

# Borders of Solidarity, Seasons of Meanings

## A spatial-temporal analysis of solidarity action frames during the refugee ›crisis‹ in Greece

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on pro-refugee ›solidarity‹ politics and associated forms of everyday resistance -a most salient feature of pro-refugee collective action. Aspiring to contribute to the ongoing literature on shifting repertoires in times of crisis, and by adopting a relational approach in the study of emergent forms of contentious politics, we attempt to demonstrate the different dynamics of solidarity politics by focusing on the collective action frames adopted in a spatial-temporal perspective. Having identified and indexed 2.243 posts appearing on the Facebook page created by the »Panhellenic Networking of Anti-Racist and Immigration Associations«, we present the findings in three sections: (a) continuities and discontinuities amongst pro-refugee and -still existing, albeit declining-anti-austerity forms of collective action inside Greece; (b) critical institutional junctures and their corresponding transformative events; and (c) different »seasons of meaning« as a function of shifts in the sites, the potential, and the identities of solidarity initiators at each different institutional turning point. It is argued that the meaning attributed during each season, the practices to which it was associated, and its programmatic-visionary goals (ranging from humanitarian aid to struggles for social rights) changed in constant interaction with the spatial-temporal pendulum of institutional transformations and the stations of the refugee journey.

**Keywords:** Refugee ›crisis‹, collective action frames, European border regime, migration politics, pro-refugee solidarity networks, Greece

The crossing of the »external« European border (Eastern Mediterranean Sea) by approximately 857.000 refugees during the second half of 2015 marked the beginning of the so-called »refugee crisis«, amidst a socioeconomic environment that was already both crisis-ridden and crisis-prone. At this intersection and rotation of crises, the domestic field of collective action shifted rapidly towards a »politics of solidarity« with the refugees. Initiatives of citizens, informal local and national networks, but also NGOs together with swarms of international volunteers undertook initiatives ranging from the provision of immediate humanitarian aid to confrontational border protests and international campaigns welcoming refugees to Europe.

Aspiring to contribute to the ongoing literature on shifting collective action in times of »crisis«, this paper focuses on what has been considered to be the most salient feature of the protest cycle emerging in the aftermath of the crisis; namely, »solidarity« collective action frames and associated forms of everyday resistance. However, whereas the appeal to the same value – »solidarity« – was a relatively constant feature of pro-refugee collective action throughout the crisis, the meaning attributed to it by various institutional and collective actors differed. Its mutations were a function of the timing of critical »institutional moments« (i.e., of official policies adopted for managing refugee movement at Europe’s borders) that modified and altered the collective identities of actors on the basis of the stations of the refugee journey and the space where solidarity was performed.

By adopting a relational approach highlighting the interplay between waves of contention, the fluctuating institutional environment of European/local policies, and broader societal processes (such as *depoliticization*), we endeavour to demonstrate the different dynamics of solidarity politics by focusing on the *collective action frames* (see Snow/Benford 1988; Snow 2004) of pro-refugee initiatives that flourished on the national level. Previous research on the politics of solidarity in Greece (see Papataxiarchis 2016; della Porta 2018; Kotronaki/Seferiades 2019) has highlighted the importance of changing European and domestic political-institutional contexts in the process of value adjustments in the discourse and, often a time, the practice of solidarity action. Numerous studies in the field of social movements have similarly underlined the importance of including the spatial variable in both the process of inculcating protest strategies and the adoption of specific contentious practices (see Tilly 2000; Sewell 2001; Kotronaki/Seferiades 2012; Monforte 2016). However, with the exception of some ethnographic studies (see Rozakou 2016; Serntedakis 2017; Oikonomakis 2018), the theoretical coupling of these perspectives with the study of solidarity collective action has yet to be attempted.

