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Spaces of solidarity:

the case of Athens' refugee housing squats

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I hereby declare that all the data used in this work, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above-mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work.

Abstract

In 2015, fleeing wars, conflicts and poverty over a million of refugees and migrants had arrived in Europe. During this period, due to its geopolitical location as Europe's gateway, Greece had become a major stopover in their journeys. While the refugee movements were framed through a narrative of crisis and anti-immigrant populism was on the rise in Greece, like in the rest of Europe, at the same time numerous grassroots solidarity initiatives towards people on the move had emerged. As a striking example of this solidarity movement, some activists had started to occupy vacant buildings in Greek cities in order to turn them into self-organized housing spaces for refugees and immigrants. These acts of squatting were not only carried out for providing housing to refugees and immigrants, but also for protesting immobilizing strategies and policies of the Greek state and the European Union. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the possibilities these self-organized refugee housing squats can open up for an alternative socio-spatial imagination. In order to examine this issue, two cases of refugee housing squats established during the so-called refugee crisis in Athens were presented and analyzed. Therefore, the thesis is based on a case study method. For constructing the cases, qualitative data was collected through document analysis. The theoretical framework of the thesis includes debates on space and place in anthropology together with a conceptualization of solidarity in relation to migration. The thesis argues that migrant solidarity activism might challenge hegemonic constructions of places and communities by forging new connections between different places and social groups.

Contents

1. Introduction

As a result of war, elevated conflicts and poverty more than a million of refugees from the Middle East, Africa and Asia arrived in Europe during the years of 2015 and 2016. Fleeing the ongoing civil war in their country, Syrians constituted the majority. In this period, due to its geopolitical location as Europe's gateway, a great number of the refugees crossed Greece on their way to northern and western European countries. However, because of the changing socio-political context from late 2015 on, once being transit in the country, newcomers had to settle or to stay for much longer periods in Greece in the end. While these large-scale refugee mobilities were constructed as a crisis by the media and politicians, and the states have increasingly adopted restrictive and exclusionary measures against the people on the move, activists who mostly identify with anarchist and leftist movement, as a direct political action against the migration policies of the Greek government and the European Union, started in 2015 to occupy abandoned buildings in Greek cities with the aim of converting these into self-organized housing spaces for refugees. The purpose of this thesis, is to examine socio-spatial implications of these self-organized refugee housing squats. More specifically the thesis aims to think through following questions: What might refugee housing squats tell us about contested constructions of home and place-making in relation to migration? Can migrant solidarity activism forge alternative spatial imaginaries and meanings?

Squatting is usually defined as occupying a vacant land, a building or an apartment without holding its legal property rights (Mudu & Chattapodhyay, 2016). Squatting for the purpose of satisfying housing needs, or organizing social activities is a common practice all over Europe since the 1970s, though occasionally occurred before that date as well, and some authors describe it as a new urban movement rather than as isolated social acts (Martinez Lopez, 2013). Squatters have various profiles, and their activities, goals, resources and relationships with authorities can widely differ (Aguilera & Smart, 2019). The reasons that lead to the

occupation of vacant buildings or lands can be purely survival needs, or political aims such as establishing alternative spaces for entertainment, cultural and artistic production, education away from the influences of commodification and commercialization under neoliberalism and capitalism. Broad range of actions that are carried out in the occupations might include housing, guerilla city greening projects, autonomy over food production, educational and artistic workshops, libraries, counter pedagogies, discussion forums and so on (Mudu & Chattapodhyay, 2016). Moreover, occupying public spaces has been extensively practiced as a means of protest (for example, the Occupy Movement; Indignados Movement). In relation to migration, occupation of land, buildings, and public spaces has been used as a means of protest, as well as, of a solution to housing deprivation encountered by migrants, and in many instances for the purposes of both (see, for example, We are Here movement in Amsterdam in Dadusc, 2016; the occupation of Oranienplatz in Berlin in Bhimji, 2016). Migrants also are involved in the squats established by local activists (see Martinez Lopez, 2017; Belloni, 2016)

When it comes to Greece, although in the past the creation of housing squats has not been as common as in the Western countries, and squatting was mostly practiced for the establishment of squatted social centers-*stekia* (Alithinos, 2015), in the last decade, overlapping of the "refugee crisis" and the debt crisis resulted in the creation of many more housing squats in the country. Greece has seen arrival of thousands of migrants in 1990s as well, however, during 1990s and early 2000s squatting was not widespread among migrants as many of them managed to enter the housing market, and it was carried out mainly by political activists in order to create social centers -called "stekia" in Greek, plural form of the word "steki" meaning "a place where one frequents"- in which a few migrants were involved (Makrygianni, 2016). Pointing out to this change in terms of migrants' involvement in the squatting scene in Greece, Makrygianni (2016) argues: "migrants' squats during the last decade redefined the meaning of squatting in Greece." Furthermore, similarly with the other

countries, occupation of vacant buildings and city spaces by migrants and solidarity activists was carried out as a way of protesting in Greece as well (see, for example, Skleparis, 2017).

Although squatting is frequently practiced by migrants in parts of the world, the literature connecting it with migration is fairly limited (Augustin & Jorgensen, 2019). The number of studies on the squats in anthropology is very limited, even though the squats could provide fruitful empirical fields for the anthropological research (see, for instance, Campbell 2019; Starecheski, 2019), and only a few of those studies focuses on squatting in the context of migration (see Massa 2022). This thesis aims to fill this gap in the field by attempting to advance an anthropological inquiry of migrant squats. It draws on the analysis of various academic works in order to construct two exemplary cases of self-organized refugee housing squats in Athens. It, then, develops a discussion of these cases informed by the theories on space and place in anthropology, along with scholarly debates on migrant solidarity activism. In doing so, the thesis aims at investigating the place-making practices through migrant solidarity activism which challenge hegemonic socio-spatial constructions, and shape different connections and relations between people and places in opposition to those.

The thesis is structured as follows: the next section demonstrates the methodology used in the study. The third chapter describes the context in which the self-organized refugee housing squats have emerged. The fourth chapter sets out the theoretical framework of the thesis. In this chapter anthropological literature on the concepts of space and place are reviewed, and a conceptualization of solidarity is developed in relation to migration in order to provide a better understanding of migrant solidarity activism. In the subsequent chapter, the cases of the thesis are represented and discussed. Finally, chapter six concludes the thesis with a summary of the basic arguments of the thesis.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore alternative socio-spatial meanings and imaginaries that migrant solidarity activism might animate. Case study as a research method was chosen. As data-gathering technique, document analysis was used.

2.1 Case study

A case study can be defined as in-depth examination of one or just a few instances of a particular phenomenon. It is consistently described as most suitable to use when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear and contain many variables (Harrison et al., 2017). Here, the case study facilitates explaining and/or exploring complex phenomena with concrete examples. The use of case studies has become highly common in social research, especially with small-scale research (Denscombe, 2010). According to Denscombe (2010) the main benefit of this approach is that it allows the researcher to handle the intricacies of complex social situations. It enables the researcher to deal with social processes and relationships which might be difficult to grasp by adopting other research methods such as survey research. In this respect, the analysis in case studies is not based on isolated factors but holistic. However, the case study approach has also some disadvantages; difficulty in making generalizations from the findings of only one or few cases being the most important one.

The cases of this thesis, Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza and Notara 26 Refugee and Immigrant Housing Squat, have been chosen because of their significance among the Athenian refugee housing squats. They constituted prominent and long-lasting examples (Kapsali, 2020). Nonetheless, although the cases chosen are unique, at the same time they bear similarities with the other cases of their type; establishing therefore, single examples of "a broader class of things" (Denscombe, 2010). The thesis focuses on these

squats' common aspects with other refugee housing squats, however, considers at the same time their differences. In order to describe and investigate the cases of the thesis, secondary data was collected. As data-gathering method document analysis was employed.

2.1.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure of reviewing and evaluating various kinds of documents in order to elicit meaning, gain an understanding and develop empirical knowledge out of them (Bowen, 2009). It is an important research method and has been used for many years (Morgan, 2022). The term document refers to a variety of printed and electronic material including books, journals, newspaper articles, institutional reports, press releases, blogs, social media posts, photographs, video, and film. Document analysis can be carried out quantitatively or qualitatively, or by combining both approaches in a single research study. In this thesis, a qualitative approach was adopted. As a research method document analysis is specifically appropriate for qualitative case studies (Bowen, 2009). Choosing document analysis as a research technique can have several advantages: it is cost-effective and less time consuming, data in the documents is unaffected by the research process or by the presence of the researcher, documents can provide information about several settings and events and they can cover a long-time span. Moreover, document sources have high level of accessibility and can allow researcher to reach populations or subjects which could be difficult to reach through the use of other data-gathering methods.

Although document analysis is used mostly as complementary to other research methods, it has been also employed as a stand-alone method (Bowen, 2009). Especially for studies with an interpretive design, for the study of events which cannot be longer observed such as historical events, or for cross-cultural studies document analysis might be the most viable method of data gathering. In this study document analysis served as the sole method of

research. Since Notara 26 is the only remaining refugee housing squat in Athens at the time of writing of this thesis, with regard to City Plaza and other refugee housing squats in Athens which existed in the past, document analysis was the most feasible way of data gathering in terms of accessibility and exactness. Furthermore, it is well known among some scholars and journalists who research these issues, that generally the squatters can have concerns with regard to giving information about themselves and the squats. Because these places are defined as illegally occupied against the consent of their owner by the legal system, they face possible evictions and legal charges. As a result, some squatters prefer secrecy about their projects because any information regarding them could be used by the government or by the private owner against the squats and themselves. Beside these security concerns, sometimes ideological views of the squatters about the institutions researchers present, might make them refrain from collaborating by providing any information. Considering all these, utilization of document analysis as the research technique of this study has eliminated some ethical concerns from the research process.

