, idéalement à l'échelle locale mais dans le cadre d'un réseau, ce qui est de plus en plus possible avec les technologies disponibles aujourd'hui. Si ce processus est abordé individuellement, il conduira à la poursuite et à la perpétuation de structures hétéronomes dans l'intérêt du centre.

Le concept de collectivité va aujourd'hui au-delà de l'accent traditionnel mis sur les regroupements après déplacement basés sur les identités nationales, comme le souligne l'idée de « continuité généalogique, fondée sur le temps et le lieu d'origine » décrite par Emmanuel

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<sup>21</sup> Amin Samir, *The World We Wish to See*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2008, p. 124

Ma Mung<sup>22</sup>, et sur les "sociétés conteneurs" comme le désigne Stephen Castles<sup>23</sup>. Il faut donc prêter attention à l'émergence de communautés et d'espaces sociaux transnationaux, déclenchée par les déplacements forcés<sup>24</sup>.

Les biens communs sont une plate-forme importante où des personnes de tous les milieux se réunissent, découvrent leurs intérêts communs et échangent des histoires qui servent à développer des liens entre les membres de la communauté, quelle que soit leur étiquette. La lutte pour initier un processus de transformation sociale ne peut être menée en catégorisant des groupes tels que les migrants, les réfugiés, les demandeurs d'asile et les communautés d'accueil, mais doit être considérée dans sa totalité comme une communauté locale avec tous ses habitants. Cette conceptualisation a trouvé une place dans les récents mouvements sociaux et initiatives locales de la région méditerranéenne qui expérimentent de nouvelles façons d'organiser et de façonner leurs communautés. Bien qu'elles n'aient peut-être pas soutenu leurs actions sur le long terme, ces initiatives autonomes et anarchistes peuvent tout de même être considérées comme des lieux où la démocratie directe honore les droits fondamentaux de l'homme et la dignité et où les individus sont mis sur un pied d'égalité, en contraste avec les traditions d'humanitarisme paternaliste.

Au fur et à mesure que les données prédisant une augmentation des déplacements forcés en raison du changement climatique et des catastrophes environnementales<sup>25</sup> apparaissent, un climat d'incertitude tend à s'installer. Il est probable que les personnes dans le besoin ne soient pas couvertes par les mécanismes de protection internationaux, et que les États-nations continuent à ne pas être en mesure de traiter ces questions en temps utile. De telles périodes nécessiteront des solutions créatives et locales.

Il est essentiel que les luttes pour l'autonomie et la création de nouvelles formes de gouvernance remettent en question et contestent les relations de pouvoir et les privilèges établis. Ce questionnement critique n'a pas nécessairement un rôle déterminant dans ce qui doit être créé, mais encourage la participation de personnes de toutes les couches de la société, permettant ainsi la révélation d'idées libres et innovantes. Tout en offrant une inspiration pour des alternatives, les zones étudiées ne présentent pas un modèle alternatif unique, mais soulignent séparément certains éléments et conditions pour imaginer des

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<sup>22</sup> Ma Mung Emanuel, "Continuité temporelle, contiguïté spatiale et création d'un monde-propre", *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 4 n. 41, 2012, p. 352-368

<sup>23</sup> Castles Stephen. "Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 36, n.10, 2010, p. 1565-1586

<sup>24</sup> Castles, art.cit., (Towards Sociology of Forced ....), p. 27

<sup>25</sup> Décision du Comité des droits de l'homme des Nations unies CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016, janvier 2020, rapportée dans le Guardian : "Les réfugiés climatiques ne peuvent pas être renvoyés chez eux, selon une décision historique des Nations unies en matière de droits de l'homme", Lyons Kate.

alternatives qui pourraient inspirer un modèle de gouvernance locale par rapport aux déplacements forcés. Les communautés étant flexibles et adaptables et se régénérant constamment, ce travail restera dynamique et incomplet. Une question qui se pose est de savoir comment procéder au mieux pour définir les prochaines étapes de la gouvernance ; quelles sont les possibilités existantes qui peuvent ou devraient être explorées davantage ? Non pas au nom de la création d'une société parfaite, qui peut essentiellement conduire au totalitarisme, mais de manière à faire un pas vers une démocratie radicale, un processus inachevé de transformation sociale.