The aim of this paper is to bring together these approaches by focusing on the interaction between the changing institutional environment and the content of solidarity action in a spatial-temporal perspective, as reflected in the discourse of pro-refugee collective actors during the crisis. To accomplish this task, we have relied on posts appearing on the »Panhellenic Networking of Anti-Racist and Immigration Associations« Facebook page –a most suitable source of data. This initiative (the »Networking«) was formed in April 2015 in a national meeting of movement organizations, informal networks and new or emerging solidarity groups, workers in NGOs, and international organizations. The page created on Facebook served as a web portal for the collection and exchange of information (legal advice on asylum seeking and family reunification processes, living conditions in the reception and identification

centres, international NGO reports) and aimed at the efficient coordination of pro-refugee and pro-migration action on a national scale. A total of 2,243 articles posted between April 2015 and December 2016 were identified and indexed.

To analyze such a broad variety of documents, we have employed the theoretical tools provided by the literature on collective action and contentious politics on *meaning construction*, and have undertaken extensive discourse and frame analysis intended to detect diverse *diagnostic*, *prognostic*, and *motivational frames*. We have organized the presentation of the findings in three sections, identifying (a) continuities and discontinuities between pro-refugee and –still existing, albeit declining– anti-austerity forms of collective action inside Greece; (b) critical *institutional junctures* and the relevant transformative events (see Sewell 1996) shaping the dynamics of solidarity action in time and space; and finally, (c) shifts in the sites, the contents, and the identities of collective action at each different institutional turning point.

## **(DE)POLITICIZING CRISIS, (RE)POLITICIZING SOLIDARITY: A RELATIONAL APPROACH**

The financial crisis that broke out in Greece in 2010 provoked such a dramatic collapse in the living conditions for large segments of the Greek society that it has justifiably been characterized as humanitarian crisis. The social policies adopted to cope with it were dominated by *neoliberal rationality*: further austerity and the reinforcement of already existing tendencies of *depoliticization* (see Held 2006; Hay 2007; D’Albergo/Moini 2017) involving (a) the eradication of all political and moral questions from public life; (b) an obsession with the control of techniques, productivity, and the effectiveness of different means for attaining predefined objectives (the so-called model of »governance by numbers«); and (c) the demotion of the governmental, public, and private spheres to the »realm of necessity«, where no alternatives exist or can be allowed.

But crisis management as prescribed by the neoliberal rationality left a lot to be desired. As a result, the need to cope with the increasing social inequalities created a new type of extra-institutional »demand« for collective action as well as an opposite organizational »supply« (Klandermans 2004). Shedding light to this process is critical in order to codify continuities and discontinuities between the forms of collective action that were triggered by the financial crisis and the solidarity action that emerged in the aftermath of the hectic refugee mobility to Greece and Europe in 2015-2016.

Voted in 2010, the first Memorandum ushered into a contentious cycle (see Psimitis 2011; Diani/Kousis 2014; Karyotis/Rudig 2018; Serdedakis 2018) which began

to ebb *pari passu* with the fading of the collective action undertaken in support of the OXI [NO] vote in the Referendum of July 2015. Its peak coincided with the Greek *Indignados* mobilizations (May-July 2011), when, among other contentious innovations, we had the noteworthy emergence of self-organized templates of social and economic solidarity (see Kavoulakos 2018; Serdedakis/Koufidi 2018; Malamidis 2020). These were collective experiments attempting, on the one hand, to respond to immediate needs and, on the other, to challenge the policies adopted to alleviate the miseries inflicted by the socioeconomic crisis (see Rakopoulos 2014: 15). As the anti-austerity protest cycle began to ebb and a new pro-refugee demand for collective action started rising in 2015, many of these organizations either served as templates for the undertaking of new solidarity action, or were themselves reactivated by shifting their focus to the field of humanitarian aid to refugees.

These were initiatives taking place in the background of accelerated *depoliticization* on the part of the state, adopting a *language of compassion* that treats domination as misfortune and injustice as calamity and implementing measures of *humanitarian governance*: a type of governance applied to »precarious lives« and combining, alternately, policies of »securitization« and »humanitarianism« (Fassin 2005, 2012). But depoliticization of the refugee mobility also involved an industry of hyper-politicizing the »refugee risk« through the *production of spectacle* (De Genova 2013). Focussing on the interpretative schema of »migrant illegality« at the borders, the key idea was to familiarize the public with military techniques and control measures, the institutional screening of the borders, the rapidly multiplying deterrence practices, the expulsion, and deportation of »irregular migrants«. Pro-refugee solidarity actions unfold in the opposite direction.

