

Contesting Europeanism: Migrant Solidarity Activism in the European Union

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Abstract; In this paper, I investigate the way in which legal frameworks concerning immigration and border controls have been transnationalised in the European Union (EU) and how migrant solidarity activists in EU member states have responded to this development. Taking the Eurozone crisis as a starting point, I first develop a critical analysis of the EU project as the regional expression of a set of economic and political developments generally referred to as 'neoliberal globalisation'. In this context, I propose to look at the dominant contemporary notion of European belonging as a legitimising discourse aimed at stabilising the particular social and political organisation of the region that the EU has established. I argue that bordering, borders and exclusion have been essential to the form of European identity that the EU has put forward. The Europeanisation of immigration law and border controls is presented as the material embodiment of this dominant notion of European identity. I then present my fieldwork, which consisted in interviews and participant observation with migrant solidarity groups and networks in three EU member states. One of the main focuses of the fieldwork was to investigate the ways in which migration-related activists and organisations have adapted their work in order to respond to the developments at the EU level. I present an analysis of my fieldwork data drawing on insights from social movement theory. In conclusion, I identify a process of pan-Europeanisation of migrant solidarity struggles and critically assess its resemblance to an emerging transnational social movement.

Key words: Europe, European identity, European Union, migration, activism, transnationalisation, social movement.

Since 2009 and the advent of the ‘Eurozone crisis’, the subject of ‘Europe’ and disputes over the required course of action to save the region have been regular features of the media and public debate. Yet, beyond the on-going controversy concerning the best ways to implement austerity measures and occasional high-level dramas in Brussels, the crucial questions of what the European Union (EU) represents, which power dynamics it enacts and what its relationship with the peoples of its member states is remain as vague and unclear as ever. Last April, the Spring 2013 Eurobarometer showed the lowest ever levels of popular confidence toward the EU in the six biggest European member states.¹ A polling system aimed at measuring popular feelings toward the EU, the Eurobarometer, was created in 1973 as Eurocrats and pro-Europe politicians were showing increasing concern regarding the growing popular discontent with the European project. Notions such as that of ‘European democratic deficit’ were gaining currency to describe the tenuous relationship between the then-European Community (EC) and the people of its member countries (Chalmer et al. 2006: 64). In a desperate quest for legitimacy, a series of measures were designed in Brussels in order to instigate a sense of European belonging or ‘Europeanism’ among the people of the region. In the absence of meaningful emblems of identification with the institutions of the European Community, a major identity-building enterprise, largely based on the reproduction of a series of national identity symbols at the supranational level, was put in place. Thus, a European anthem was adopted in 1972, followed by a European flag in 1983.²

In this paper, I will first look at how the process of creation of a particular sense of European identity and belonging has been put at the service of the European Union project. I will argue that the produced notion of Europeanism has mainly relied on identifying and excluding the non-European and on drawing borders between Europe and outside. The harmonisation of migration and asylum law across the EU will be analysed as the legal embodiment of this development. In the second part, I will look at how these forms of restriction and exclusion have been challenged. I will present and discuss the fieldwork research I carried out with groups and organisations working with migrants in the EU and investigate whether and how, in the process of opposing the EU exclusionary framework on migration and asylum, new transnational links have developed between these actors, leading to alternative forms of European solidarity.

The Politics of ‘Europeanism’

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the growing dissatisfaction and disengagement towards the European project occurred as the EC was endorsing a distinctively neoliberal turn, in line with the economic orthodoxy of the time. The project of an integrated capitalist market in Europe in fact predated the European Community, but concrete steps in this direction had been hampered by the persistence of national capitalist interests. It is in the 1970s and 80s that the prerogatives of the new neoliberal form of global capitalism pushed national capitals into transnational alliances, leading to the 1986 Single European Act which placed firmly on the regional agenda the idea of a liberalised European market. This integrated market was to bring back economic growth to a Europe slowed down by ‘incrusted and rigid structures of European labour and social regulations’ (van Apeldoorn 2001). In practice, history has now shown that this meant the

¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/24/trust-eu-falls-record-low>

² http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/index_en.htm

opening up of European economies to ‘competitors’, twinned with the dismantlement of national systems of social protection and welfare. Today, as the failures of the global capitalist agenda have become more striking than ever, the neoliberal nature of the European Union remains one of the main focuses of popular protests in Europe. From Greece to Portugal, from the UK to Spain, the last three years have seen waves of demonstrations and popular anger denouncing the capitalist EU and the dictatorship of the ‘Troika’ (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund).³

In this context of on-going volatility, the afore-mentioned attempts to conjure a sense of European belonging must be seen as part of a vital struggle for meaning on the part of the EU, which I call the ‘politics of Europeanism’. As Fran Cetti (2010) puts it ‘the survival of locally or regionally based capitals in an internationally hybrid world of instability, regional conflicts and economic convulsions demands ... an inherently ideological operation to postulate a unitary set of interests in the attempt to displace social antagonisms and secure legitimacy’. One of its crudest mechanisms has been the production a set of identity symbols at the European level reminiscent of the traditional appendages of national identities. Less immediately obvious, the attempt to inculcate a sense of Europeanism in the inhabitants of the region has also relied on the multiplication of narratives tracing back the roots of the Union to ancient times, drawing on European past to present the EU as the linear continuation of a European historical and cultural spirit in motion. The idea of a continuous Europe as an entity and as an identity is not a new one. Since the 1970s, it has been increasingly asserted as a possible antidote to the unconvincing reality of the European Community/Union. A crude example is Jordan’s assertion that ‘Europe is a culture which occupies a cultural area’ (Jordan 1973 in Paasi 2001). But one can also note, particularly since 1989, a sharp increase in a ‘culture-historical literature on the question of Europe’ (Nowotny 2000). Nowotny examines the work of a range of European historians and intellectuals, specialised in an array of research areas, and highlights their tendency to concentrate on topics concerned with tracing a historical sense of European identity. He claims that:

From the medievalist Jacques Le Goff to Rémi Brague, professor of Arabic philosophy, the "postmodern" conservative Peter Koslowski and the left-wing liberal Massimo Cacciari, this literature shares a specific interest in a historiologically decipherable "identity", as well as in culture-historical prototypes of Europe which are supposed to allow conclusions – or rather preconceived judgements – on the future shape of the EU (ibid, own translation)

A common trait of these researches is that a set of historical events and ideas are drawn upon to create a coherent narrative of the construction of Europe as one entity. They also sanctify Europe, upholding it as a desirable model with universal validity. In his account of Europe since 1945, Tony Judt (2005) praises ‘Europe’s emergence in the dawn of the 21st century as a paragon of the international virtues: a community of values ... held up by Europeans and non-Europeans alike as an exemplar for all to emulate’. In the UK, no group expressed better the mythology of Europeanism than New Labour. In *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, Mark Leonard (2005) invites his readers to share his dream: ‘Imagine a world of peace, prosperity and democracy... What I am asking you to imagine is the ‘New European Century’...’ (in Anderson 2011: 47).