*Le chapitre 2* présente le municipalisme et la démocratie directe comme des moyens possibles de création d'un terrain d'entente pour les communautés affectées par les déplacements qui doivent être prises en compte dans un processus de co-construction. En se concentrant sur le concept de municipalisme et les principes municipalistes tels que décrits par Murray Bookchin et ses collègues, la mise en œuvre du municipalisme est examinée, avec le cas unique andalou de Marinaleda, où un exemple concret de démocratie directe en action est examiné.

Compte tenu de la tendance et des prévisions de déplacement croissant, toute reconsidération de la gouvernance doit s'éloigner des paramètres connus des communautés sédentaires, et envisager la régénération de la communauté ainsi que le passage d'un sentiment de permanence ancré.

Conscient des forces influentes de la « colonialité du pouvoir » et des « esprits colonisés », le processus de méta-intégration est orienté vers le renforcement de la confiance dans les solutions collectives<sup>26</sup>, les communautés autogérées et une pratique de la démocratie directe de manière plus institutionnalisée au niveau local. Par conséquent, les solutions locales autonomes ne visent pas nécessairement à remplacer les États-nations en tant que luttes anti-étatiques, mais plutôt à reconnaître et à transformer les expériences positives existantes au niveau local en vue d'un changement social progressif.

Le mouvement municipaliste s'élève des quartiers situés en marge du pouvoir, où les communautés ne présentent pas une forme unifiée et n'ont pas de rapport traditionnel avec l'État-nation. Un défi important consiste à s'engager dans un processus de dialogue fondé sur l'égalité lorsque le « caractère temporaire » est devenu un phénomène permanent et que les pratiques de gouvernance traditionnelles ne répondent pas aux besoins dans les circonstances actuelles. Ce constat a été observé en Italie et en Grèce, qui sont généralement

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<sup>26</sup> Rosenthal Susan, "Marxism and psychology", *Socialist Review*, n. 416, February 2016

perçues comme des pays de transit. Ces deux pays sont des lieux de fluidité, de précarité et d'hétérogénéité qui ont subi un ralentissement économique majeur ces dernières années, et principalement des zones de transition ayant une longue histoire de mouvements de population.

La croyance enracinée dans le concept d'intégration, menée par les résidents de longue date, les organisations locales, nationales et internationales, constitue un obstacle important lorsqu'il s'agit d'imaginer des alternatives par le biais du processus de méta-intégration. Par conséquent, un changement de perception devient fondamental si une politique de proximité vers une communauté d'égaux est adoptée. Un tel changement exige une remise en question critique de la croyance profonde dans la nature temporaire du déplacement, les liens avec un lieu dans une perspective possessive et territoriale, et les relations de pouvoir, de privilège et d'autorité.

Par conséquent, la présence d'espaces autonomes et anarchistes a plus de chances de trouver une plateforme et un soutien dans les milieux urbains en raison des niveaux de population plus élevés dans ces zones. Compte tenu des défis accablants que la vie urbaine présente aujourd'hui, le repeuplement des zones abandonnées en Europe a un potentiel important et mérite d'être sérieusement envisagé. Il s'agit peut-être davantage d'une nécessité que d'un choix au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle.

En considérant le déplacement comme une opportunité de changement social et en reconnaissant la nature diverse des communautés, en particulier dans les milieux urbains, la création d'un terrain commun pour un processus de co-construction exige une perspective nettement différente, qui examine et remet en question les relations de pouvoir et de privilège entre les résidents de longue date et les nouveaux arrivants, ainsi que les concepts fétiches d'intégration et l'approche néo-libérale descendante de la gouvernance locale.

Deux conclusions principales se dégagent de l'analyse des concepts de déplacement, d'intégration et de gouvernance locale, ainsi que de l'examen des scénarios possibles et de l'exploration d'un moyen de progresser. La conceptualisation d'un processus de co-construction qui est transformateur et œuvre pour une communauté d'égaux incarne ces deux résultats dans un cadre comme le processus de méta-intégration, qui a été exploré dans cette recherche, et les principes municipalistes qui ont été mis en avant par Murray Bookchin et ses collègues. Ces deux éléments sont combinés dans un cadre consolidé pour la co-construction communautaire déclenchée par le déplacement (ou cadre de co-construction communautaire / CCF) avec lequel les intellectuels organiques peuvent réaliser des expérimentations dans

une variété de cadres. Le CCF peut également inspirer un changement de perspective indispensable concernant les déplacements forcés et leur impact croissant sur la façon dont les sociétés sont façonnées et gouvernées au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## **Conclusions générales**

Les conclusions générales tirées de chaque chapitre rassemblent en six points principaux les divers concepts abordés tout au long de la thèse. Avec la nature changeante de l'engagement politique ainsi que le rôle de la régénération des communautés en période de déplacement, le processus de méta-intégration est présenté comme une voie d'avenir, où les intellectuels organiques ont un rôle essentiel dans tout processus de co-construction.