As already mentioned, however, the meaning attributed to it, the practices to which it was associated, and its programmatic/visionary goals changed in constant interaction with the spatial-temporal pendulum of institutional transformations and the stations of the refugee journey.

## **EUROPEAN BORDER REGIME IN (REFUGEE) CRISIS: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, NEW ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION**

The refugee crisis in the European borders did not fall from a clear sky. Dating back to 90s and 00s, marked by the massive migratory arrivals in Greece from Eastern European countries and Albania, European policies on migration as prescribed by the *Convention of Dublin* (followed by the *Treaty of Amsterdam* in 1999 and the *Dublin*

*II Regulation* in 2003), were primarily focused on the constant quest for appropriate practices, technical bodies and legislative forms aiming at the *securitization of the borders* (see Samers 2004; Carrera/Guild 2010) and the restriction of asylum seeking and freedom of movement in Europe. This Europeanization of migration and border politics effected by the EU asylum legislation codified in the *Dublin II Regulation* (see Norwegian Organization of Asylum Seekers/ Norwegian Helsinki Committee/Greek Helsinki Monitor, 2008) requiring asylum seekers to lodge their claims for protection in the first European country they set foot on, led to the emergence of a »European border regime« affecting not only the landscape of migration and the concept of citizenship in Europe, but also the shape of the borders, as well as the practices and functions required to implement it (see Tsianos/Karakayali 2010).

The outbreak of civil wars in Syria, Sudan, and Libya in 2012 cumulated in the »long summer of migration« in 2015 was undoubtedly a *turning point* in the trajectory of both European and Greek border regime politics. The effort undertaken by the European Commission to tackle the *crisis* –a crisis of the European border and migration regime (see Mezzadra 2018)– through the so-called »hot spot« approach inaugurated a new epoch of humanitarian crisis for Greece and for other southern European countries. After months marked by a series of lethal shipwrecks in the Libyan and Sicilian coasts, thousands of migrants were able to get to the European shore on Greek islands, hoping to continue their travel across the »Balkan route« and to claim their access to the European space. However, the refugee travelogue was to be short-lived.

The second *critical juncture* in the recent EU institutional history of migration management –the gradual closure of the »Balkan route« (November 2015)– signalled the transfer of the crisis from the external to the internal borders of Europe (to Greece and North Macedonia). The third one consisted in the signing of the »EU-Turkey agreement« (March 2016) which trapped 57.000 refugees in the Greek mainland necessitating their relocation to the urban centres.

At first, these changing geographies of border regime crisis triggered a widespread ethos of »welcoming politics« all over Greece. Under the master frame of »solidarity«, old and new social movement organizations, solidarity networks and structures, new-born local initiatives of residents and a galaxy of domestic and international NGOs were engaged in the field of humanitarian aid and inclusive social action.

In the ethnographic research conducted by Papataxiarchis (2016b) in a village of Lesbos (Skala Sykamias), this effervescence of solidarity activity is clearly depicted. As he points out, from the first arrival of refugees to the island until their entrapment, what prevailed was a »patriotism of solidarity« (Papataxiarchis 2016b). A multitude of actors, from the UNHCR, municipal authorities, domestic and transnational advo-

cacy networks, all the way to local communities and pre-existing grassroots collectivities and many hundreds of volunteers embedded in local and transnational networks (including »solidarians from a distance«), rallied around the refugees to form a new »humanitarian geography«. However, as the author underlines, although this collective predisposition was manifest and diffuse at the local level, we have to treat the field of solidarity as a »contentious field: as a place where opposing meanings met and clashed« (Papataxiarchis 2016a: 8-9).