³ See this useful press review in French of articles against the Troika: <http://actu-leplus.nouvelobs.com/troika-commission-europeenne-banque-centrale-europeenne-fmi.html>

The Imagined Community of the EU: 'Fortress Europe'

In contrast with such essentialist narratives, a number of scholars have elaborated critical reflections on these attempts to form a European identity. Gerard Delanty (1995) claims that defining Europe has always relied on representations of what it is not and been characterised by the lack of European unity besides that achieved through adversity. He demonstrates that lines of exclusion/inclusion have always been at the heart of projects related to the idea of Europe and that Europe's cultural and political identity has historically been articulated through a process of constant re-construction of 'ins' and 'outs' reflecting particular sets of power relations at given points in time. Ideas of Europe have been characterised by their production of an excluded otherness, in both geographical and 'mythological' terms, which evolves in content throughout time (different 'Others' are mobilised towards the elaboration of different projects) but remains constant as a mechanism. His conclusion is that these dynamics of exclusion are more than ever at work in the EU project: 'who is a European is largely a matter of exclusion, and in the dichotomy of self and other which constitutes the discourse of European identity, Europeaness is constructed in opposition with the non-European, in particular Islam. This sense of the uniqueness of the European is today emerging as a basis for a kind of supranational identity and citizenship which European integration does not have' (Delanty 1995: 9).

In a similar vein, Marfleet (1999, 2002) examines the role played by Huntington's theory of a 'clash of civilisations' in the EU's attempt to construct a European identity. The clash theory relies on primordialist readings of history and of the world, which is seen as divided in hermetic areas of 'culture'. Those belonging to other 'civilisations' are erected as absolute Others and it is in the mirror of this produced image of otherness that Eurocrats have tried to anchor an ever-fleeting sense of a European identity. These observations are confirmed by the work of Liz Fekete. Looking at recent socio-political developments, Fekete (2001, 2009) examines the rise of 'xeno-racism' in Europe, 'a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at Western Europe's doors, the Europe that helped to displace them in the first place' (Sivanandan in Fekete 2001, 2009). Fekete provides evidence of the intrinsic relation that links, on the one hand, the media, legal, discursive and physical practices of xeno-racism in Europe and, on the other hand, the strengthening of a shared sense of European belonging and identity as a basis for European citizenship. In doing so, she demonstrates the importance and instrumentality of the (produced) figure of the non-European, the migrant, as a crucial ideological cog in the European discourse on identity and belonging.

Together with these authors, I argue that in spite of its claims to represent a supra- or post-national political entity freed from the exclusionary tendencies of the national form, the process of production of a European identity has relied on similarly restrictive mechanisms. In order to trigger a sense of allegiance within the population of its member states, the EU has resorted to the figure of the foreign Other, traditionally mobilised in national identity building enterprises, as an ideological counterpoint against which what qualifies as European can be defined. This Other has been revamped to fulfil the need of the large regional project and has been granted alleged civilisational and cultural features. The idea of the 'migrant', sanctified in European legislation as the 'third country national', has been of utmost importance in the construction of European self and otherness.⁴ The migrant as a constructed figure, who comes from outside yet infiltrates the inside, also allows the articulation of two processes of identity

⁴ It is also important to remember that the EU project does not only erect external borders of absolute otherness but also creates internal borders. The use of the derogatory acronym PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) to refer to

formation, that of the production of difference and that of the dialectics of the same. The importance of such figures in the construction of national identities has already been the subject of extensive scholarly attention. Balibar (1996), for example, has offered detailed historical and sociological analyses of the role of the border as the place where both difference and sameness are produced and has shown that the 'border is central' to identity formation in nation-states. What is striking in the case of the EU, is the reproduction of similar mechanisms at the supranational level.

The centrality of the border to the EU identity building process is also visible in another way. One of the key material embodiments of the European unity and identity that Eurocrats have been trying to produce is the suppression of national border controls between member-states, making it possible for EU citizens to travel across the EU without a passport and visa. This free travel zone, named the Schengen Area after the Treaty that created it, currently comprises the territories of 25 European countries, including three non-EU member-states (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland). Only two of the EU member-states, Ireland and the UK, have decided to opt out of Schengen (though the Treaty has been integrated into EU law) and three EU member-states (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania) have not yet implemented it, mostly due to restrictions towards the freedom of movement of their citizens imposed by other EU countries. The abolition of intra-EU national borders through Schengen has been heralded as the ultimate illustration of the progressive potential of the Union. However, a closer examination of the EU today reveals a very different picture that contradicts the idea that European nations and nationalisms are being replaced with progressive cosmopolitan forces. Schengen operates as a single state for international travel and has therefore matched the elimination of internal borders with a reinforcement of Europe's external borders (those with non-EU member-states) so ruthless that the term 'Fortress Europe' has been coined to describe this process. Only those holding EU citizenship – which is derivative in that it can only be acquired through citizenship of one of the member states – can benefit from the privileges of Schengen and of freedom of movement within the Area. For others, not citizens of a EU member-state, the exclusion from national communities is now exacerbated by an exclusion from the community of Europeans. The institutions and rules of the Schengen framework thus materially call into existence and embody the idea according to which Europeans share a common identity, setting them aside from non-European. In this regard, I argue that rather than making nationalism obsolete, EU integration is actually crafting a form of hyper-nationalism with similar exclusionary tendencies. European identity is thus created at its external and internal borders – in its regime of visa and residence permits, in its retention centres, in its discriminatory policies against migrants within member states. Haynes puts it very clearly:

it is here, in both the ideas and practice of immigration control, perpetuated both at the intergovernmental level and at the level of the EU, that the new 'Europe' is being forged, as much as in the debates and celebrations of internal unity (Haynes in Dale & Cole 1999: 25).