Avec l'augmentation de la mobilité, les changements démographiques et culturels deviennent inévitables. Une croyance ancrée dans la nature temporaire du déplacement s'est avérée non pertinente, la durée moyenne d'un déplacement prolongé étant actuellement de 20 ans. Dans la régénération des communautés, la définition du terme « local » fait une différence significative. Les discussions sur le lien possessif et territorial avec un lieu et un peuple, fondées sur les arguments de l'installation d'origine des personnes, de l'héritage historique, de l'identité, du patrimoine et de la culture de la majorité n'ont pas la même signification dans les périphéries géographiques où les habitants sont systématiquement poussés à se trouver en marges du pouvoir et à des positions subalternes. La « régénération des communautés » ne permet pas à un seul groupe de dominer suivant la règle des 51 %. Avec la présence d'identités et de récits multiples et dynamiques dans les contextes interculturels, l'imposition de l'État-nation et de la ploutocratie reste la norme, même si elle ne reflète pas les conditions réelles du contexte culturel.

Tout mouvement social et toute projection future doivent tenir compte de la régénération des communautés et de la nature constante et dynamique de la culture, du patrimoine et des identités. Une réaction de transformation au changement est étroitement liée à la remise en question des normes, des pratiques traditionnelles et à la création de nombreuses manières diverses d'exister.

La remise en cause du concept d'intégration soulève un certain nombre de questions qui doivent être abordées du point de vue des périphéries, puisque l'intégration reste un concept abstrait et sans fondement détenu par le centre, impactant les politiques gouvernementales avec un bénéfice minimal pour les populations des périphéries. Dans les cas de la Grèce et de l'Italie, la précarité accrue de la population générale due aux ralentissements économiques, ainsi que les mesures d'austérité et les préoccupations des nouveaux arrivants en matière de

statut juridique et de survie quotidienne, ont poussé ces deux groupes dans les marges du pouvoir en envenimant les droits fondamentaux et les conditions de travail. Cette recherche conclut que l'intégration fondée sur l'insertion dans une norme spécifique conçue par le centre ne nourrit pas le bien-être des communautés affectées par le déplacement, en maintenant une séparation calculée entre les groupes. Les populations engagées dans la démocratie représentative sont conditionnées par le faux concept de la règle de la majorité, qui éloigne les membres de la communauté des pratiques démocratiques quotidiennes. Alors que les réponses institutionnelles classiques offrent un cadre d'intégration préconçu qui vise à trouver des solutions durables mais ne peut s'adresser qu'à un petit nombre de personnes, le savoir collectif et l'action des personnes se trouvant dans en marge du pouvoir et dans les espaces autonomes (y compris les occupations et les squats) produisent des alternatives de travail. L'intégration, par sa nature, manque des éléments permettant de construire ensemble et de projeter un avenir collectif fondé sur le principe d'égalité, puisque les nouveaux arrivants sont supposés s'intégrer dans les structures existantes. Le processus de méta-intégration qui remet en question ces approches encourage la possibilité d'imaginer une solution qui dépasse les paramètres de l'État-nation au niveau local, sur la base d'expériences vécues au quotidien, avec une diversité de positions idéologiques et politiques dans les périphéries. Le cadre de co-construction (CCF), mis en avant par cette recherche, répond fondamentalement au besoin de dialogue pour la co-construction et introduit les principes du municipalisme comme modèle de gouvernance locale.