## SOLIDARITY IN TIME AND SPACE

### Solidarity at the External Border: »The Border of Dignity«

Undoubtedly, the first act of solidarity to refugees was performed during the summer of 2015 in the islands of the North Aegean, at the gates of entrance to Europe. In the sight of the exhausted refugees reaching the coasts, groups of citizen volunteers at the Aegean islands (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos) took up action. They were first engaged in rescuing the refugees and then in forming local initiatives to coordinate the collection of relief supplies for the new arrivals. Having as a common *diagnostic frame* (definition of the problem and attribution of responsibility) the absence of any elementary infrastructure or of any –international, national, or local– authority (except Frontex) at the venues of the first reception for the provision of humanitarian aid (food, water, clothes), the *prognostic frame* (proposed solution to the problem) articulated by the local communities was *solidarity action*. What is worth mentioning is that those involved in more or less spontaneous initiatives of care did not attribute elements of strategic agency to their action. For them, solidarity was the reflexive human response to the sight of lives in danger, the practice that defined the boundary of human dignity in the long refugee journey.

In Lesvos:

»The European Union is not doing enough to tackle the crisis. Frontex, a joint European cooperation for the policing of EU borders, is the only European agency working in Lesvos [...] why is Frontex there? They take money. Why? To watch people, die? [...] We help because we are human beings. We see it happening in front of us. We can't ignore it.« (Lesvos News 2015)

»Here they take out dead children, girls and boys. It breaks my heart. I can't sleep at night. What is the fault of these people [...].« (Solidarity4all 2015)

In Leros:

»For two days we've been afoot until late in the evening. Dozens of refugees at the Port Authority, dozens at the ›villa [Artemis]‹ and the most unlucky in police cells. Clothes, shoes, water, medicine, questions, anxiety. ›Make sandwiches quickly‹, ›Bring children's clothes, they're wet‹, ›The Syrian doctor isn't well. He's got a heart condition. Alert the ambulance quickly, guys‹, ›Eight pairs of shoes, write the sizes down‹, ›The croissants and biscuits for the children. Also give them juice‹. ›Leros is the name of this island. We'll tell you when there is a ferry, don't worry we'll give you all the information you need‹, ›Don't cry dear lady, you have two children to care for‹. Small moments from our daily lives filled with pain, anxiety but also hope for these people, the victims of wars and violence within a cannibalistic system. And late at night when we return exhausted taking the last image of rescued children, that found a warm embrace and love over here, gives us strength for the next day. Have a safe trip.« (Leros Solidarity Network 2015).

The invocation of the value and practices of solidarity through the provision of direct humanitarian aid to refugees on the part of these local initiatives did not only reflect the moral imperative to defend the universal right to life. In the places and times of refugee reception, and given the reluctance of international, national, and municipal institutions to intervene in the field of human rights protection, the public record of solidarity also performed another function: that of forging a temporary code of peaceful coexistence between the refugee newcomers and local social groups, suffering a dramatic deterioration in their daily living and professional conditions (tourism, trade, fishing) due to the successive crises. As an announcement of the local initiative »Solidarity Kos«, put it in August 2015:

»Citizen Initiative Solidarity Kos, which has been taking care of the feeding of refugees (as well as the provision of clothes and personal hygiene items) for the last two months, stops its activities from Monday [...] No official body seems willing to take on the economic cost of feeding, nor the political cost of not feeding, which is occurring [...] The Municipality of Kos has no competence to deal with the problem of the arrival of refugees in Kos. However, it does have the responsibility and the competence for the living conditions of its inhabitants [...] It is its duty to

promote feelings of solidarity towards all those suffering in this place, without discrimination. In this way bonds between citizens are created and a society of solidarity and fraternity is established. It must anticipate the sparks of fire that will be lit in the effort to survive.« (Solidarity Kos/George Hartofilis 2015).

Tensions and confrontations between solidarity initiatives, municipal authorities and other local groups were escalated when the refugee spatial status changed; that is, when the »travelers of necessity« (Papataxiarchis 2016b) of the summer of 2015 gradually began to acquire a more permanent spatial identity in the local landscape. In this transition from refugee ephemerality to provisional permanence, solidarity frames were extended into a broader normative narrative, aspiring to synthesize the demands of disparate social groups that were affected by the crisis.