As with any research technique, document analysis has also some disadvantages: the documents might be biased; they might not reflect the reality of the issue under investigation but demonstrate the better or worse sides of it selectively. In addition, they might provide limited data or not include the data needed to conduct a study, since many of them are not produced for research purposes (Morgan, 2022). Regarding this study, factors such as authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of the documents were considered while deciding which documents to use in order to reduce the potential biases the data might have (Flick, 2018, as cited in Morgan, 2022). These factors were considered by examining critically the purpose, authors, target audience and completeness of the documents. Before choosing data to construct the cases, a wide array of documents on the topic of the thesis was reviewed carefully. Therefore, it was a not random selection of documents but they are

selected purposively by taking into account the aforementioned four aspects. Also, the information available in the documents were adequate and suitable for the purposes of the study.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

Case study materials for analysis were collected from academic journals, newspaper articles, blogs and social media posts which contain information about the Athenian refugee housing squats that were established starting from the year of 2015. I examined the material which was publicized from 2015 until this year (2023), for a year starting from September 2021 until September 2022 few times each week. The data used in the thesis include written and audiovisual content in Greek and English language that mainly gathered from the statements of the squatters which were published in various blogs, the interviews of the squatters with journalists and bloggers, scholarly works on the specific squats that constitute the cases of this thesis, and these squats' Facebook pages. The analysis focused on the activists' and migrants' discourses regarding their perceptions and feelings of the squats, on their relations among themselves, and on their practices within the squats.

Regarding the data analysis, a textual analysis was conducted in this study. In the process of conducting data analysis, first, the overarching themes, similarities, differences and patterns within the data were identified, and accordingly with that, various categories were created for the analysis. Then, these categories were grouped into broader themes. As the reviewing of the data in relation to the categories continued, new categories or relations between categories were discovered. Once a set of themes had been reached, the interrelations between different themes were discussed through the adoption of a theoretical framework in order to develop an analysis of fundamental points emerging from the data set.

Atkinson (2014) points out that it is crucial for a qualitative researcher not simply to report what was said about events, actions, and feelings but also to consider how the things were said. He argues that language-in-use is never a neutral medium of representation. According to him, therefore, in qualitative research accounts must not be taken for granted as transparent representations of social actions and realities, and the researcher must always recognize the role of language-but not only- in creating those actions and realities. This study takes Atkinson's (2014) suggestion into account in its analysis of the data. The point here is not only having an exact description of the experiences of the squatters but more than that, is understanding how these experiences were constructed, perceived, and referred to in interviews by them, and how their ways of expressing those experiences affected their actions.

2.3 Limitations

The fact that triangulation- the use of different data sources and methods in the examination of same phenomenon- has not been adopted in the study constitutes a limitation. Notwithstanding that there are plenty of studies in which document analysis is employed as the only research technique, it is often used together with other qualitative research methods such as interviews, non-participant and participant observation. As this study is solely based on document analysis, data collected by different methods were not corroborated in comparison to each other. Therefore, the absence of triangulation might increase the biasness of the data and limit the comprehensiveness of the study.

During the process of determining the research design of this study, due to the uncertainties within the context of coronavirus pandemics, as research methodology document analysis was chosen and interviews were not conducted, because implementation of the measures against the spread of the virus such as social distancing, travel restrictions, and limits to mobility was possible and might have hindered doing fieldwork through physical co-presence. Moreover,

since the squats constitute a sensitive matter because of the legality issues surrounding it, I did not prefer to do interviews remotely with the use of virtual or other kind of communication means due to the security concerns regarding these means and the difficulty of establishing a relationship of trust in this way. All in all, the coronavirus pandemics has created challenges for qualitative research, especially for approaches like ethnography which are thought to be primarily based on physical proximity (Eggeling, 2022). However, Eggeling (2022) suggests that proximity and knowledge production signify more than mere physical co-presence. Engaging with secondary sources as different sites (field) of research connecting or showing the limitations and failures is at the heart of ethos of ethnography, and this was the process that I tried to follow.

3. Setting the Context

In this chapter the context in which refugee housing squats have emerged is described. The chapter provides brief information on the link of solidarity movement grew as a response to austerity politics, and the expansion of refugee solidarity movement in the last decade in Greece. It is important to understand this setting in order to get a picture of the repertoires of contention adopted in the recent history of the country, which influenced migrant solidarity activism.

 During the last decade, due to the country's geopolitical location, Greece has been a gateway to wealthier northern and western European countries for vast numbers of refugees fleeing conflicts, wars, poverty and oppression. More than 800,000 refugees from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, crossing the Aegean Sea via Turkey, entered Greece in the year of 2015 (Clayton & Holland, 2015). Two opposite reactions were given to these large-scale refugee mobilities by locals of the countries on the refugee routes: while anti-foreigner sentiments were escalating, parallelly an extensive refugee solidarity movement emerged in Greece and

throughout Europe. In the case of Greece, this solidarity movement was pushed forward both by already existing solidarity networks in the country formed within the context of long financial crisis since 2008, and newly flourished solidarity initiatives established as a response to the refugee mobilities. At the same time, the crisis-hit Greek state unable to provide even for its own citizens, was completely unprepared for receiving and caring for refugees. In the beginning of the "refugee crisis", absence of the state and the EU in the field, resulted in the coverage of refugees' reception and basic human needs by local citizens and these grassroots solidarity initiatives. International organizations and volunteers joined soon to this expanding refugee solidarity movement, and worked side by side with Greek volunteers and activists in order to assist the people on the move.

In that year, Greece became famous for the welcoming response of some segments of its population towards refugees (Cantat, 2021). Especially, as large numbers of refugees were arriving on the shores of the Eastern Aegean islands after going through perilous journeys, and loss of life on the Aegean Sea became much more visible and frequent, these islands came under the world's attention. Local residents, civic and activist networks on the islands, intensely engaged in assisting refugees through search and rescue operations, provision of basic needs such as healthcare, food and clothes, and transiting them onward. In his ethnographic account of a village in the Northeastern Greek Island of Lesbos, Skala Sykamnias, where was the entry point for one fifth of the newcomers in 2015, Papataxiarchis (2016a) mentions how during this period beside the human flows, there was also a constant flow of materials and money into the frontline of the "refugee crisis". Indeed, there was such an abundance of donations sent to Lesbos from Greece and all over the world, Rozakou (2016) writes that at some point, collectivities assisting refugees there, even had to publicly ask for a halt of donations in order to be able to sort and distribute the items they already collected. In the main cities too, the movements supporting refugees grew rapidly in 2015.

Locals and solidarity collectives started to provide assistance to thousands of refugees who were coming from the islands and arriving in Athens, staying outdoors in the makeshift camps or at the parks and the squares of the city before they head for the borders again.

This situation has changed dramatically after the gradual closure of the Balkan corridor,[1] and signing of a deal between the European Union and Turkey on 18 March 2016.[2] The EU-Turkey deal, together with the closure of the Balkan route resulted in the entrapment of more than 60,000 refugees in Greece, who were initially there in transit. The solidarity initiatives supporting refugees have also evolved accordingly with these developments (Oikonomakis, 2018). Before, these initiatives were aiming to facilitate refugees' journey through the Balkan route, however, since the newcomers have not only been passing through but been there to stay, the initiatives also had to transform accordingly. Moreover, the State has changed its initial relatively open stance towards refugee solidarity initiatives, and has started to intervene in and take control of the field into its own hands. It subcontracted the NGOs to perform the tasks previously carried out by the solidarity groups, and prevented access of refugee solidarity movement to the people on the move. Both in Greece and throughout Europe, civil society actors who aid border crossers have started to been increasingly criminalized by states and immigration authorities through a wide range of methods such as police harassments, bureaucratic barriers, administrative penalties and fines, public scapegoating, prosecutions and attempted prosecutions of individuals (Schack & Witcher, 2021)

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[1] A path commonly used by the migrants heading to northern Europe by usually beginning from Turkey and crossing through either Bulgaria or Greece.

[2] According to the EU-Turkey deal, 'irregular migrants' arriving on the Greek islands from Turkey after March 2016, would be returned to Turkey, and for every immigrant returned, a Syrian refugee living in Turkey would be settled in the European Union countries (European Council, 2016). Bringing geographical restriction on the movements of the newcomers who arrived on the Eastern Aegean islands after March 2016, the deal was aiming at restricting the arrival of undocumented migrants into the European Union territory via Turkey.

 It is worth mentioning that the widespread solidarity movement which developed in Greece in support of the refugees, must be considered in juxtaposition with the already existing solidarity structures at the time, which had emerged in the context of austerity. Greece has been heavily hit by the repercussion of 2007-2008 global financial crisis. Facing a sovereign debt crisis in its aftermath, the memoranda -a series of three economic adjustment programs- leading to a loan, were signed starting from 2010 between Greece and the "Troika" (the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank), stipulated stringent austerity measures. Leading to high rates of unemployment, cuts to salaries and pensions, shrinkage of several basic social services and rights, and privatization of several public assets; the austerity measures had appalling consequences for a big share of the society. Unemployment rates among the youth reached as high as to 59.5% in 2013 (Kraatz, 2015), while the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion rose from 28.1% in 2008 to 35.7% in 2013 and 36% in 2014 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016). As the crisis unfold, many people in Greece have become impoverished, and many others found themselves in a heavily precarious situation. Against this backdrop, since people could not rely on the state welfare or their wages to have a decent life anymore, several solidarity networks and initiatives flourished all over Greece to counter the destructive effects of the austerity since 2011.

Organizing around the slogan "nobody alone in crisis" these initiatives aimed at meeting day-to-day survival needs (Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016), and provided services both to citizens and non-citizens who have suffered the dramatic consequences of the debt crisis and austerity. From social clinics and pharmacies (Cabot, 2016), to soup kitchens, groceries and anti-middle-men markets (Rakopoulos, 2015); solidarity initiatives encompassed a wide range of areas of action. The majority of them were informal, self-organized, and citizen-led structures. Participants of these, were often suspicious of formalization and officialization, and distinguished solidarity networks from the NGO and non-profit sectors (Rakopoulos, 2016).