Le rôle des intellectuels organiques est essentiel pour piloter le processus de méta-intégration. L'importance des récits multiples et des identités dynamiques qui sont mis en avant dans le processus de méta-intégration est révélée à travers la médiation des intellectuels organiques permettant aux personnes marginalisées d'obtenir une place légitime dans les discussions et la prise de décision. Les intellectuels organiques ont un rôle essentiel dans les différentes phases du déplacement, en reliant les phases d'urgence, de post-urgence et de développement. Conscients des différentes positions politiques et organisationnelles, les efforts pour surmonter les divisions et atteindre d'autres intellectuels organiques constituent une étape importante dans la lutte commune contre les injustices structurelles. L'expérience montre que les intellectuels organiques qui participent à des initiatives autonomes se sentent marginalisés, et que beaucoup deviennent introvertis et protecteurs dans leurs actions. Dans certains cas, ils sont même fortement critiqués par les membres du même mouvement, en raison de leur divergence présumée d'une position idéologique dogmatique, comme le démontrent les groupes anarchistes en Grèce. La solidarité internationale et la création de réseaux entre intellectuels organiques au-delà des frontières nationales sont plus importantes que jamais pour éviter la marginalisation. Un processus de méta-intégration, qui consiste à

cultiver l'imaginaire social des communautés affectées par les déplacements et à les orienter vers la gouvernance locale, crée également une plateforme permettant aux intellectuels organiques d'émerger en tant qu'acteurs de changement.

Dans un monde en pleine évolution, l'adaptation au changement est devenue une condition de survie puisque les communautés sont obligées de développer des mécanismes d'adaptation et de constamment renforcer les modes d'interdépendance. Il faut reconnaître que les personnes vivant dans les périphéries sont confrontées à des conditions précaires. Le processus de méta-intégration, facilité par des intellectuels organiques, peut adopter comme principe l'autogestion collective, comme le montrent les exemples concrets d'initiatives anarchistes et d'espaces autonomes où émergent des alternatives créatives. Les biens communs et le processus de mise en commun sont des éléments essentiels qui incarnent la lutte. La co-construction communautaire après le déplacement est un processus pédagogique où le passage de l'hétéronomie à l'autonomie s'effectue dans la pratique. Les espaces autonomes et anarchistes alimentent les mouvements sociaux, en tant qu'expériences alternatives qui se construisent les unes sur les autres, incarnées dans une structure locale et renforcées par des réseaux de solidarité. Des exemples en Grèce et en Italie montrent que les relations entre les résidents de longue durée et les nouveaux arrivants prennent une dimension différente dans les lieux où ils s'engagent tous deux dans la lutte sociale. Empruntant le concept de « continuité temporelle » de Ma Mung, il est important de souligner que la continuité des luttes et des mouvements sociaux émerge souvent d'expériences anarchistes et autonomes temporaires de courte durée. Malgré leur "caractère temporaire", il y a une continuité dans la lutte contre les injustices structurelles et une projection vers l'avenir. C'est la raison pour laquelle ces initiatives doivent faire l'objet d'une attention nécessaire pour changer de position et développer de nouveaux récits dans le cadre du lien entre déplacement et gouvernance.

Les mouvements de population et la recherche de meilleures opportunités ailleurs ont été une constante dans l'histoire de l'humanité. Dans ce contexte, la question essentielle pour construire des vies après un déplacement est de savoir si cette recherche d'une vie meilleure a été motivée par l'idée de réussite individuelle pour maintenir un certain niveau de vie, ou par l'acquisition de libertés et de droits civils avec le concept de bien-être collectif et de qualité de vie, en équilibre avec l'environnement. Cette question doit être sérieusement examinée par les résidents de longue durée et les nouveaux arrivants. Un nouveau récit détermine les paramètres de la réponse et l'approche des communautés affectées par le déplacement. En mettant à profit les expériences des espaces et des initiatives anarchistes et autonomes ainsi que les résultats de la démocratie directe sur les conditions et le paysage politique actuels, les

principes municipalistes de Murray Bookchin offrent une voie d'avenir inspirante. Un tel chemin ne peut être dogmatique et limité à une forme spécifique de lutte, comme en témoignent les pratiques nationales et intergouvernementales actuelles.