In the appeal addressed by the inhabitants of Skala Sykamias (Lesvos) to the municipal authorities this conceptual extension of Solidarity is starkly evident:

»The following residents of Skala Sykamia who sign this document are most of us children and grandchildren of refugees who grew up or still live in the refugee settlement of our village [...] We know that the passage of refugees from our village and our place is out of necessity and not by choice [...] We have all realized that this is where the borders of solidarity, humanity and human dignity lie [...] Apart from all the above, we cannot but admit that the migrant and refugee flow has created economic problems for many professionals in our region. We also express our solidarity with all those who are suffering through no fault of their own and ask for measures to be taken to relieve them.« (Residents of Skala Sykamia, signature campaign 2015).

In addition to the expression of solidarity to refugees and crisis-ridden social/professional groups, the Skala Sykamia's residents initiative submitted to the municipal authorities a number of proposals for the relief of both the refugees and the local population (integration of refugees into the residential tissue, lower VAT for the islands, subsidies for fishermen who cannot cast their nets, the recruitment of temporary staff from NGOs and the municipality, strengthening of social tourism for the stimulation of the local economy). However, their plea was not met with any response, and the problems in the local community continued to pile up. As the residents of Lesvos, pre-existing solidarity networks, and the international NGOs continued to submit viable proposals for the initial reception and accommodation of the refugees, the sole institutional response was the establishment of hotspots in Moria (Syrians) and Kara Tepe (Afghans and Iranians) in October 2015.

### Solidarity at the Internal Borders: »The Fence of Shame«

But since the early autumn of 2015, the crisis on the map of the refugee route had already started to move from the external to the internal borders of Europe (on the borderline between Greece and North Macedonia). Two were the major institutional events that –in tandem– shaped both the geographies and the contents of solidarity action.

The first concerns the exceptional funding that Greece received in the context of the »European Community Solidarity« project and the »European Agenda for Security«, having as their main objective »the reinforcement of inter-European cooperation against organized crime and terrorism and for the benefit of European citizens« (Efimerida tw n syntaktwn 2015). The second consisted in the decision to close the »Balkan corridor« from Greece to North Macedonia, and from Eastern to Central Europe, as well as to enhance Frontex’s presence at the internal European borders for the purpose of protecting European citizens from the dangers highlighted in the Commission document.

In the confluence of these two institutional acts overemphasizing the dimension of »security«/»danger« of European citizens, a new institutional trait emerged whereby the right to mobility for refugees within the European territory was further restricted. It was a moment when loci, collective action repertoires, meanings, and even collective identities of solidarity action were profoundly redefined.

Henceforth, the symbolic site of performing solidarity became the fence in Evros (the Greek-Northern Macedonian border). Moreover, the very concept of solidarity, while maintaining its moral, humanitarian core, acquired more strategic features, transmuting into that transcendental collective aspiration to »bring down the fences«. Last but not least, under the dynamics of these events, solidarity tended to be reshaped into contention triggering the »constituent process of the struggle for social rights« (Isin/Nyers 2014:3): the right to freedom of movement.

Having as a distinct *injustice frame* the European security and border control policies as well as the concomitant measures implemented by the Greek government on the spot, the national network of anti-racist and pro-refugee collectivities »Coordination Against the Evros Fence« attributed to the Fence symbolisms intertwined with the moral dilemma life/death, and interpreted solidarity as the driving force for remedying injustice (*prognostic frame*):

»The Evros Fence is not only a symbol of exclusion, of the demonization of the »stranger« and of national and European securitization, no matter what. It is also the cause of all these drownings in the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea, since it forces refugees and migrants to follow the

dreaded sea routes to cross the borders [...] We cannot remain silent in the face of deaths [...] That's why, on Saturday October 31, in the context of a national mobilization, we call for a march in Evros against the fence and the borders: Freedom of movement for refugee and migrants! Abolition of all detention camps! Against Fortress-Europe! Our solidarity is going to tear down the fence at the borders!« (Coordination Against Evros Fence 2015)

The mobilizations taking place were met with severe repression, but a critical consequence was that the European border was now turned into an emblematic locus –both as a »theatre of humanitarian aid« for NGOs (Skleparis/Armakolas 2016) and as a »contested space« (Maestri/Hughes 2017) where different meanings of citizenship clashed. This was an antagonistic terrain where the meaning of citizenship shared and promoted by European institutions and national governments (on both sides of the fence) was pitted against that held by refugees and collective actors. It was primarily there where the limits of the repressive option (versus the humanitarian one) in the management of refugee mobility in Europe were to be tested.