Rakopoulos (2016), explains that differentiating solidarity from humanitarian action stems from solidarity's political origins in social struggles against austerity. These initiatives sprang after the social mobilizations in 2011, which led to the occupation of the Syntagma Square [3](Arampatzi, 2017). In post-occupation period, several local popular assemblies formed in many neighborhoods of Athens, were later turned into solidarity initiatives and networks. However, although these initiatives and networks' political profile was mostly left-leaning, they did not target explicitly political mobilizations but rather strived for addressing more immediate human needs (Cabot, 2016). In the meanwhile, the responses given to the debt crisis and austerity measures included an alarming rise in xenophobia and far-right mobilizations, culminating in the representation of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn in the Parliament and its strong presence in some neighborhoods of Athens. Initiating attacks against immigrants and anti-fascist activists, and vandalizing shops owned by immigrants, members of the group claimed territorial control in parts of Athens.

As the effects of the Greek debt crisis continued, they overlapped with the "refugee crisis", and the above-mentioned solidarity networks created as part of anti-austerity struggles, formed the basis of growing refugee solidarity networks. Since the financial crisis, roughly 30% of Athens' housing stock have been left empty, and between 20 and 50% of its stores have been closed (Thedorou, 2016, as cited in Agustin & Jorgensen, 2019). The coalescence of the so-called refugee crisis with the debt crisis have attracted many activists to create housing squats in the city, especially in and around the neighborhood of Exarcheia. Beginning in September 2015, several activists and refugees have squatted disused buildings with the purpose of transforming them into self-organized refugee housing spaces. In Athens, between 2016 and 2019, there were about ten functioning such housing squats (Cantat, 2021), with

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[3] Following the voting of the first austerity package, mass protests organized as a part of anti-austerity struggles culminated in the occupation of Athens' Syntagma Square by thousands of protestors for more than two months in the summer of 2011.

City Plaza and Notara 26 being prominent and long-lasting examples (Kapsali, 2020). Some of the squats established by migrant solidarity activists for housing purposes or for organizing various activities included: Dervenion 56, Gini building on Politehnio (on the university campus), Acharnon squat, School 2- 2o Filoxenio Prosfigon, Themistokleus 58, Themistokleus 96, Strephi squat, School - 5th Likio, Hotel Oniro, Cat's Spirit, Refugee housing squat Kanniggos 22, Steki Metanaston, General Hospital Patision (Tsavdaroglou, 2018)

The fact that most of these housing squats were located in Exarcheia does not stem from a coincidence. Exarcheia is a neighborhood where intellectuals, artists, activists, members of leftist, anarchist and anti-authoritarian movements have long been attracted to. It was the location, dating back to late '80s, where most of Athenian squats and social centers were created by anarchists (Tsavdaroglu, 2018). Ringed by university buildings, it was the center of the student movements and mobilizations which shaped the modern history of the country, such as anti-dictatorship uprising in November 1973 (Tsavdaroglou & Kaika, 2022). Moreover, it was the focal point of other uprisings and insurrections which highly impacted the Greek society, for example, youth uprising started after the murder of a 15-year-old boy, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, by a police officer in December 2008. Neighborhood's pre-existing "solidarity economy" in the context of austerity-ridden Greece, made it also well-prepared for the emergence of refugee solidarity networks there. All in all, lack of a visible police presence inside Exarcheia together with the neighborhood's vocal anti-racist stance, provided for a relative sanctuary for the refugees and immigrants in a country where far-right and state violence against immigrants are well-documented (King & Manoussaki-Adamopoulou, 2019).

At the same time, over the period of 2016 and 2019, 13 state-run refugee camps were created in metropolitan area of Athens (Tsavdaroglou & Kaika, 2022). Established on former military

bases, or in abandoned industrial buildings, at great distances from the urban center; these camps constituted isolated ghetto-like spaces, far from facilities and public services, and also from urban social life. Moreover, numerous reports from humanitarian organizations showed the squalid living conditions of refugees in the camps; emphasizing poor hygiene conditions, inadequate resources, and overcrowding. On the contrary to these state-run camps, one of the most significant aspects of the refugee housing squats formed by activists and refugees was their central location. As these occupied buildings were located in and around the central Exarcheia neighborhood, the residents had access to schools, hospitals and employment opportunities.

It should be noted that there could be vast differences among these squats, accordingly with the political and social background of the groups or individuals organizing them, but also with the physical conditions of the buildings. Some of these squats were initiated by the local activists, while the others were organized by the refugees themselves. Certain squats were explicitly political, whereas the others prioritized the practical necessities of the refugees more. For instance, Annibale (2017) claims that Notara 26 constitutes an example of the political squats with its well-articulated anarchist principals and political stance, while in the squats of Hotel Oniro and Jasmine School political views were of secondary importance. The refugee housing squats also differed in their accommodation standards. However, despite the differences, and even outspoken animosity between squats at times, what many had in common is a sense of community and solidarity.

According to the Mayor of Athens at the time, Giorgos Kaminis, approximately 2,500 to 3,000 refugees and migrants were being housed in the squats in 2017 (Georgiopoulou, 2017). Just after coming to power with July 2019 elections, right-wing New Democracy government launched a campaign of evictions of the squats starting from August 2019, resulting in the evacuation of approximately 1000 refugees and migrants from the occupied buildings

(Nashed, 2019). Although majority of the squats do not allow drug and alcohol use inside their buildings, most media reports linked the evictions with drug dealing (King & Manoussaki-Adamopoulou, 2019). Vowing to bring "law and order" to Exarcheia, New Democracy's rhetoric has conflated drug dealers, criminals, anarchists and migrants. Despite the fact that lack of visible law enforcement in Exarcheia has facilitated the existence of drug dealers and criminal gangs in the neighborhood, migrants and activists stated that there were none drug dealers living in the evicted squats; in all of which a strict no drug policy was being followed (Nashed, 2019).

In the Fall of 2019, numerous squats in Athens have been evicted, and on 20th November of the same year, the government issued an ultimatum giving 15 days to all the squatters in the country to vacate the buildings. Following the evictions, Notara 26 remains the last refugee housing squat. Migrant evictees depending on their legal status, were sent either to detention centers to be held there before their deportation from the country, or to the state-run refugee camps. Some of them chose to stay in the center of the city instead of being replaced into the refugee camps, even though this would mean sleeping rough on the streets.

Souzas (2015) contends that squats in Greece contributes to the formation of radical political identities and according to squatters, this is the reason why the state and the mass media represents them as "hotbeds of lawlessness". He points out how this stereotype distorts the actual contribution of squats in Greek society. According to him, while the squatters are portrayed as destructors of public property, in reality, they restore derelict buildings and transform them into open social centers. Similarly, while they are depicted as anti-social, actually, they often uphold social cohesion of entire neighborhoods. He gives the example of the squat Villa Amalias, which prevented the expansion of fascist attacks in areas where several immigrants live and work.

Correspondingly with the contradiction Souzas (2015) explains, throughout this chapter, it can be seen how different constructions of space, both representatively and practically, conflicted with each other, and contestations to these constructions unfold. Against the spaces of neo-liberal economic restructuring, "urban solidarity spaces" (Arampatzi, 2017) have arisen in many parts of Greece; challenging the designation of austerity measures as the only possible "solution" to the crisis at the expense of people. Likewise, against the spaces of exclusion and discrimination such as camps, detention centers, and borders; spaces of solidarity among and with migrants thrived in the country. This opposing production of and claims over space raise questions about the nature of it: is space given; a neutral background where our actions take place in, or relational, contested, shaping and shaped by the actions of the subjects inhabiting it? The next chapter of the thesis tries to seek an answer to this question.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on the concepts of space and place, and home as a significant place for individuals and groups. It discusses these concepts in relation to migration and displacement. In addition, the chapter attempts at conceptualizing solidarity in the migration context with the aim of giving an insight into migrant solidarity activism.

4.1 Space, Place and Identity

Despite being often used interchangeably, the concept of space expresses location or physical space to which a value or meaning is not attributed, while place indicates sites or locale with some sense of boundaries and with culturally ascribed meanings attached to it by people. Place is a "framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time" (Thornton, 2008, as cited in Aucoin, 2017). So, place is a space that carries individual and collective significance, and emotional connotations for people. Cultural activities people engage in order

to render spaces into meaningful places constitute place-making practices, and when sites take on a cultural meaning, they become places instead of generalized spaces (Aucoin, 2017).

1990s have seen an increased interest in the concepts of space and place, and spatial relations in social sciences and humanities. The traces of this 'spatial turn' in social sciences in general, could also be discerned in anthropology, and several works by the anthropologists provided important contributions to the discussions of space and place. The arguments focused on the traditional conceptualization of space and place in ethnographic research and in public view, and on its far-reaching implications. For a long time, place in anthropological writing, have been taken as unproblematic, as simply an ethnographic locale where people do things, and there was inadequate attention in conceptualizing it as something other than a physical setting (Rodman, 1992). However, as mentioned before, this has been started to change in the last decades, and anthropologists have increasingly been emphasizing that place is not a basic container of social activity but is a product of that social activity; it is socially constructed, contested and in flux. This critique has come along with an interrogation of the basic assumptions informing the "national order of things" (Malkki, 1995).

In a world of nation-states, there is a widely held assumption that supposes a natural link between people and places, and a highly territorialized identity deriving from that (Malkki, 1992). Historically, taken for granted conceptions found both in commonsensical views and in academic research, are grounded upon an idea of a world consisting of discrete units with their spatially bounded, unique cultures and peoples. In fact, this vision reflects itself in many areas of our daily lives and habits, such as in the language; in the use of arborescent metaphors of "rootedness" or "uprootedness" (Malkki, 1992), or, in the routinely use of the words of "culture" and "society" together with the names of nation-states (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

Where an image of the world as divided into territorial segments each incorporating its own distinct society and culture prevails as a given, this means, there is a place for every person; where he or she naturally belongs. Moreover, when people and cultures are seen as intrinsically belonging to particular places, this implies that places are fixed locations with an unchanging character (Massey, 1994, as cited in Brun, 2001). This idea of steady and unique places informs the nationalist views suggesting the nation-states are homogenous entities with their homogenous peoples and cultures. However, the premise of isomorphism of space, place, society and culture generates important problems (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

One of the areas, where the consequences of this premise become most deep-reaching is migration. Because, in this context, immigration policy is just a matter of to what extent we should try to maintain this natural order, and immigration prohibitions are a rather minor issue in this sense (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Furthermore, when it comes to forced migration, the way displaced persons are viewed and represented in addition to the solutions formulated for displacement, are highly connected with this essentialist notion of place. From this perspective, construction of the displaced persons as a "problem" becomes inevitable.