Contesting the EU Border Regime

In this context, it is now possible to see why groups and movements contesting EU border controls and immigration policies engage with issues at the heart of the European project, unsettling one of the key mechanisms used to justify and stabilise its existence. Between November 2011 and November 2012, as part of my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with activists engaged in migrant solidarity work in three EU countries, namely France, Italy and the UK, and tried to grasp the ways in which their activities challenged and destabilised the dominant European discourse. Groups working in solidarity with migrants in Europe are varied and plentiful: they range from Brussels-based organisations engaged in policy work and lobbying of EU institutions to research groups concerned with documenting and reporting on imprisonment practices in detention centres, to numerous community or activist groups providing day-to-day practical support to migrants. Before starting my fieldwork *per se*, I therefore took a while filtering these groups in order to select the type of practices and discourses I would be focusing on. My main criterion was that activist practices that would constitute my case studies had to conduct migrant solidarity work at the European level, rather than solely in local or national contexts. Through this pre-research process, I identified 11 groups and campaigns in the three above-mentioned countries. I then conducted 21 in-depth interviews, lasting an average of two hours, with representatives (members, staff or volunteers) from these groups and networks. In spite of the common objective of their activities, my participants display a high level of heterogeneity, with groups ranging from established charities with paid staff to loose activist networks with little formal structures. Three groups are France-based *associations*⁵ (Gisti, Fasti and Migreurop) whilst one, the Migrants' Rights Network (MRN), is a UK-registered charity. No Borders, No One Is Illegal (NOII) and Stop Deportation are unregistered activist networks. Finally, PICUM is a Brussels-based NGO and European Alternatives calls itself a 'transnational membership organisation' that brings together local groups. These groups and networks greatly vary in terms of yearly income or budget, membership requirements and structures of participation. One of the main focuses of my research is the way in which these diverse organisations and networks develop transnational links in order to engage in European migrant solidarity work. I am also interested in investigating whether any form of grassroots alternative European identity linking activists across national borders has been emerging. I will however not be addressing this point in this paper.

In order to meaningfully investigate and study activist practices and examine whether and how a process of transnationalisation is taking place, I have used some selected tools and concepts developed by Social Movement Theory (SMT) scholars, particularly New Social Movement (NSM) theory. The main appeal of SMT was its flexibility, which allowed me to look at a wide range of discourses and praxes, varying in shape, method and location, whilst retaining a comparative dimension by conceptualising them as forming a continuum – linked by the commonality of their aims – rather than as isolated sites of action – characterised by the specificity of their approach. NSM theory, a branch of SMT, focuses on the new organisational forms developed by contemporary movements, often characterised by decentralised, polycephalous and reticulated structures (Freeman 1983: 204). NSM theory focuses on the way politicised actors organise in loose coalitions to promote the particular discourse and objectives

⁵ Under French law, an association 'is the agreement through which two or more people decide putting in common, in a permanent fashion, their knowledge and/or activities for an objective which is not profit-oriented' (own translation from French law on association from 1901).

of a social movement but do so in less formalised ways than traditional organisations (Buechler 1990: 61). This has been of high relevance to the study of a variety of movements that emerged since the 1970s (Wiktorowicz 2004a: 12) such as women's movements (Buechler 1990; Staggenborg 1998), lesbian feminists (Taylor and Whittier 1992) and neighbourhood movements (Stoecker 1995). NSM theory is particularly adapted to the study of the nascent yet uneven network of varied initiatives that I have come across in the field of European migrant solidarity activism. The main conceptual tools developed within SMT and NSM theory that I refer to are the following:

Opportunities and Constraints: the notions of 'opportunities' and 'constraints' in relation to social movements emerge from the recognition that social movements do not operate in a vacuum but rather exist in social contexts characterised by complex configurations of possibilities and limitations, which play a part in structuring a movement's dynamics (Wiktorowicz 2004a: 13). Exogenous factors can be both a source of further empowerment or a source of constraint for activists participating in social movement politics (Tarrow 1998; Kolb 2007: 52). These exogenous factors influence a movement and its choice of tactics and actions, as well as the degree of public exposure and visibility it achieves. Generally speaking, these concepts are used to describe the level of (formal and informal) access to political institutions and decision-making structures; the degree of popularity of the movement's claims and objectives within the wider public; the type of political system the movement operates within and the level of political repression it can be exposed to. Often referred to as 'political opportunities and constraints', it is worth noting that they also consist of cultural, social and economic factors (Kurzman 1996; Mc Adam & al. 2001). Thinking in terms of opportunities and constraints is extremely relevant to understand the different ways in which the groups and networks participating in my fieldwork organise their campaigns and protests. Factors such as whether groups are acting on their national stage or engaging with the European level will determine their chosen methods of action. Moreover, a restrictive context in terms of opportunities will often lead groups and campaigns to seek new alliances in order to gain more leverage. The question of the transnationalisation of pro-migrant initiatives in the EU must thus partly be analysed in relation to this mechanism.

Frames: the concept of framing emerges from the observation that ideology is not the sole guiding reference for discourse and action. Rather than referring to ideology as the only explanatory factor of the way in which people understand their political identities and discourses, it is more insightful to understand the role of ideas as socially created, organised and disseminated variables (Wiktorowicz 2004a: 15; Oliver and Johnston 2001). The process of discourse-creation and construction results in what SMT sometimes calls 'packages', which refers to the way in which movements frame their arguments by articulating various references and ideological resources in response to a problem (Wiktorowicz: 9). One must also remember that social movements exist and develop in social, political and cultural fields where multiple actors with various agendas and perspectives are competing over 'framing hegemony', which means they engage in contests to influence the way in which a particular issue or set of issues is interpreted and understood (Benford 1993). This is clearly the case of the relationship between a movement and the dominant frame it opposes, but contests over framing also happen within movements between activists holding different positions (e.g. violence vs. non-violence, pragmatism vs. idealism, engagement vs. non engagement with the authorities, and so on). A social movement can be seen as an attempt at disputing the 'official frame(s)' in a context where mainstream discourses will attempt to limit the institutional resources and the public spaces available for the spreading of alternative frames (Noakes 2000; Wiktorowicz 2004a). Selbin (2010)

insists on the ‘power of story’, that is to say, the importance of developing a frame of analysis of both domination and reaction that successfully compels people to act on their indignation. The narratives that activists develop are characterised by ‘associations and connections across time and space that people deploy to construct a revolutionary imaginary comprising symbols, names, dates, places, grievances, stories, and means and methods, which they then draw on as they consider the world and their options’ (ibid: 166). In this sense, frames are crucial interpretative devices that operate as translators of grievances and perceived opportunities into the mobilisation of activists and resources toward achieving a movement’s goals. The issue of framing is central to the work of pro-migrant groups and campaigns I am working with. Not only do these organisations have the stated aim to challenge dominant frameworks on migration, I argue that they also engage in a work of ‘reframing Europe’ which relies among other mechanisms on presenting a different ‘story’ of what Europe represents in the world and in history.