La région méditerranéenne abrite un certain nombre d'exemples inspirants d'initiatives locales de co-construction communautaire. Les droits et la dignité de l'homme jouent un rôle central dans ce processus, qui n'est pas nécessairement lié à une voie institutionnelle. De petites initiatives significatives allant dans la même direction engagée constitueront des parties essentielles d'un processus de changement, où le langage du dialogue ne doit pas être dominé par les pouvoirs traditionnels de l'État-nation. Dans les périphéries, comme aucun pouvoir central n'a encore été établi avec la domination d'un groupe spécifique, des scénarios qui vont au-delà de l'idée d'intégration détermineront les prochaines phases. En conséquence, la conscience politique locale devra concevoir ses propres mécanismes de réponse autogérés et remodeler progressivement les valeurs communes partagées avec l'idée d'horizontalité. Aujourd'hui, avec près d'un quart de milliard de personnes qui migrent, dont plus de 70 millions sont déplacées de force, et compte tenu des prévisions allant jusqu'à un milliard de personnes supplémentaires déplacées de force en raison du changement climatique et de la dégradation de l'environnement, les perspectives d'avenir et les modes opératoires pour faire face à ces mouvements de population doivent dépasser le cadre d'un État-nation. De nombreux universitaires et professionnels dans le domaine du travail humanitaire préconisent des alternatives et des changements significatifs pour minimiser la souffrance humaine et la destruction du monde naturel. Le cadre communautaire de co-construction, avec tous ses arguments de fond, offre une voie d'avenir et favorise un dialogue approfondi sur le thème du déplacement, en encourageant un changement de perspective pour les nouveaux récits culturels qui sous-tendent le changement social et qui émergent d'un changement conceptuel au sein des communautés.



**DU MOUVEMENT DE LA POPULATION AU MOUVEMENT DES PERSONNES**  
Après les déplacements forcés : le rôle des acteurs du changement dans la co-construction sociopolitique des communautés - un examen de Kilkis, Thessalonique - Grèce, Sutera, Palerme - Italie et Marinaleda - Espagne

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## Résumé :

Lorsque le processus de transformation sociale d'un mouvement démographique devient un mouvement politique, au sein des communautés un changement conceptuel fait émerger de nouveaux récits culturels qui fondent le changement social. À travers l'examen des concepts de déplacement, de déplacé, d'intégration et de gouvernance, cette thèse analyse le rôle des intellectuels organiques ainsi que les capacités et les conditions pour que les personnes déplacées s'engagent dans un processus de transformation socio-politique. En remettant en question de façon critique l'approche des États-nations en matière de déplacement et de gouvernance, des alternatives possibles sont explorées, avec des exemples concrets de mise en œuvre dans deux pays : l'Italie et la Grèce. En dernière analyse, la proximité d'une gouvernance locale, appliquée à travers le concept de municipalisme, se révèle plus pertinente face aux besoins humains fondamentaux et à la dignité des personnes que le contrôle centralisé par l'État-nation. Cette thèse conclut qu'un *Cadre de co-construction collectif (CCF)* déclenché par le déplacement, proposition résultante de cette recherche, pourrait consolider une meta-intégration et les principes du municipalisme comme possible chemin vers la création d'une communauté d'égaux.

**Mots clés :** Déplacement, déplacés, réfugiés, migrants, demandeurs d'asile, vulnérabilité, intégration, gouvernance, communauté d'égaux, méta-intégration, les communs, mutualisation, récits multiples, colonialité du pouvoir, esprits colonisés, hétéronomie, autonomie, centre / périphérie, transformation sociale, local, minorité, co-construction, démocratie directe, autogestion collective, cadre de co-construction communautaire collectif.

## **Abstract**

When the social transformation process of population movement becomes a political movement, new cultural narratives underpinning social change emerge through a conceptual shift within communities. Through examination of the concepts of displacement, the displaced, integration and governance, this thesis analyses the role of organic intellectuals as well as the agency and conditions for displaced people to engage in a socio-political transformation process. By critically questioning the nation-state approach to displacement and governance, possible alternatives are explored, with concrete examples of implementation in two countries; Italy and Greece. In the final analysis, the proximity of local governance, applied through the concept of municipalism, is found more relevant to basic human needs and dignity than the centralized control of the nation-state. This thesis concludes that a Displacement Triggered *Community Co-Construction Framework* (CCF), a process developed as an outcome of this research which consolidates meta-integration and municipalist principles, offers a possible path for creating a community of equals.

**Key words:** Displacement, the displaced, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, vulnerability, integration, governance, community of equals, meta-integration, the commons, commoning, multiple narratives, coloniality of power, colonized minds, heteronomy, autonomy, center / periphery, social transformation, local, minority, co-construction, direct democracy, collective self-management, community co-construction framework.