When people flee their places of residence and become refugees, then, this means that they are suddenly torn loose from culture, they become powerless and lose their identity (Brun, 2001). Where identities seen as "naturally" gained as a result of "natural" place attachment, to be deprived of that identity conveys "loss of some part of one's very humanity" (Turton, 1996, as cited in Kibreab, 1999), and a view of territorial displacement as pathological is enabled (Malkki, 1992). In respect to the solutions formulated for the "refugee problem", to consider refugees as "out of place" imply that they reside temporarily in the places of arrival, and that they can never belong there, hence, the best solution to their displacement would be ending their refugee status by either integration, relocation or repatriation (Brun, 2001).

This criticism of fixed notions of space, place, and identity is forwarded in relation with the broader scholarly discussions regarding our rapidly mobile contemporary age. Considering increasing mobility of goods, images, capital and people, with the innovations in communication and transportation technologies in the contemporary era– the phenomenon which is referred to as globalization- this debate does not come as a surprise, as globalization has significantly changed the meaning and experience of place and identity for people. Today, world cannot be easily thought of as consisting of clearly demarcated culturally distinct areas, whilst movement has brought most isolated areas of the world into a global network of connections. Differently from the premodern era, where local opportunities and constraints were more determining forces on the ways people adapted to their world, modernity and globalization destabilized the locally guided meanings, and identities (Williams, 2002), as well as, the localities themselves. The presumed isomorphism of space, place, society and culture has been unsettled as people are, more and more, now living out of their places of origin, remembering or imagining places of belonging from far, and developing multiple place attachments.

There is a widespread argument endorsing the idea that mobility in its all forms, is inherently progressive (Morley, 2001). The globalization process has been celebrated by some strands of the postmodern literature suggesting the deterritorialization of identities and thus, people's becoming citizens of a deterritorialized world (Kibreab, 1999). The figures of refugee, exile and migrant are used as metaphors in this literature in order to describe the condition of life where boundaries and borders supposedly have lost their significance, and a general sense of "uprootedness" is the defining component of an age of hypermobility. However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that, although globalization process has unsettled the territorially based identities to some extent, as Kibreab (1999) states, territory still remains as the fundamental source of rights and membership. In fact, in many cases,

globalization made place-based identities more rather than less important for individuals. The uncertainties and instabilities globalization had brought, led people to regressive forms of closure and instigated revived nationalisms and xenophobia targeting at newcomers, foreigners and outsiders (Morley, 2001) Geschiere and Meyer (1998), draw attention this paradoxical articulation of globalization, the tension between "global flows" and "cultural closure", emphasizing that the possible equation of the notion with the disappearance of boundaries is highly misleading.

It is worth noting here that the globalization process unfolds within, and as an imperative of global capitalist economy. Therefore, while it promotes the integration of international markets, and movement of the powerful elites, it does not come along with the opening of the borders for the disenfranchised who experience the most disruptive consequences of it. Harvey (2001) contends that globalization is not a new phenomenon, in fact, it has been going on at least for many centuries now. According to him, contemporary globalization is driven by the inner crises tendencies of capitalism; by its search for a "spatial fix" to these tendencies, which in result, leads to its geographical expansion globally, and a worldwide capitalist production and reconstruction of space. As a result, rapid capitalist globalization of the world economy brought about the production of new forms of "uneven geographical development" (Harvey, 2001) of parts of the world, and "new technologies of labor arbitrage" (Kirtsoglou & Tsimouris, 2016).

Intensifying socio-economic differentials together with the increasing social, technological, and cultural links between countries have prompted people to migrate; however, movements of people from the poverty-stricken parts of the world into the territories of more prosperous states have been increasingly obstructed at the same time. In this setting, the migrant, the refugee, the *sans papier* constructed as the Janus face of her globalized Other- the tourist, the businessperson, the international artists, the academic- and who is allowed or who is denied

mobility, under which circumstances become closely associated with contemporary neoliberal condition (Kirtsoglou & Tsimouris, 2016). Nevertheless, people from regions of the world that is devastated by conflicts, wars, poverty and natural disasters continue to migrating, starting new lives, making new homes in a search for dignified and safer life conditions.

4.1.1 Home

Along with place, there has been an increased interest in the notion of home in social sciences (Ward, 2003). Anthropologists as well as social scientists from other fields, have started to develop a more fluid and dynamic conceptualization of home in opposition to its exclusively static understandings. As globalization processes have unsettled the traditional ideas of home -home as perceived places of belonging: i.e., home, hometown, homeland- Morley (2001) argues that there is a need to develop a new understanding of the idea of home.

The notion of home has long served as the geographical center from where to build a self-identity (Williams & McIntyre, 2001). However, in a world of perpetual movement, where people are increasingly mobile, and places are rapidly changing, home might cease to represent a singular or a particular location. For many, home might be experienced "on the move and in the mind" as much as sedentarily and physically (Ward, 2003). An evident example to this could be the case of transnational migrants and diasporas feeling connections to more than one location, or perhaps feeling being-at home at multiple places. Furthermore, studies with the displaced show how people can invent homes or homelands through the memories of and claims on places in the absence of a territorial base (see Malkki, 1995)

 Home is a complex and multifaceted notion, and it might, from a single building to a specific geographical location, signal various sites for individuals. Home has been associated with a variety of concepts in the literature such as house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying (Mallet, 2004). Moreover, the notions of being at home, making home and ideal home have

been examined by several authors. One of the points in respect to home highlighted in the relevant literature, is its characteristic of being imbued with affections. In this sense, home differs from house. Even though in many cases the two concepts are used interchangeably, what separates the two is that the idea and the imaginary of home are penetrated by feelings. Thus, home is not merely a house; a dwelling or a shelter, but it is composed by the relation of the material and the affective.

Home and place are interconnected notions. According to Easthope (2004) home is first and foremost a special kind of place, which holds significant social, psychological, and emotive meaning for individuals and groups. The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1991) describes home as a localizable idea. In her view, "home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space…home starts by bringing some space under control." Moreover, beyond this spatial aspect, home has a temporality. Douglas (1991) points out that home is not only a space but it has some structure in time. It involves regular patterns of activity, and "an organization of space over time" (Douglas, 1991).

Much scholarly work and policy design with regard to the displaced persons incorporate an understanding of home which is tightly linked with homeland. However, when refugees' subjective experiences of home are considered, a more complex picture of home than that of typical of methodological nationalism emerges (Taylor, 2013). Displacement may complicate the understandings of home, as what it means to be at home for the displaced may become associated with multiple sites and temporalities. Facing with the task of nurturing a new sense of home in an unfamiliar and at times in a hostile environment, displaced people most often interconnect their past experiences and future expectations while undertaking home-building practices in the present. Quite often the displaced persons long for their home in the past, and picture home in the future through past experiences (Brun & Fabos, 2015). For example, Hage (2010) shows how Lebanese migrants adopted their nostalgic feelings to engage in home-

building in Australia. He argues that nostalgic feelings guide home-building practices in the present, because one seeks to foster the kind of homely feeling he or she knows.

Material objects and practical habits are central in producing and reproducing a sense of homeliness; especially in situations of displacement they might take on an important role in home-making practices. Materiality such as objects, furniture, food habits and decoration become significant in sustaining a sense of belonging and identity in new contexts, but also, for producing new belongings. They are important in that they provide a sense of spatiotemporal continuity with the pre-exile life, hence, facilitate displaced people's adjustment to their new environment, but also, they indicate the agency of the displaced as they work hard to make best of their circumstances (Dudley, 2008)

Dossa and Golubovic (2019) conceptualize home-making in the displacement context as a "form of cultural labor that exemplifies the agency, innovation, and resilience of the displaced persons" (p. 171). It is crucial to pay attention to the home-making practices of refugees, in order to have a more complete understanding of the experience of the displaced. Turton (2005) contends that displacement is not only about the loss and pain, but also, about the struggle of making a place in the world. According to him, not talking about the work of producing home, but focusing only on the loss of home and pain, would be to see refugees as "passive victims" rather than seeing them as social agents. Moreover, this might obstruct our ability "to identify with the suffering stranger, to see him or her as an ordinary person, a person like us, and therefore a potential neighbor in *our* neighborhood" (Turton, 2005, p. 17).

There is a fundamental political dimension to the notion of home. Alexander et al. (2018) points out that although in modernist, bourgeois thinking home is thought as a private space of family and social relations which is separate from the public sphere of the politics and the market, home is actually a nexus of affective and politico-economic domains. According to the authors home is a paradigmatic case where political economy intersects with everyday

moralities and affect. This modernist idea of home can be read in line with the modern understandings of property ownership. In modernity property is understood as exclusive, commodifiable, and individual (Edgeworth, 1989). This modern concept of property therefore goes along with the understanding of home as a private and politically neutral space of the nuclear family.

In the same vein, while conventionally home is conflated with the feelings of security, intimacy, and comfort; in reality home, most often, is the place wherein gendered, racial and class hierarchies and socioeconomic inequalities are maintained and reproduced. Feminist theorizations of home showed how home might become a domain of alienation and exploitation rather than of positive emotions. Taking into consideration of the widespread abuse women are exposed to at their homes, and the exploitation of their domestic labor, feminist theories argue that home can be a site where mirrors and perpetuates the broader power relations in society. Still, they also point out that, home may become a site of contestation and resistance to these power relations as well.

 All in all, the meaning and function of home are dependent on its context, and in a hostile social environment home may take on a more significant role (Morley, 2000). For instance, Bell Hooks (1990) notes the crucial role "homeplace" historically played for African-Americans in the United States, for having an autonomous space where they do not directly encounter with racist aggression. As a space for organizing and for political solidarity among African-Americans, the home had an important part in creating a "community of resistance". In this sense, the author views "homeplace" as a site where social inequalities can be challenged, and describe it "as a site of resistance". The thesis takes the author's understanding of home as a site of resistance and political possibility, as a base in its research into the refugee housing squats.