Policies of border-crisis management took a dramatic turn in February 2016, however, with the de facto closure of the Balkan corridor (see Mezzadra 2018) and the implementation of measures outlawing solidarity groups. Initially manifesting as a »soft repression« strategy (Ferre 2005:141) seeking the moral stigmatization of NGOs, the policy subsequently acquired a far harsher character that involved the legal repression and criminal prosecution of volunteers mobilizing at the European border. As early as January 2016, an operation of moral challenge to the NGOs was set in motion which bore the following results: (a) the emergence of a discourse of lack of good faith towards them (see Emprosnet 2016; Lesvosnews 2016); (b) the creation of a Register of Certified Volunteers; and (c) extensive controls by joint groups of FRONTEX and the Greek Police Forces on NGOs and individual volunteers, with the aim of »instilling a climate of security in all islanders« (To Pontiki 2016). Meanwhile, volunteer members of rescue boats from the Spanish NGO PROEMAID and the Danish TEAM HUMANITY operating in Lesvos, were arrested on charges of human trafficking and »assisting illegal outlanders to enter Greece« (Lesvos News 2016), triggering once again the process of conceptual and ethical reframing of the solidarity identity.

It must come as no surprise that this new turn in government policy led to a new reframing of pro-refugee solidarity action. Such action now began to bear the moral burden of civil disobedience, of non-compliance to the law when such law was deemed to be unjust: »Solidarity is not certified, it is not intimidated«, claimed the self-organized Solidarity Initiative in Skala Sikamia (Lesvos), (Solidarity Initiative in Skala Sikamia 2016).

## **Solidarity Within the Border: Self-Organizaiton for the Social Integration of Refugees**

On 18 March 2016, the European Council published the EU-Turkey joint declaration, euphemistically titled the »EU-Turkey Agreement«. It was series of mutual commitments aspiring to regulate the management of the European border crisis by specifying conditions for the readmission of asylum seekers disembarking on the Aegean islands. According to its provisions (a) Turkey was recognized as a safe »third country«, i.e., as a country of first reception for asylum seekers and (b) the Greek Ministries of the Interior and Defence were authorized to take ad hoc emergency measures in case large numbers of incoming refugee asylum seekers showed up at the borders.

In the aftermath of this Agreement, about 57.000 refugees found themselves entrapped inside Greece. They were transferred to the restructured reception and detention centres (the so-called »multifunctional« reception centres) where, from now on, the procedures of reception, identification, detention, asylum seeking, and deportation were unified (see Maniatis 2018). At the same time, more than 15.000 refugees who had been stacked in Athens were temporarily settled in 14 reception centres set up by the Greek government outside the urban fabric (see Tsavdaroglou 2018).

Against the backdrop of these changes, solidarity, as a *motivational frame to action* and as a cluster of practices, acquired more radical features. It was explicitly differentiated from the ethics and rituals of charity, and was reconstructed as contentious collective action. In terms of its content, it was defined as an intermediate stage of refugee self-organization with the strategic goal of a long-term articulation of local and migrant refugee struggles for social rights (to housing, access to urban space, education and health services, social integration). As regards its performances, it was identified with transgressive action, namely the squatting of abandoned buildings located at the urban space (Athens, Thessaloniki) for the purpose of promoting the formation of »spaces of struggle« for social and political rights. This was a new epoch of solidarity action, where social movement collectivities and networks of activists were to play a pivotal role.

In the period that followed, a series of housing squats took place in the city centre of Athens (44 Arachovis, 22 Kaniggos, 17 Spyrou Trikoupis, 58 Themistokleous, 22 Acharnon, 22 Oniro Hotel, 5<sup>th</sup> School of Octavio Merlier), each one of them having hosted between 150 and 200 people. The occupations, at least declaratively, were organized with an emphasis on the principles of participatory democracy, decentralized operating structures and consensual patterns of decision-making. Of particular note

in this mosaic of squats in Athens was the »Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space« *City Plaza*.