Repertoires: the concept of the ‘repertoire’ (often discussed as ‘repertoire of contentious’ or ‘cultural repertoire’) of a social movement refers to the set of protest-related tools and tactics available to it in a particular context. Commonly used tactics, actions and tools that feature frequently in social movements’ repertoires include public meetings, demonstrations and rallies, vigils and sit-ins, petitions and lobbying of governmental institutions, press releases and media statements, strikes and pickets, boycotts, among others. Repertoires evolve over time, in response to the opportunities and constraints and to the framing strategies chosen by a particular social movement (Tarrow 1998). New tactics are integrated into repertoires all the time, as illustrated by the recent scholarship around Internet-based tactics and ‘hacktivism’ (Samuel 2004; Knapp 2005). My fieldwork will look in particular at how groups develop and selectively use several repertoires, each adapted to a particular level or type of action, and how, in the process of collaborating with other groups, these repertoires often evolve and sometimes converge.

The Changing Context of Migrant Solidarity Practices

Solidarity campaigns and groups opposing and denouncing the way in which migrants are treated are by no means new. They have featured in Western European countries’ political and social life in various forms since the emergence of immigration controls and the importation of migrant workers for industrial purposes as early as the late 18th and early 19th centuries.⁶ However, I would argue that while solidarity movements opposing racism, immigration controls and discrimination against migrants have been important aspects of the European political scene for decades, the groups and movements I am looking at in my research present some qualitative differences with previous forms of migrant solidarity. The groups created recently specifically to address issues engendered by the Europeanisation of migration frameworks and those that existed before but have both been pushed into engaging with European issues have been shaped by the new

⁶ In his book, *No One Is Illegal: Immigration Control and Asylum*, Steve Cohen, one of NOII’s founding members, provides a historical overview of such movements and groups in the UK. In a similar vein, in *Open Borders: The Case Against Immigration Controls*, Teresa Hayter traces the origins of pro-migrant campaigning in the UK and explores the emergence of an explicitly anti-fascist and anti-racist dimension to migration struggles in the 1970s (Hayter 2004). Similar developments can be identified in other European countries, including France, though they vary in form and content. The Italian context, like that of other southern European countries such as Spain and Portugal, is significantly different in that, until the 1970s, Italy was mostly a source of emigration rather than a destination of immigration. As Italy increasingly became a destination of immigration, the Italian anti-racist movement emerged throughout the 1980s and held its first significant protest rally in 1989.

political and social context of migration in Europe. Here, I would like to mention three recent developments that have affected the political identities of pro-migrant groups and activists.

First, there has been an irruption of migrant-led struggles, which have brought a new migrant subjectivity into the political discourse associated with migration. The intervention of migrant-led initiatives in the political space of European societies is a relatively new phenomenon that has nonetheless deeply affected the ways in which pro-migrant groups operate and conceptualise their work. Though the relationship of the organisations and groups I have interviewed with migrant-led groups varies, the conceptual recognition of a subjectivity and agency of migrants, as a diverse and heterogeneous group, is unanimously asserted.

Since the 1990s, we have much more organic links with organised groups of migrants. This is not because we didn't work directly with migrants before, but... there were few self-organised groups... This has changed, we have partners and that means our work has to be always grounded on the daily reality of the lives of *sans papiers*. This was a very positive development.⁷

The way in which migrants are objectified by mainstream representations speaking of 'flows', statistics and numbers whose presence results from 'push and pull' factors, is also denounced and challenged (Walter 2003). A participant from Italy spoke of eight ways in which the mainstream media's language around migration was flawed:

There are eight rules media follow to speak of immigration. I will tell you about them now (...) First, the use of shocking news: statements not corroborated by evidences. The phenomenon of irregular migrations is represented as a phenomenon of frightening proportions (...) Second, the use of a terminology that involves contempt, that dehumanises, that deprives of dignity (...) Third, the use of words with negative connotations (...) Fourth, the abusive use of a military terminology like, for instance, emergency, alarm, siege, invasion, landing. The message reaching the public opinion is that Italy is at 'war' and that migrants are 'the enemy'. Fifth, Italian media interpret the migratory phenomenon through the opinion of politicians. But migrations are a complex phenomenon requiring experts able to 'explain' it. Sixth, a biased selection of people participating in the debates (...) Then, the use of words denoting something abnormal or extraordinary. For instance: biblical exodus, humanitarian tsunami, earthquake, human weapons. Finally, there is a total lack of care and knowledge about the situation in the countries of origin of migrants. This calls into question specific political and historical responsibilities of Italy towards countries such as Libya, Somalia, Eritrea (...) which have a colonial past with Italy.⁸

This evolution has much to do with the irruption of migrant-led struggles on the national and European scenes, where non-citizens affirm their subjecthood and claim their 'right to have rights', even when and where the space for them to do so has to be claimed by force. The French *sans-papier* movement of the 1990s is a well-known example of this. A large part of the scholarship on the *sans-papiers* focused on the emergence of a new political subjectivity of non-

⁷ Interview with Gisti's Claire Rodier (Paris, September 2012)

⁸ Interview with When We Don't Exist's Roberto Noury (Lampedusa, July 2012).

citizens and the disruption of the traditional understanding of democracy, civil rights, and citizenship (Wright 2003: 5).⁹