Similarly with the case Bell Hooks (1990) describes, the refugee housing squats provided spaces for organization and development of solidarity relations between activists and refugees. And through the establishment of solidarity relations, activists and refugees created communities within these "homeplaces" that resisted to the repressive immigration policies of the Greek state and the EU, as well as to anti-immigrant sentiments and attitudes. Since solidarity has such a central place in these squatting projects, examining its meanings and uses in relation to migrant activism becomes crucial for the purposes of the thesis.

4.2 Migrant Solidarity Activism

 In the recent decade, the concept of solidarity has become pronounced very often in relation to migration by a wide range of actors. Especially with the beginning of the "refugee crisis" in 2015, from grassroot activists to the officials of the European Union, solidarity was adopted frequently to characterize a variety of practices, discourses and positionalities. However, the meaning of solidarity and how solidarity is enacted are rarely elaborated. As a concept which has come to be occupying such a central role in the migration field, what does solidarity signify? And how is it enacted?

Solidarity signifies different meanings to different actors, and it might take a variety of forms in diverse contexts. In the context of the recent decades' refugee mobilities, solidarity with refugees might mean, for instance, helping refugees in transit from one point to another, distribution of materials, or sharing of information to facilitate their journeys. Nevertheless, in the same context, at the scale of the European Union, the same word solidarity is often used on a state-based logics, and in terms of national interests. In fact, much research in migration scholarship, focuses on the concept of solidarity as a "burden-sharing" among the member states, referring to the refugee intake carried out by each state (Bauder, 2020). Even anti-immigrant, far right, nationalist movements sometimes employ the term solidarity to define

their exclusionary and discriminatory acts against immigrants. (See, for example, Hogar Social Madrid in Agustin & Jorgensen, 2019) All these varieties in the use of solidarity, by a wide spectrum of political actors, points out that solidarity itself is a battlefield (Agustin & Jorgensen, 2019), and it reflects the difficulty of defining the term neatly from a certain point of view which would apply to the other views and uses of it.

While attempting to conceptualize solidarity in the immigration context, the thesis draws upon David Featherstone's (2012) account of solidarity elaborated in his influential book *Solidarity: Hidden histories and geographies of internationalism*. Featherstone (2012) understands solidarity primarily as a transformative political relation. Focusing on the solidarities created from below, he emphasizes that solidarity is a fundamental practice of the political left, radical political and social movements. According to him, solidarities are inventive of new ways of relating, new ways of connecting places, and new ways of "being in the world" (Featherstone, 2012). They are not "given", not about linking pre-existing communities and identities, but are constructed through actions, movements and agency, and work through negotiation and re-negotiation of various forms of political identifications. They have a potency to reshape the world in more equal and just terms by challenging inequalities and oppression.

It is important to investigate the emic meanings of solidarity within the context of austerity-ridden Greece, in order to better understand solidarity discourses and practices with refugees that emerged in the course of so-called refugee crisis in the country. As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, in the post-2010 period of the economic and humanitarian crisis, solidarity has gained an unprecedented prominence in Greece (Douzina-Bakalaki, 2017). While in the late twentieth century Greece, solidarity was mostly associated with anarchist and anti-authoritarian movements, with the arrival of immigrants and refugees and the introduction of austerity measures after the debt crisis, solidarity has gained a new relevance and become

increasingly employed to describe a wider array of progressive, antisystemic action (Rozakou, 2018; Rakopoulos, 2018, as cited in Theodossopoulos, 2020). Rozakou (2018) notes how the word *allileggios* (solidarian), a neologism, has turned from adjective to a noun in recent years in Greece; signaling the radicalization of solidarity in the austerity setting and the flourishment of solidarity.

The principles of egalitarianism, horizontality, and counter-hegemony characterized the discourses and practices of the majority of solidarity initiatives, groups and networks formed as a response to austerity politics in Greece, and participants often distinguished solidarity work from other modes of assistance like humanitarianism, charity and philanthropy. People who were engaged in these groups emphasized their grassroots, informal, non-professional character, opposing the solidarity work to the professionalized and formal work of NGOs and non-profits. This demarcation is consistent with the surfacing of people's distrust in institutions, and rise of new forms of sociality in the austerity setting. Theodossopoulos (2020) points out that the revived popularity of the concept of solidarity among Greek activists shows their motive to circumvent inflexibility of formal institutions and hierarchies of giving that underlie the humanitarian aid. In a similar manner, through the case studies of anti-middleman food distribution networks which sprung up following the debt crisis, Rakopoulos (2015) demonstrates that what distinguished these grassroots solidarity networks from the official NGOs was their incorporation of sociality into their activity; the participants of these networks drew on intimate relations of the everyday in order to mobilize individuals and groups, something seems lacking in the activities of the NGOs.

Similarly with the solidarity initiatives spread during the financial crisis in Greece, grassroots pro-immigrant solidarity groups also often distanced themselves from professional humanitarian organizations, philanthropy and charity. Humanitarian responses to displacement by the states, international and national NGOs, have long been criticized by the

scholars and activists, for establishing hierarchical care-control relations with refugees and ignoring their agency by reducing them to beings without any political and social agency- to "bare life" [4](Agamben, 1995/1998). Malkki (1996) shows how humanitarian representational practices and standardized interventions, produce refugees as a universal and dehistoricized category of humanity. She argues that the bureaucratized humanitarian interventions abstract displaced people's predicament from specific political, historical, and cultural contexts. The dehistoricizing universalism of this mode of humanitarianism tends to silence displaced people. Their narratives lose its importance, they stop being specific persons and become pure victims. In fact, anthropologists have shown how sometimes bodies of refugees are seen as more reliable sources than their narratives in the humanitarian field (see, for example, Malkki 1996). Furthermore, humanitarian work is denounced for it perpetuates clear-cut distinctions between migrants constructed by the state and the global refugee regime through the use of bureaucratic statuses such as refugee, asylum seeker, economic migrant and so on. Through this scheme, demonstrating vulnerability and victimhood become the criteria upon which assistance is provided. Application of these distinctions, result in the generation of the frames of "deservingness" which do not reflect the complex realities of the migration processes.

On the contrary to top-down logics of humanitarianism and its depoliticizing effects, contentious solidarity practices from below aim at establishing lateral and anti-hierarchical relations between its participants, apart from to what extent they could realize this ambition. Distribution of material aid, for instance, which is at the core of humanitarian interventions, was at times looked upon with suspicion by the participants of grassroot solidarity initiatives

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[4] Drawing on the distinction between the words *zoe* and *bios* in Ancient Greek, which in contemporary European languages mean life, Agamben (1995/1998) distinguishes political and social life in a society (*bios*), from the simple fact of living or *bare life* (*zoe*). According to Agamben's theory, the figure of refugee exemplifies the workings of contemporary sovereign power, and is paradigmatic of "bare life". The concept is frequently used in migration literature to criticize the view of refugees simply as bodies without any political and social agency.

in Greece, and caused doubt and dispute among solidarians for the hierarchies of giving implicit in it. In addition, it produced a dilemma with regard to the risk of perpetuating existing inequalities by ameliorating their effects. In this respect, Cabot (2016) writes how participants of social solidarity clinics and pharmacies that emerged following the debt crisis, expressed an awareness of this "two-facedness" of solidarity: while solidarity inspired collective action, at the same time it was tightly tied to austerity and neoliberalism. Her study shows how the participants of these networks described their solidarity efforts as the other side of the crisis, and rather than seeing solidarity as a remedy to the crisis or a radical break from the dominant inequalities, they located it within the space of neoliberalism.

A point worth mentioning concerning solidarity with immigrants and refugees is that, it challenged hospitality as an established way of dealing with alterity in the Greek society (Rozakou, 2018). Hospitality -in Greek *filoxenia* literally meaning love (*filia*) of the stranger (*xenos*)- is usually idealized as a practice of generosity and openness toward the stranger, and is stereotypically produced as a national virtue in Greece (Rozakou, 2012). Hospitality is also central to how the Greek state represents itself. It is connected with the construction of the nation-state and ethnocultural similarity, which define cultural difference as a threat (Papataxiarchis, 2006, as cited in Rozakou, 2012) The extensive body of the literature on hospitality showed that on the contrary to its widespread popular perception as a positive attitude toward the stranger, how in reality hospitality can imply hierarchical inclusion of the guest into the social world of the host. It might figure as a way of controlling the stranger; the threatening difference "Other" represents. It sets rules and boundaries between outsiders and insiders, and attributes social and political agency solely to the host (Rozakou, 2012).

 The notion of hospitality is used frequently in relation to immigration, not only in Greece but in all over Europe, and metaphors of the host and the guest informed the public, media and political discourses around migrants as well as the logic of migration management. Through

host-guest paradigm, the alterity of the migrant/refugee is produced and dealt with. Pointing out the naturalized paradigm of migrant/refugee as a guest, and the nation as a host Rosello (2001) argues: "The vision of the immigrant as a guest is a metaphor that has forgotten that it is a metaphor" (as cited in Rozakou, 2012). Therefore, both hospitality and solidarity are a key "mode of engagement with an 'other'" (Papataxiarchis, 2016b), however, in contrast to asymmetrical power relations inherent in hospitality, solidarity emphasizes horizontal and anti-hierarchical connections.

 Nevertheless, like hospitality, solidarity should not be taken for granted, but it must be situated historically and spatially; in the context of the broader power relations. In some cases, contrary to forming equal relations solidarity might maintain existing hierarchies and even extend ongoing privileges. Take for example women's exclusion from some forms of labor organizing (Mohanty, 2003, as cited in Featherstone, 2012). Therefore, solidarity is "without guarantees" (Featherstone, 2012), conflictual and in constant resignification.

Overall, this chapter showed, as Smith (1994) contends, while acceleration of global flows destabilized once taken for granted boundaries differentiating states, ethnicities, culture and communities; the blurring of these boundaries at the same time created new social spaces of daily life and identity formation, new forms of social and political agency and of resistance. The thesis adds to that, new spaces of solidarity. And as one of those spaces of solidarity, it focuses on the Athenian refugee housing squats.

5. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the cases of the thesis will be presented and discussed. The cases of the thesis consist of two self-organized refugee housing squats that were established in Athens by solidarity activists and migrants in the years of 2015 and 2016. The themes chosen for the analysis were discussed in the theoretical chapter of the thesis (see Chapter 4).