City Plaza was occupied in April 2016 by members of the »Solidarity Initiative for Economic and Political Refugees«, an umbrella of anti-racist collectives attached to anti-authoritarian and left- libertarian political milieus in Athens, and active in the field of solidarity politics since August 2015, when the first refugees from the islands arrived in the »vulnerable« neighbourhoods of the Athenian centre. What was the uniqueness of the City Plaza experiment of self-organization and emancipatory solidarity?

»The City Plaza squat offers an experience to their participant that is very different from other political and activist projects/movements [...] It organizes everyday life while furthering the broader struggle for rights and freedom [...] The City Plaza project contains a double movement. On one hand, it articulates a wider demand for social and political rights—for proper housing and provision of basic needs, and for free access to education and healthcare. At the same time, however, these rights are also produced in City Plaza from ›below‹. Those who were deprived of their right to dignified housing, to healthcare and education, can now exercise these rights within a self-organized structure. In this sense, City Plaza is not just a counter-example contrasting the dominant policies around the ›refugee crisis‹, but an example of how self-organization can function and produce social rights from the ground up, thus exemplifying emancipation and solidarity.« (Lafazani 2017).

City Plaza operated as a vehicle of » prefigurative politics« at the micro-level and the macro-temporality. By actively questioning the fatalistic, deeply depoliticized notion that »There Is No Alternative« for refugee housing other than detention camps, it was constituted as a counter example for refugee social (co-)existence at the urban space on the basis of forms of social interaction that embodied the desired change. Under the normative and motivational frame »We will live together!«, the City Plaza community sometimes took the initiative to organize public celebrations in locations wounded by memories of racist violence, sometimes responded to local »welcoming calls« and participated in the festivities of local schools. At the same time, it was engaged in the process of networking with trade unions in education and health for the purpose of setting in motion the most far-reaching process of refugee social inclusion. Finally, all children of the accommodation space gained access to primary education (Kotronaki 2018).

Refugee Accommodation Squats gradually faded away under the pressure of the repressive action against the communities of squats, while City Plaza continued to perform as an open space of »Living Resistance« up until 2019 and the electoral victory of the conservative party »New Democracy« (*Nea Dimokratia*).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper attempted to chart the various contents and practices of solidarity as it was manifested during the period of the »refugee crisis« (2015-2016). It was argued that the limited range of European and domestic policies (absence of alternatives in crisis management) accompanied by the long process of depoliticization, formed a type of »demand« for a politics of solidarity. It was also stressed that, despite the invocation of a common value, the attributed meaning, the associated practices, the programmatic horizon, and the identity of the mobilizing groups changed as they interacted with the spaces of solidarity and as a function of the timing of critical institutional events.

In the light of this observation, different »seasons of meaning« and solidarity repertoires were detected. The first one (summer 2015) was performed at the »external« borders of Europe (the Aegean islands) by grassroots initiatives, and viewed solidarity as humanitarian action with the moral commitment to defend the universal right to life in conjunction with a quest for the peaceful coexistence of refugees and locals. The second (autumn 2015) had a spatial focus on the »internal« borders of Europe (Greece's border with North Macedonia), and was characterized by the fact that while solidarity frames maintained their humanitarian connotations, they began to acquire more confrontational features, thereby serving as symbolic resources for claim-making (freedom of movement). Manifesting in the same geographical area as a response to the strategy of outlawing humanitarian aid to refugees at the borders, the third »season« (November 2015-January 2015) saw solidarity frames extend in order to express the collective stance of civil disobedience. The fourth »season«, finally, was determined by the EU-Turkey joint statement (spring 2016) and the entrapment of refugees in the Greek mainland. In it, solidarity was conceived as a partial stage of refugee self-organization, in the strategic horizon of a long-term struggle for social inclusion.

Pending further research, it can be reasonably surmised that each epoch of meanings and practices corresponded to a different category of collective social action.

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