The second development is the emergence, since the late 1990s, of various contentious political and social interventions that can be loosely brought under the label of anti- or alter-globalisation politics. The inscription of migration-related struggles within the framework of the anti-globalisation movement has not been an obvious and unproblematic development. In fact, the earlier forms of transnational anti-globalisation political interventions largely left migration issues aside, as illustrated for example by the absence of specifically migration-focused workshops in the earlier editions of the World Social Forum. This was mostly due to the fact that the 'globalisation' of immigration controls was not as obvious as that of trade and finance and is still characterised by a complex intertwining of national and supranational practices. However, both analytically and practically, this gap has been significantly bridged and migration has been firmly inscribed on the WSF's agenda since at least its fifth edition in 2005. In Europe, Sandro Mezzadra notes that the 2001 Genoa protests in Italy already saw the organisation of a large migrant rally, which he identifies as the first encounter between migrant organisations and the 'global movement':

... the demonstration on 19 July 2001, which opened the protests against the G8 meeting in Genoa with the slogan 'Freedom of movement - freedom without boundaries', has put the issues of migrants before the 'global movement' born in Seattle for the first time. (Mezzadra 2004: 268)

The European Social Forum (ESF), the regional expression of the so-called Global Justice Movement, has thus been strongly influenced by anti-racist and pro-migrant themes and, reciprocally, anti-capitalist events and social forums have been important moments in the development of pro-migrant groups and networks working transnationally in Europe. Most of my participants had directly participated in an ESF or another large anti/alter-globalist gathering, and the discourse, analysis and tactics of the anti-capitalist movement have had a strong influence on the ways in which these groups understand themselves and their struggle and design their actions and tactics. This might not be immediately obvious with all the interviewed groups, yet my participants recognise the relevance of the anti-capitalist critique in order to understand the EU's immigration and border regime.¹⁰ One of the participants summed up this close relationship as follows: 'we are anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-debt of the third world. These are our values. But we also are action-oriented in our local context. We merge the local and the global'.¹¹ Another one also stipulated that: 'one cannot understand migrations today without internationalising the issue. This is why we have a global, in fact alter-global, approach'.¹² In particular, it is clear to them that the border control practices of a given EU member state cannot be seen as simply the expression of an unjust national government. Rather, all the groups and networks inscribe their analysis within a larger reflection on the roles of borders globally, and their relationship with other global dynamics of domination and exploitation. Another aspect is the use by pro-migrant groups and networks in Europe of tools and tactics developed by anti-globalisation activists, such as transnational mailing lists and forms of action directed against non-state actors. The

⁹ See also McNevin 2006 and Lowry and Nyers 2003.

¹⁰ For example, MRN's Director explained that the official narrative of his organisation tended to be more liberal and human rights-oriented but that it didn't invalidate a critical understanding of global migration nowadays.

¹¹ Interview with Fasti's Anna Sibley (Paris, September 2012)

¹² Interview with Gisti's Jean Pierre Alaux (Paris, September 2012)

intersection between the anti-globalisation movement's politics and tactics and the particular traditions and cultures of the various groups participating in the research is a complex one but it has been a key structuring factor for migration struggles in Europe.

Finally, the institutional terrain on which these groups and campaigns are fighting strongly diverges from that of previous pro-migrant initiatives. The participant groups and campaigns exist in particular local and national settings operating through their own political institutions but, at the same time, they all engage in a transnational political praxis. As previously mentioned, the transnationalisation of their work has been the result of the realisation that immigration and asylum controls had changed and had to be fought at different levels and by addressing different actors – in particular that there was a need to fight beyond national boundaries and to confront trans- and supranational institutions. The evolution of the centre of power and decision-making into a multi-layered and complex transnational and intergovernmental assemblage has thus called for new structures and tactics in order to efficiently address the new political and institutional setting in which they operate.

When and Why: The Emergence of Transnational Pro-Migrant Actors in the EU

In order to test the hypothesis that an increasing transnationalisation of migration struggles has been taking place in the EU in response to the harmonisation of immigration laws and policies in Europe, I asked my participants a series of questions concerning their relationship with the EU and the ways in which the process of communitarisation of legislative frameworks related to migration and asylum had affected their work. A strikingly consistent narrative emerged, identifying a number of key moments in the development of European legislation, which decisively encouraged activists to operate at the European level and to develop transnational links with groups in other EU member countries.

The Europeanisation of legislative frameworks governing issues related to migration and asylum has been a key area of cooperation between EU member states at least since the 1985 Schengen Agreement, which envisaged a zone of free movement between five countries of the European Community at the time (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). The rationale for Europeanising immigration and asylum policies was that the free movement of people within the EU/ECC space could only happen if, first, all member states applied identical criteria regarding entry requirements into their territory for 'third country' nationals and, second, if the controls which had been waived at the EU's internal borders were reported and reinforced at its external borders. These legislations, which had started as inter-governmental regulations, were fully incorporated into European legislation with the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam. The Treaty was implemented at the 1999 Tampere Summit, which was strongly criticised by European civil society organisations for its secrecy, lack of transparency and the association it made between 'immigration' and 'security' (Statewatch 2003). Subsequently, the harmonisation was further codified with the 2006 Schengen Borders Code¹³ and the 2010 Schengen Visa Code¹⁴ which legislate on border surveillance, joint controls and cooperation between member states regarding border checks and govern the role of the European external border agency, Frontex. Another development brought about by the Schengen Agreement is the

¹³ See *Schengen Borders Code* < <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:105:0001:0032:EN:PDF> > [last accessed in March 2013].

¹⁴ See *Schengen Visa Code* < <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995R1683:EN:HTML> > [last accessed in March 2013].

Schengen Information System (SIS), a policing information network that was created to supposedly compensate for any security 'deficit' that could be engendered by the removal of internal border controls in the EEC/EU and which constitutes a transnational database storing information concerning various 'risk groups and individuals', accessible by Europe's police forces and security agencies (Lodge 2009: 142).