5.1. Case study I: Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26

> It's [Housing Squat Notara 26] infused inside me so much that it's part of me. It's not a squat, it's the people inside. The residents and the people in solidarity. Sometimes it feels more home than my own home. . . . The people who live here call it "our home", and that's what it is – it's home away from home. (*Voices of Notara Part 8*, 2019)

Sara Ahmed (1999) argues that the lived experience of being-at home implies that "the subject and the space leak into each other; *they inhabit each other*." According to her, being at home is like inhabiting a second skin: a skin which does not only contain the subject but also allows the subject to be touched and to touch the world. The remarks of a solidarian who is involved in the Housing Squat Notara 26 remind this analogy drawn by Ahmed (1999). They indicate how the squat beyond fulfilling the need for a shelter, became a homely space for its residents and activists; a space that became a part of their subjectivities. A space of resistance has turned into a "homeplace", and vice versa. Similarly with the expressions of the solidarian quoted above, in their interviews with researchers and journalists, several residents of Athens' refugee squats described their experiences and feelings of those places with the use of concepts of home, family and community. Notara 26 constituted the first and a prominent example of those refugee housing squats.

Many of refugees passing through Athens during the year of 2015, were compelled to sleep on the streets or in makeshifts camps, in poor conditions. In this period, some solidarity activists were going to the areas where migrants gather, in order to support them by providing food, clothing, information and so on. As winter was approaching, groups of anti-authoritarians and anarchists decided to occupy a disused building with the purpose of turning

it into a temporary housing space for refugees and immigrants. On 25 September 2015, in the neighborhood of Exarcheia, activists occupied a vacant five-storey building, which was a former tax administration office belonging to the Ministry of Labour, and Greece's first housing squat for refugees and immigrants was born. The building has been functioning as a self-managed refugee shelter and housed more 9,000 refugees and migrants from over 15 countries since then. Addressing to the refugees arriving at Notara 26, activists write in a statement:

> We criticize and resist against the inhumane and unjust anti-immigration policies – practices of both Greece and the EU. For that matter, we have taken the initiative to occupy this public building on Notara 26 and create an open, self- organized and supportive housing facility with no interest neither to replace state responsibilities nor emerge as "goodwill" philanthropists. Instead, our aim is to show the indifference and hypocrisy of both the Greek and European authorities by standing by your side and actively expressing our solidarity through the operation of this housing squat… (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26, 2016)

The squat operates on the principles of self-organization and anti-authoritarianism (Strickland, 2017a). It does not accept any support from the State and NGOs, this type of aid is categorically refused and condemned by the members of the squat (Gavroche, 2016); the squat relies solely on volunteer work and donations from the solidarity groups and individuals who would like to contribute. In fact, the community of Notara 26 (2016) declares: "This project does not stand for philanthropy, state or private, but rather for a self-organized solidarity project, wherein locals and refugees-immigrants decide together." Consistently with the members of the grassroot solidarity initiatives emerged in the context of austerity-ridden Greece, the difference of solidarity work from charity and philanthropy features also accounts

of the squatters, as it can be seen in their statements. Underscoring the lateral and anti-hierarchical relations of solidarity, the squatters strictly distinguished themselves from these forms of extra-state assistance.

The refugees and immigrants who live in Notara 26 are called as 'residents', while volunteers who help are called 'solidarians'; none of the solidarians live in the building (Georgiades, 2018). Decisions regarding the management of the squat are taken through assemblies that grounded upon direct democracy and consensus, with the participation of the residents and the solidarians. In addition, working groups are created for the daily organization of the space, for night shifts, cleaning, and cooking. The building incorporates rooms where migrants sleep in, showers, a laundry room, a storage room, children's playroom, and a medical doctor's office. The food for the residents is prepared by the solidarity kitchen projects in Athens, and is cooked at several nearby places. The medical office in the squat is run through the support of the doctors and nurses on a voluntary basis. There are also volunteer translators helping with the communication among the residents and activists during the assemblies. In an interview, a member of the squat emphasizes the key role the translators play, by stating that many aspects of the project and the assemblies might have not been realized without the necessary and everyday participation of the translators (Tsirmpas, 2016). Because of the wide range of the languages spoken at Notara 26, sometimes people had to wait for a sentence to be translated into as many as six languages during the assemblies (Georgiades, 2018).

Around a hundred residents live in the squat at any given time. Priority is given to families and minors; legal status is not a criterion upon which the accommodation is provided. There have been two different periods in terms of housing at Notara 26 (Georgiades, 2018). Initially, refugees who were passing through Athens on their way to northern borders, were staying for a few days at the squat before they continue to their journey. After the neighboring Balkan countries closed their borders, some of the residents have started to stay for longer terms.

Activists mention that after the squat stopped being a transit point for its residents, the residents become more involved in the decision-making processes.

Solidarians sometimes go on activities together with the residents, such as playing sports, getting food or going to beach (Georgiades, 2020). In addition, they organize parties and celebrations together. Some of these celebrations included the New Year's Eve, Newroz, and the anniversaries of the founding of the squat. A squatter says that the squat has also hosted many projects and initiatives, such as assembly of the LGBTQI refugees, and groups for women's empowerment, language lessons, children's activities, collective kitchens, photography, dance, and theatre among other things (*Voices of Notara Part 3*, 2019). The community of Notara 26 organizes and attends demonstrations and political events, whether or not directly related to migration issues. From taking part in the feminist marches on 8th of March, to organizing demonstrations against evictions of the squats; activists and residents of Notara 26 were engaged in various political actions.

In the early morning of 24 August 2016, the squat was attacked with arson by a neo-Nazi group calling themselves Radical Autonomous Fighters of National Socialism, which claimed the attack later in a 15-minute-long video they posted involving Islamophobic, anti-immigrant rhetoric and the moment of the arson attack on Notara (Lihtenvalner, 2019). Leaving all the supplies in the storage, the first and partially the second floor of the building badly burned, the attack caused heavy material damage, but thanks to quick response of the people who were responsible of the night-shift that day, none of the residents got injured. There were 130 refugees staying at the squat at that time, and in another scenario, the attack could have killed them. Following the attack, there was so much support both from local and international solidarity groups, in terms of funding and helping with the repairment of the fire-damaged building, the squat could be opened again after remaining closed for a very short time. The squat is part of a widespread solidarity network, both locally and internationally, and had

connections with other refugee housing squats in Exarcheia. For instance, just after the firebombing attack, residents of a nearby refugee housing squat came to help with extinguishing the blaze and in the days followed, the residents of the squats together with the Greek volunteers repaired the damaged storage (Zaman, 2019).

Considering all the above, it is evident that the squat forms a counter-example of other type of accommodation provided by the state and NGOs. In fact, contestation against the official camps and against the employment of camps as a means of sheltering refugees in general, composed an important aspect of the political program of the squatters; not only from Notara 26 but also from other refugee housing squats, residents and solidarians frequently forwarded a critique of the camps in their statements. Notara 26 repeatedly refers to official camps as "concentration camps", and demands the closure of all camps (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26, n.d.). On the contrary of the exclusionary spatial regulations and practices that push refugees into invisibility, through the act of squatting, the squatters aimed at reclaiming refugees' visibility and defended the idea of co-existence of refugees, immigrants, and locals. In this sense, what the squatters did as a protest, proved that contested place making- in this case home making- might challenge unjust and discriminatory place-making practices.

 Nowadays, the squat remains as the last political refugee housing squat in the area, and is under the threat of eviction since an ultimatum issued by the government for all the squats in the country to be evacuated, has already expired (see Chapter 3). In fact, the electricity of the building has been cut off by the government several times, and the squatters reported that they were frequently exposed to verbal threats and slurs by the police patrols in the area. However, solidarians and residents believe that even though the squat might be evicted someday, the community they formed through this housing squat will continue to exist:

> The building is a building. The community is ingrained in us and cannot be evacuated. . . .
> It's no coincidence that asylum seekers who lived in Notara and left for a Western
> European country still contact us or once they get their new passport, they try to ensure
> that the first trip they will make to be here. (Louka, 2019)

Many migrants who lived in Athens' refugee housing squats were referring to them as home even after they left Greece and settled in other countries in Europe. Some former residents of Notara 26 write "…you will be always my family" or express their hope to come back to meet "Notara's big family" in their messages to the squatters (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26, 2021). This might give a hint about how place-making is a socio-spatial process; solidarity relations constituted the defining characteristic of this refugee housing squat, and they gave rise to the feelings of being at home, community and belonging which were expressed here by the residents in a rather conventional way through the concept of "family".

5.2 Case study II: Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza

Similarly with the words of the former residents of Notara 26, a resident of City Plaza at the time tells to an interviewer that "A small society, a big family. That's what we are.", and a former resident of the squat writes "I live in France now, but I will try to come back home, and the City Plaza is my home." (Camilli, 2017). In its 36 months of operation, Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza became home for more than 2500 refugees from 13 different countries. Although there was a dozen of other squats in Athens at its time, City Plaza was the most prominent among them, as it was studied and visited by several academics, covered by various internationally renowned newspapers and magazines such as Time, Al Jazeera and the New York Times. Many activists and volunteers from all over Europe travelled to Athens either for visiting or staying there in order contribute to the project.

   On 22 April 2016, the Solidarity Initiative to Economic and Political Refugees, a coalition of anti-racist and left groups and individuals, occupied an abandoned hotel in a central neighborhood of Athens, with the aim of transforming it into a living space for refugees. The occupation had come just after, and as a response to the EU-Turkey deal which was signed on 18 March 2016. Many refugees who were stranded in Greece after the deal, were settled in state-run camps which are located on the outskirts of the cities, while many others become homeless sleeping outdoors at squares and parks in the city centers. Consequently, housing started to emerge as an urgent need.

   After the company managing it went bankrupt, the hotel City Plaza was shut down, and not used since 2010 until its occupation. The hotel is situated in downtown Athens, next to Victoria Square and Agios Panteleimonas Square. The Victoria Square has become a meeting and gathering place for migrants since 2015, and many times was transformed into an informal migrant shelter. However, the area is considered unsafe for the migrants as the stronghold of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn, Agios Panteleimonas Square is nearby. It is a part of city where would seem particularly unwelcoming to a squatted migrant housing project (Kotronaki, 2018). Beginning in 2004, the members of the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn claimed control of the area by undertaking systematic attacks against immigrants.

The hotel City Plaza consists of a seven-floor building, which incorporates private rooms with bathrooms and balconies where mostly refugee families, but also either single refugee men or women, and volunteers lived in. It had common spaces: a café, a dining room, a kitchen, a storage space of basic personal hygiene items, an assembly hall, a children's room, two schoolrooms, a woman's space and a healthcare clinic (Lafazani, 2017). The residents of City Plaza came from several different nationalities (Afghans, Kurds, Syrians, Iranians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Pakistanis), spoke various languages and had different backgrounds, needs,

aspirations, and future plans. At each period around 350-400 refugees and 30-40 solidarity activists were residing at City Plaza (Lafazani, 2021).

City Plaza project was based on principles of self-organization and political autonomy (Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza, 2016). It has been run and maintained by its residents; refugees, solidarity activists, and volunteers, without relying on any funds from the State and the NGOs. It was entirely depended on the donations from people and solidarity groups. Several solidarity initiatives, which were part of the previous social solidarity structures formed in the context of austerity, were also involved in providing for the necessary consumable items (Kotronaki, 2018).

The decision to occupy the specific building was based on two parameters (Lafazani, 2021). Both the morphology of the building, and the neighborhood in which it is located motivated activists to choose Hotel City Plaza for their project. Since it was a former hotel and had individual rooms with a closing door, a private bathroom, a wardrobe and a balcony; it was convenient for offering privacy to its residents. The other factor effective in the choice of the building, was the activists' aim of reclaiming the space against the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn and the extreme right which were active in the neighborhood.

The daily tasks for the functioning of the squat were being carried out by working groups created by the members of City Plaza; these working groups were responsible for reception, education, children's activities, health center, kitchen, security, finances, cleaning, communication, and women's space. Organization of everyday life in the squat was based on the decisions taken during the assemblies with the participation of residents, activists and volunteers, together with smaller group meetings. There were two main assemblies which worked as instruments of decision-making: 'House Assembly' gathered once every two weeks, and regarded the issues relating to the space's management, and a smaller assembly which was taking place weekly and usually attended by a smaller group of people who was

part of the squat for a longer time (Lafazani, 2017). The latter was discussing the issues beyond the daily management, with regard to sociopolitical context surrounding the refugee arrivals and was organizing solidarity activities and political action (Katrini, 2020). The decisions taken by the assemblies were based on consensus between participants.

In a conversation with Kiddey (2020), one of the founding activists Nasim Lomani, says that everyone was welcomed at City Plaza as long as they were following a few strict rules: no sexism, racism or abuse of any kind was allowed. Refugees arriving at City Plaza were informed about the differences of the project from camps and the accommodation provided by the State or NGOs, and the obligation to participate and take responsibilities actively in running the place. Residents were expected to take shifts for the contribution in the everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, maintenance of the building, and in various other domestic jobs. For instance, refugees, activists and volunteers were cooking together three meals a day on shifts, for 400 people residing in the squat.

The community of City Plaza sometimes organized public celebrations and artistic performances in Victoria Square and the surrounding areas, and at other times it participated in the events organized by other social actors; some of these included anniversaries of the student uprising of Polytechnio, Christmas and Clean Monday (Kotronaki, 2018). The residents and volunteers organized activities such as film screenings, day trips to historic city center, football matches, and parties (Koptyaeva, 2017). In the beginning, not everybody in the neighborhood where City Plaza is situated had welcomed the squat, but by time neighbors' reactions had changed towards the activists and residents. Pointing out this change in the attitude of the locals Nasim says that many of the people who were worried about refugees coming to the area and the hotel in the beginning, started to bring donations such as pasta, sugar, and toilet paper for the residents. (Vehkasalo, 2019). Activists in City Plaza were

seeking communication with the local community, and they invited locals to celebrations and discussions they organized.

An emphasis on the common struggles of migrants and locals can be found in the statements of the both squats that are examined in this thesis. In the case of City Plaza, this was more elaborately articulated. City Plaza (2019) defined one of its two key goals as: "to function as a center of struggle in which political and social demands by migrants and locals will interweave and complement each other". Their aim of creating a hub for the common struggles of migrants and locals was also apparent in a case where the former hotel employees and the squatters collaborated with each other. After the hotel went bankrupt, former hotel employees whose wages were not paid by the owner of the hotel, were granted the ownership of the mobile equipment such as furniture and kitchen equipment via a court order as compensation for their unpaid wages (Squire, 2018). After the occupation of the hotel by the activists, the former employees left this equipment there for the use of the residents and solidarians as an expression of their support. Similarly, in order to support the former employees, the squatters organized a fundraising campaign for them in April 2017 (Strickland, 2017b). All in all, it can be said that the main motto of the initiative was realized: "We live together, we work together, and we struggle together!"

Central locations of Notara and City Plaza chosen intentionally by the squatters, their proximity to the services and amenities on the contrary of the remote locations of state and NGO-run camps, allowed refugees' and migrants' inclusion in the urban fabric. For instance, despite facing several challenges, City Plaza initiative enrolled children living in the squat to the public schools (Katrini, 2020). Hence, these squats did not only meet a practical need by housing refugees and migrants, but also reclaimed several aspects of everyday life (Tsavdaroglou, 2018). In fact, City Plaza members drew attention to that segregation of the refugees at camps in remote areas far from cities and in appalling conditions does not take

place as a last resort due to not having an alternative during the times of "crisis" and "emergency", but it is an intentional act by the state and immigration management authorities. Lafazani (2017) writes that the fact that solidarians and refugees established one of the best housing spaces for refugees in Greece (Hotel City Plaza), without relying on any institutional funding or "specialists", but solely on limited resources through donations, points out that the camps are a political choice. The stark difference between the two place-making practices demonstrate that places are not given, and an alternative, a more progressive politics of place is possible.

City Plaza closed voluntarily in July 2019 due to lack of material resources and commitment (Vehkasalo, 2019). Remaining residents living in City Plaza were moved to safe housing within the city, and the keys was handed to the hotel's former employees who owns the mobile equipment in the hotel, yet, left it there from the beginning of the initiative in order to support it.

5.3 Discussion

Through the case studies a point coming into attention is that these squats differ highly from the NGO and state-run refugee accommodation. In contrast to state-run refugee camps where residents are separated accordingly with their nationalities, in the squats people coming from various nationalities and backgrounds were living together. In fact, volunteers at City Plaza expressed the importance of collaboration of people from different backgrounds and countries in every task in the squat (Vehkasalo, 2019). Moreover, rooms and beds at City Plaza were allocated in a way that guarantee heterogeneity, a factor that was considered on a floor basis as well (Scampoli & Cardinali, 2017a). In an interview, an activist from the squat mentions the fact that, where in refugee camps inter-ethnic conflicts constitute a very big problem, they never had any fight at City Plaza (Scampoli & Cardinali, 2017b).

A crucial aspect through which self-organized housing squats constituted a vital alternative to the government- and NGO- run camps, was the greater autonomy refugees had in respect to the essentials of their everyday life. Refugees and migrants residing there had a say on the decisions regarding their own life conditions. Unlike camps, they did not have to wait in queues for hours just to use the facilities, or to receive food. The residents of these squats were neither defined with and categorized according to their vulnerability, nor to their legal status, to be able to have access to resources fundamental for their psychosocial well-being, which is the dominant practice carried out through bureaucratic mechanisms of the state and humanitarian organizations. They were not seen as merely passive recipients of aid. Rather, they were active participants with responsibilities in a community.

The squats contradicted logics and metaphors of hospitality adopted in relation to migration by public, media and politicians, and by humanitarian organizations and the state. Through creation of cohabitation projects, the squatters subverted the hospitality frames which temporally and conditionally incorporate the stranger into the social world of the host. Hospitality, by establishing relations of power and control over the stranger, asserts national frameworks of belonging and sovereignty. As hosting occurs in a 'home' (Harney, 2017), the 'homes' created by the solidarians and immigrants challenged the code of hospitality in that they did not ascribe power over space, political and social agency, solely to a certain predefined group which was seen as the "owner" of that place.

In this regard, they also fostered alternative relations to property against the understandings of property ownership as exclusivist, individual, and a source of profit. See, the words of an activist who is involved in Notara 26 which was established in an abandoned public building: "What is public we have to give to the people, so we occupy and give to the people." (Georgiades, 2018) and of the squatters from City Plaza: "we are not claiming ownership of the building, we are simply using it…City Plaza is a workshop of solidarity and resistance"

(Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza, 2018). Here, it is evident that the use of vacant public or private buildings is primary to their legal ownership rights in view of the squatters, and what's more, the use of these buildings outweighs their profitability as a commodity; especially in a situation where thousands of people face homelessness. The collective home-making practices of the squatters within these vacant properties in turn, gave new meanings to "homeplace" by subverting the modern idea of home as a private and politically neutral space of the nuclear family.

Solidarians and migrants strived for creating a homely space within these squats. In light of the theoretical section of this thesis, it can be seen that materiality and daily practical habits were important elements in the creation of these homely feelings. Continuing their pre-exile routines in the context of displacement residents of the squats cooked, ate, cleaned, learned, played and celebrated together in the communities they created with solidarians. An illustrative example written by Kiddey (2020) is how her conversations with refugees- including City Plaza residents- disclosed the importance of food in the creation of a feeling of homeliness in refugee shelters. Through the use of locally available ingredients, refugees adopted the recipes and traditions from across the Middle East, allowing them to carry out important cultural practices, and thus contributing to a feeling of continuity and stability. Hage (2010) describes four feelings home-building practices aim to foster and maximize: privacy, security, familiarity and a sense of possibility or hope. Albeit not fully or perfectly, the squats have provided its residents with these feelings at a greater extent in comparison with camps or other types of state subsidized accommodation. In this sense, the squats did not only offer a shelter to the refugees but they also provided the tools through which they would manage their own lives (Dalakoglou & Alexandridis, 2016).