Several participants admitted that it was not until the mid- and late 1990s that they took full measure of what was happening at the EU level. They acknowledged feeling concerned following the 1985 signature of the Schengen agreement, in particular as it failed to address the issue of the status of 'third country nationals' and started to refer to the reinforcement of Europe's external borders, but it was not until the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, which created the EU and European citizenship as an exclusively derivative status, that the discriminatory and exclusive nature of the Union was fully grasped. Soon after Maastricht, the process of Europeanisation of immigration and asylum laws was initiated, boosted by the 1995 implementation of Schengen. This process encouraged closer collaboration between activists in different EU member states, both to exchange information in order to understand what the effects of these developments were and to share ideas about how to resist them. An interviewee from Gisti summarised these evolutions as follows:

At Gisti, there was a preoccupation since the late 1980s ... regarding what would come out of the Schengen Agreement. Some of our members were paying close attention ... to something which the French *associations* were not talking about - the implementation of this Schengen agreement, which was going to reorganise circulation inside what was then the Schengen area ... and all the consequences it would have on the status of migrants in France... But it was really difficult to work with our traditional *associative* partners, because all this seemed very theoretical for these partners. It wasn't there... Contrarily to what was happening in other countries, the French government never publicly announced the negotiations or what was being talked about in Brussels about the implementation of this Schengen Area (...) But we quickly anticipated that from this system would come out many things which would have rather serious implications, and that we had to be ready for what would come next. And thus to find partners elsewhere, outside France...¹⁵

While it might have been the case that, at first, the developments were going unnoticed in France, participants in Italy which, like other Mediterranean countries, was suddenly turned into a border guard country for western and northern European member states, draw a very different picture:¹⁶

In Italy, until the mid 1980s, we didn't have any immigration law. Issues to do with migration and residency were still governed through a royal decree from the 1930s, which basically gave administrative discretion on the matter. Of course, I am not saying that Italy was a heaven for immigrants. But that changed very rapidly after 1995, when the Schengen Agreement was coming into place, and Italy was told it had to adopt immigration policies that were along the lines of those that existed in northern European countries. Not only the law changed, there was a discourse to go with it, and you could see the change in people's attitude, you could see racist graffiti appearing on the walls ...

¹⁵ Interview with Gisti's Claire Rodier (Paris, September 2012).

¹⁶ Similarly, in Portugal, the post-Salazar immigration laws passed in the mid 1980s had to be strongly tightened under pressure from the EU in 1993, in preparation for the implementation of Schengen.

You know, there was definitely a new form of racist discourse in the media, by the politicians, that was being pushed forward, in the name of Europe.¹⁷

It is at the occasion of the 1999 Tampere summit that, for the first time, these diverse experiences were brought together by activists. Schneider, a No Border activist and blogger, remembers the days leading up to the formation of the No Border network before 1999 as follows:

It all began with a meeting in Amsterdam, at the margins of a big demonstration against the EU summit in 1997 ... The priorities and objectives of the political work in each country were gravely different, but what the groups had in common was the demand for practical, political intervention at the base i.e. grassroots politics. The new network was ... concerned with systematically creating the preconditions for a Europe-wide collaboration, whose purpose was in the first place to enrich the every-day activities in each and every country ... Yet, although a regular exchange of information was arranged amongst the participants of the first network meeting, the initial zest soon died away ... However, this was about to change: in 1999 the network was renamed "Noborder" and relaunched with the European-wide protest action to mark the occasion of the EU's special summit "justice and the interior" in Tampere. This latter was expressly dedicated to the aim of standardizing the asylum and migration politics in the European context. In the preparation some Noborder groups had managed to connect with promising contacts in France and, above all, in Italy. On this basis a common European day-of-action was arranged (...) to protest in a decentralized but coordinated manner against a new chapter in the politics of separation: (...) more exclusion, more control, more deportation.¹⁸

For these activists, the word Tampere became shorthand for the Europeanisation of immigration and asylum policy. It came to stand for the very process whereby a certain Europe, based on a system of segregation and discrimination and on a discourse of exclusion, was taking shape. It was a key moment in the history of many of the autonomous migrant solidarity groups: from then on, they started to consistently try to match the practices of national governments by making their tactics and activities similarly transnational. Following the Tampere counter-demonstrations, the European No Border network emerged. 1999 was also the year when PICUM was established in Brussels. PICUM came about at the initiative of a group of grassroots organisations from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, which shared similar concerns regarding the lack of protection for undocumented migrants in the new European legal framework on immigration and asylum. PICUM's Director explained that:

As the laws around migration were being transferred into the legal structure of the EU, groups in various member states realised that ... the issue of undocumented migrants was left out of these juridical developments and that they would not gain any form of protection through the process of Europeanisation. We felt undocumented migrants and the problems they face had to be defended in the EU, and the best way for us to have

¹⁷ Interview with Italian activist Nidal (Rome, July 2012).

¹⁸<http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/article.jsp;jsessionid=82879400D2D0FFB4F4C701D6D2584FD7?objectnumber=44008>

leverage was to join forces and literally ‘turn up the volume’: make our voices louder by shouting together.¹⁹

Tampere called itself a summit on ‘freedom, justice and security’, presented as core tenets of the European project. But activists were quick to denounce that the quest for a European identity was being led at the expense of many other European residents: all those who did not have citizenship in one of the member states. European citizenship did not therefore move away from the exclusionary features of national identity discourses but, in fact, added an additional layer of exclusion for non-citizens.

How and What: Activities, Tactics and Tools of Pan-European Pro-Migrant Actors

With the successful institutionalisation of the nation-state, peaking in the late 18th and 19th centuries, political action and affiliations had become increasingly concentrated at the national level. In this paper I have argued that, in the case of the supranationalisation of political frameworks that is taking place under the auspices of the European Union, the dominant attempts at fostering a sense of shared political destiny among the ‘people of Europe’ has largely failed. Yet, a process of transnationalisation of contentious politics and identity has nonetheless been taking place in order to oppose and challenge discourses and policies coming from the EU. During the course of my interviews, I asked members of the participant organisations and campaigns to explain the ways in which they developed, strengthened and expanded pan-European links. The sets of activities, tools and tactics they described fall into three broad categories: communication and decision-making, network (building and expanding) and organising joint protests and actions. I am using this classification for the sake of analytical clarity but many activities fall within at least two of these categories.

Transnational communication

Communication tools used by pro-migrant groups across Europe can be divided into two separate, yet sometimes overlapping, categories: on the one hand, groups and campaigns develop internal communication tools and, on the other hand, they design ways to communicate with the wider public, the media, relevant political institutions and other groups focusing on different issues. As many scholars examining internal communication among activist networks have observed, mailing lists are the preferred communication tool for many activist groups and campaigns (Kavada 2007; Saeed, Rohde and Wulf 2011). For example, since 2003, Migreurop has run a public mailing list intended for the ‘circulation of information and debates about the European externalisation policies and detention centres for migrants’.²⁰ The list currently has 982 subscribers,²¹ which includes numerous groups. Subscription is opened to all those who are interested in receiving and sending relevant information. The average number of emails circulated is just over 100 per month.²² However, Migreurop is organised through a number of working

¹⁹ Interview with PICUM’s Director (Skype, June 2012).