 The fact that former residents of the squats still call it home, even after they left Greece and settled in other countries, built other homes, prove that how home(s) might be experienced on

the move, by remembering from far, and in the absence of physical home(s). Similarly, the slogans residents and solidarians use for defending their squats against the threats of evictions; "you cannot evict a movement", "you cannot evict an idea" imply that the place-based communities established within these squats would continue to exist even when the places they were constituted in do not exist anymore. This expectation is evident in the words of an activist involved in Notara 26: "It is sure that Notara will never die. Even if they evict this building, they cannot evict the idea. I know that the community of residents and solidarians we have built will continue in new ways." (*Voices of Notara Part 3*, 2019). So, as well as home, community might be imagined in the absence of a place, even when the members making up that community do not occupy a singular place anymore and dispersed across different localities.

Differently from the construction of home and community predicated upon a bounded territory, homogeneity, and blood ties by logic and rhetoric of nation-state, a sense of home and community was created among the residents and solidarians within and through the relations of solidarity. In the squats where have become their "home", the residents and solidarians developed a sense of belonging not basing upon kinship or similarity but upon "socialities of solidarity" (Rozakou, 2016). Here, the experience of the squatters indicates new ways of constructing political communities through solidarity, and the generative character of solidarity in shaping new ways of relating becomes evident (Featherstone, 2012).

The experiences of the refugees and solidarians within these squats prove that a striking contrast of charity and philanthropy from solidarity, is the empowering and transformative potentiality of solidarity in opposition to others. An activist from City Plaza mentions how some women arriving at the City Plaza had never been part of a space where they equally participate in decision-making processes regarding the day-to-day life (Raimondi, 2019). However, the activist expresses his/her excitement of seeing the change in these women by

time; they gradually had started to take more initiative and responsibility. In addition, the raising of feminist issues at the "women space" of the City Plaza – a space opened to empower women and where only women could access- led some resident women to organize events and activities on gender issues. Likewise, some former residents of Notara 26, in the messages they sent to the squatters on different dates, mention how they learned new things by living there. For instance, in a video message, one of the former residents conveys that Notara 26 was like a school for him and how he came to understand the things he did not know or understand before living there (Housing Squat for Refugees and Immigrants Notara 26, 2020). This demonstrates the potentiality of solidarity activism in creating new subjectivities.

Although these projects present viable alternatives to the state- and NGO-run refugee accommodation in many respects, and form spaces of struggles against racism, and against unjust immigration policies of the state and the European Union; their precarious status as they are under constant threat of police evictions and violent attacks from far-right extremist groups, constitute a limitation in terms of their sustainability. The participants of the projects have to be vigilant steadily, and develop connections with local community and other solidarity groups in order to defend themselves against the intimidations to their existence.

Another limitation to the durability of these projects is lack of participation by residents in some cases. Coming from various backgrounds and histories, some refugees and migrants might not be familiar with the terms of solidarity, autonomy, and self-organization, which are the fundamental targets of these projects, like the activist participants who sometimes are involved in other political groups or have similar previous experiences, and joining these projects with a more explicit political motive. While many refugees participated in the political discussions around the squats either immediately or over time, the others showed less interest because of a variety of reasons such as tiredness of protracted displacement, their stay

in the squat out of necessity rather than political choice, and concentrating on other concerns like their onward journey (Cantat, 2021).

It is important to acknowledge the ambiguities and contradictions embedded in these projects. Although narratives of migrant squats tend to picture a romanticized view of the occupations, difficulties and contradictions are a constitutive part of these experiences (Raimondi, 2019), and the squats are not devoid of asymmetric power relations and inequalities prevailing in the outside world. Indeed, local activists tended to monopolize some fundamental activities within the squats such as calling for assemblies, organizing basic activities, making decisions on residents, and mediating the communication with the locals and institutions (Cantat, 2021). Zaman (2019) argues that the host-guest relations underpinning the humanitarian logic and practices, infused also in the interactions of local civil society actors, international volunteers, and refugees at the housing squats in Exarcheia neighborhood.

In the case of City Plaza, Papoutsi (2020) notes how subtle hierarchies emerged unintentionally in the squatters' attempt to safeguard the place and its residents. For instance, use of categorizations such as residents or refugees, internationals, solidarians, and locals led to a differentiation in responsibilities, spatial behavior and access of the people involved in the project, causing a latent hierarchy. Additionally, decisions over new admissions, sometimes by prioritizing vulnerable people, resulted in the reproduction of the labels created by the humanitarian and state practices. Furthermore, the most important decisions taken, including closing the squat, concerned only a core group which was composed of the Greek activists, due to their knowledge of the territory and local social and political context; generating conflicts within the project (Raimondi, 2019)

 However, as Rozakou (2016) suggests human relations are never without ambiguities and contradictions, and people who are involved can be aware of them and self-reflexive. Remarks of an activist from Notara 26 in an interview he gave, convey this explicitly:

It's a huge experiment of course. All different attitudes come up, and you find authoritarian people- in which I include myself. You're trying to make a horizontal structure but it becomes vertical, and you have to keep trying to push it back to horizontal again (*Voices of Notara Part 8*, 2019)

In a similar vein, activists at the City Plaza reflected on uneven privileges between refugees, and between refugees and solidarians. They recognized and expressed that objectively they were not all equal (Lafazani, 2018, cited in Bartholomew & Wainwright, 2019). As Lafazani (2017) who was a key figure in the organization of City Plaza initiative notes, the struggles such as City Plaza's, materialize within a context of wider relations of exploitation and domination; within the world of capital and the state which creates inequalities, partitioning of the rights and antagonisms between the oppressed. Therefore, she indicates, a belief did not exist in "islands of freedom", however, it existed in that "between the cracks created by social struggles…we can catch glimpses of a society of freedom and equality" (Lafazani, 2017).

Both for the analyst of social struggle and the activist involved in, it is crucial not to idealize, and in this idealization lose sight of the fact that- citing Featherstone again- solidarity is "without guarantees" (Featherstone, 2012). Therefore, it must be vital for these projects to be constantly reflecting on the potential privileges and inequalities they might create within them, while actually aiming to struggle against those. Nevertheless, with all of their complexities and ambiguities, these spaces continue to represent valuable examples of "partial alternative worlds within intolerable systems" (Cabot, 2016).

The issues discussed in this section prove that the self-organized refugee housing squats can provoke a thinking surrounding place-making. They can incite a questioning about the taken for granted conceptualizations of spaces we inhabit. Through the cases presented in this thesis, the readers may discern how the contested place constructions played out in the migration context: On the hand the Greek state and the European Union build camps and

detention centers where refugees and immigrants are kept away and isolated from local residents and urban social life, on the other hand the squatters made collective homes in the city centers where locals and immigrants live, socialize and struggle together. On the one hand, the neo-Nazi groups claimed territorial control of the neighborhoods by violently excluding refugees and immigrants from the public spaces, and on the other hand activists established places of co-habitation with them in these neighborhoods in order to reclaim the space and visibility. The place-making practices of the squatters clashed with the making of the spaces of home, neighborhood, and nation, into places inhabited by ethnically and culturally homogenous communities seen as naturally attached to them. These practices, at the same time, contradicted with place-making by capitalist globalization, which facilitates the movements of the elite while obstructing the movements of the impoverished classes from certain parts of the world, thus, creating hierarchies of mobility.

Overall, the contested place-making in relation to migration demonstrates how places are not fixed and given, but are sociopolitical constructions; places are struggled over, negotiated, and in flux. What's more, it shows how differing place-making practices are connected to production of different subjectivities and identities. The divisions between the subjects of the host and the guest; the national and the immigrant underpinning the dominant frames of dealing with alterity when it comes to migration, might not be completely subverted through solidarity activism; still it might be challenged, and the activists and migrants might forge new connections between different parts of the world and between diverse social groups-antagonistic to those connections formed by nation-states and capitalist globalization.

6. Conclusion

By analyzing two specific cases of the self-organized refugee housing squats which were established in Athens during the years of large-scale refugee movements into Europe, this

thesis has aimed to show their socio-spatial implications, and in this way, to explore socio-spatial implications of solidarity activism with migrants. The thesis argues that solidarity relations formed between activists and refugees within these housing squats challenged the hegemonic understandings of places and communities at multiple scales, namely the scales of home, neighborhood, nation, and transnational spaces.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that the ability of people to disrupt established spatial orders show evidently that places are not given and their sociopolitical construction must be always acknowledged. The important questions arise from this, is that: once we acknowledge sociopolitical construction of places, what does this mean for our relation to the places of everyday life? What possibilities does this understanding carry with it? In relation to migration, first of all, this understanding carries the possibility of changing our perception of the refugee and immigrant "Other" as well as our perception of migration. Because when it is understood that places are not given but constructed, this can allow an appreciation of the fact that movement is central to "intertwined process of place-making and people making" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Second, it shows us that, while processes of boundary making with exclusionary goals might have intensified in global times -as the concept of Fortress Europe hints- this is certainly not the only way of constructing places and identities, and a progressive politics of place-making is possible (Escobar, 2001). In light of this, imagination and action towards making places of our everyday life different than of those constructed by the hegemonic power relations seems possible as well, and place ceases to be merely a domain of those relations but it becomes also a domain of objection and agency. The thesis through the examples of the self-organized refugee housing squats attempted to point out at how migrant solidarity activism might contribute in the creation of such alternative spaces of everyday life where ways of belonging, and ideas of home and community are partially reworked. In this way, the thesis demonstrated how solidaristic practices in the migration context might shape

new relations, different ways of connecting places and diverse social groups (Featherstone, 2012).

While generalizability of the arguments of the thesis to all the housing squats established by activists and migrants is not possible since the squats can highly differ depending on the socio-political contexts of various countries where they were found in, the groups organizing them and the physical conditions of buildings; the thesis attempted at providing new insights about socio-spatial implications such solidarity activism with refugees and immigrants might have. In addition, the thesis has contributed to the theoretical discussion of the concepts of space, place and solidarity by applying them in its analysis of the specific cases. Therefore, the study has proved that migrant squats constitute an appropriate field of research for a theory of space and place which highlights place-making through social struggles.

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