²⁰ <http://archives.rezo.net/archives/migreurop.mbox/Y5XOJHJPMKROR5HKN4OMMFDBI5N3LZPV>

²¹ Figures checked on 19 March 2013.

²² These are my own calculations based on list circulation during six months (July to December 2012).

groups devoted to organising the network's activities related to specific topics.²³ All these working groups have their own private mailing lists.

Similarly, all No Border groups in Europe have set up local mailing lists where they exchange information relevant to their particular contexts, but there also exists a Europe-wide list, the Action 2 list, where information and announcements are exchanged between groups and activists across national contexts. The history of this list is an interesting illustration of the dynamics of transnationalisation of pro-migrant activists in Europe and the interaction between online and offline developments. It was agreed to set up the list in October 2004 in order to help coordinating a European day of action for migrants that had been called for at the European Social Forum (ESF) in London that year. This followed the success of the first European day of action 'against detention centres and for the legalisation of all undocumented migrants', which had taken place on 31 January 2004 and had seen demonstrations in 40 cities across Europe.²⁴ This day had been an important step in the networking process necessary for the Europeanisation of migration struggles. The callout for the second day of action aimed to build on this success in order to further develop communication structures transnationally. It was aimed at 'all groups, networks and social movements, not only the ones working on migration-related issues'.²⁵ At the time, groups from Italy, France, Spain, Germany, the UK, Greece, Portugal, Belgium and Slovenia joined the Action 2 mailing list in order to communicate with each other about the demonstrations and actions they were planning in their local and national contexts at this occasion. After the second European day of action took place, the Action 2 list remained active and it is used to this day.

Besides providing transnational communication structures, these mailing lists have also played in key role in 'Europeanising' issues, as one of the participants from Fasti put it:

If we face a problem and we need other activists and organisations to know about it quickly, in order for example to elicit a quick response, well if we send an email to the list, the local problem becomes immediately European.²⁶

In this sense, this communication process among activists and groups contributes to the construction of a more sophisticated analysis and a common discourse, based on the wide range of experiences and information circulated on the lists. It is worth noting here that this form of transnational communication tools were first developed and used by the anti-capitalist movement and later appropriated at various levels and in various ways by other types of groups and networks. They are another telling example of the influence of the 'global' anti-capitalist movement on activists in Europe and the West more generally.

In order to engage in external communication, different types of tools, platforms and activities are used. The more established and institutionalised groups, such as MRN and PICUM, often produce a regular newsletter to keep members and/or interested groups and individuals informed of their activities as well as of relevant political and policy developments. For instance, PICUM first started distributing its newsletter in 2004. In 2011, the organisation decided to set up two different platforms for its public communication work. An electronic bulletin is now circulated on a fortnightly basis in English and a newsletter is produced every three months in six

²³ For example, Migreurop has a group working on detention, another on externalisation, as well as several working groups working on the different aspects of its campaigns.

²⁴ An archive of call outs for action can be found at <http://www.meltingpot.org/rubrica119.html?part=30>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Interview with Anna Sibley from Fasti (Paris, September 2012).

languages (French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Italian) as a summary of the previous six English bulletins.²⁷ The bulletin focuses on significant developments concerning migrant rights at various policy levels (national, EU but UN). It also has a section session on events, publications and PICUM member organisations' activities. PICUM decided to have a more regular bulletin but could not afford fortnightly translation hence the recourse to a quarterly multi-lingual newsletter.²⁸ Similarly, MRN sends out a weekly newsletter to around 5,000 email subscribers in the UK, Europe and beyond. It focuses on policy development in the UK and the EU but instead of simply relaying information produced elsewhere it also contains MRN's own analysis of current topics and links to MRN's blogs these issues. This newsletter was quoted as a reliable source of information on the sector by other individuals working in similar organisations in Europe.²⁹

External communication is also organised through events and publications, which groups, campaigns and organisations undertake in order to spread their message and discourse to a wider public, which might not be familiar with the issues they are working on. This type of external communication often requires a thorough work of 're-framing' so as to make the analyses more accessible and engaging for people who are familiar with pro-migrant work. The different ways in which activists and groups frame their discourse depending on their audience can be exemplified by Migreurop's 'Map of the camps'. The map, of which five editions have been published so far in several languages,³⁰ visually represents the various centres and sites of migrant detention in Europe and at its borders. While Migreurop also produces written literature on the issue of migrant detention, the addition of a map has been a key tool to translate often complex and detailed information into an accessible and easily communicable message.

Organising or participating in public events is also a common tactic used by groups and organisations in order to communicate their message to people who would not usually be on their mailing lists or read their newsletters. Events follow a wide range of formats, from academic-type seminars and panel discussions, workshops and stalls at festivals and conferences, to cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions and film screenings. When participating in events, organisations and groups might participate in an event that is not directly related to migration with the aim of bringing the issue to the attention of a new audience. This could be seen as public communication through a process of mainstreaming migration-related issues into various other circles. In this respect, it is interesting to know that, for many years, autonomous activists who then became part of networks such as No Border and Migreurop, were meeting at the fringe of other transnational manifestations, such as the ESF. This allowed them to meet without necessarily having the resources to organise transnational gatherings themselves. Yet, it was also a way to make sure migration as a theme was represented at these events. In a similar vein, groups and organisations participate in trade union conferences (NOII, Fasti, Gisti) and pan-European conferences (Migreurop, European Alternatives, PICUM).

Building and expanding networks

I have distinguished between communication and network-building activities in the sense that network-building work, both internal (consolidation) and external (expansion), has the clear intention of recruiting and retaining members. 'Maintaining a network alive' says Migreurop

²⁷ Interview with Anna Sibley from Fasti (Paris, September 2012).

²⁸ Interview with Michele Levoy from Picum (Skype, June 2012)

²⁹ Interview with PICUM's Director (Skype, June 2012).

³⁰ The fifth edition is accessible online at http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/jpg/map_18-1_L_Europe_des_camps_2011_v11_EN.jpg.

coordinator Eva Ottavy, 'is not a small task; it is a systematic and organised job. This job requires structures and tools, which allow equal participation of all and solidify the links between our various members'.³¹ The wide availability of online tools, which allow the active involvement of network members or fellow activists, is of course crucial in this regard. Eva Ottavy adds:

We are not a political party, we are an associative network, and what that means is that we do not have a centralised decision-making power and then members implementing them. Our network is a horizontal platform, which means we need tools to allow horizontality in our everyday work. And if you want a network to be transnational, you must develop transnational horizontal networking tools. (...) This is why we have our working groups, and we internationalise the daily life of the network, we have more and more Skype meetings so that our colleagues in other countries can participate as much as people here in France or nearby. And we also do a big work of translation.³²

Migreurop also organises yearly *rencontres internationales* ('international meetings') for its members. The first such meeting took place in Seville, Spain, in 2005. Given the network's wide geographical spread, it has since tried to have these meetings in various countries inside and outside Europe and to cover the travel costs of representatives from its member organisations. There have been *rencontres* in Rabat, Morocco (2006), Paris, France (2009), Istanbul, Turkey (2010) and Cecina, Italy (2011). The *rencontres* are, above all, the main opportunity for network members to meet each other in person and, therefore, play a vital part in the strengthening of the network. As the network's coordinator argues 'meeting in person adds something qualitatively different: it does not mean we cannot work with people we have only met virtually, but something gets strengthened when there is face to face contact'.³³ A number of partner and like-minded organisations are also invited to attend these meetings, which has been crucial to the expansion of the network.

One should not, however, forget the limitations of such inter/transnational meetings: they generally take place on a yearly basis and even where conscious efforts of inclusion are deployed, they will tend to exclude those who cannot obtain visas or whose individual situation prevents them from travelling (having children and so on). Those pragmatic constraints might shape, to an extent, activists' profiles. Though they can be successful at reinforcing links between groups in the case of a tight network like Migreurop, they can sometimes also be mere formalities, with little concrete outcomes. The Communication Officer at MRN admitted that

some of these things [European meetings] are definitely over-estimated. (...) We still go, but I find very little value in that sort of, err... (...) It is sort of an external initiative: a "we need to share experiences, and we need to talk" (...). But it is always the same people, the Brussels people and a few more who are reps of big NGOs in member countries... Or maybe sometimes you meet groups that are so different to you that you don't really see the usefulness of meeting them... On the other hand, some of the less formal ways of collaboration have a lot more added value to them... the problem with that is that it is very difficult to sustain them because you kind of, I mean, you obviously need funding for pretty much everything you do.³⁴

³¹ Interview with Migreurop's Coordinator Eva Ottavy (Paris, September 2012).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Interview with MRN's Communication Officer, Jan Brulc (London, April 2012).

This quote above touches on three important issues characteristic of large transnational events: the risk that only a small cosmopolitan elite will be represented, the varied organisational models across the groups and the obstacles to collaboration that they can pose and the lack of autonomous resources available to most transnational networks and campaigns (see della Porta 2009: 34). However, the limitations that this type of events may entail can be contrasted with the efficiency of what we can call ‘encounter in action’.

Building and strengthening networks can come as a positive by-product of initiatives or activities organising with other primary purposes, such as protesting, and the weaving of links does not only take place on the day and site of the action itself, but throughout the preparation process. Organising a coordinated day of action, for instance, may not eventually lead to a physical encounter between the various groups planning an event in their national settings, yet it may encourage people to be in contact with one another and to collaborate, hence producing and strengthening links and networks. Describing a ESF, Nicole Doerr (2006) notes that:

Often, representatives of local groups or activists from different countries came together at the transnational level with more open-mindedness and curiosity about each other’s histories than at the national level, where cleavages within and between social movements have consolidated along traditional fractures and personal enmities.

This is an interesting remark that can give us an indication of the importance of groups’ participation in transnational events for the consolidation of networks. Almost all the participants to my research said they had participated in at least one transnational event or meeting, such as the World Social Forum, European Social Forum or a European Day of Action. In the section below, I will focus on a number of events and actions that have taken prominence in the migration struggles field in Europe and analyse their ability to disrupt dominant discourses and practices. While I will primarily discuss how tactics are used and shared by activists with the intended purpose of protesting and disrupting, it is also important to keep in mind their networking potential.

Transnationalising protest

Certain forms of European-wide protests have by now become strongly associated with the migration field. An important example in this regard is the No Border camps. No Border camps deserve particular attention as a form of politics and activism that redefines the scope of contentious action in the field of migration in Europe whilst at the same time following a long tradition of protest tactics, that of the protest camp. No Border camps are also of interest, I would argue, because they have influenced the discourses and practices of other pro-migrant groups by bringing direct action to the migration struggle field and by expanding the boundaries of the acceptable discourse when it comes to the issues of migration, sovereignty and citizenship. Before moving on to a detailed analysis of the No Border camps, it is useful to consider once more the specificity of No Border as a network.

It would be difficult to qualify No Border as a ‘movement’, at least in the traditional sense, due to its largely decentralised, diffuse and transnational nature. Many No Border activists consider ‘No Border’ as a label that can be claimed by anyone subscribing to such politics, which tacitly implies a strong anarchist affiliation. This anarchist tradition is better understood in terms of the tactics, methods and practices used by the network, rather than as a strictly defined

ideological position.³⁵ No Border activists believe in horizontal, non-hierarchical structures of organising and reject the binary identities of citizen/non-citizen, legal/illegal.³⁶ The network is a social and political site, that does not operate through a permanent membership model, but rather through a common thread of political beliefs and principles that links a number of radical migrant solidarity groups and campaigns together.

Pausing to reflect on the camp as a contentious political practice in the context of my research is particularly relevant, not least because of the symbolism associated with camps in the field of migration. Indeed, recent literature on migration controls and securitisation has focused on the camp as a 'zone of exception' paradigmatic of sovereign power (Agamben 1998). The image of a pro-migrant camp is in this sense highly powerful. On the other hand, the camp as a tactic of protest (exemplified by peace camps but also, for instance, in campsites set up by homeless people in urban centres³⁷) also has a long history that has largely escaped scholarly examination. The camp must thus be examined as a political act establishing a site of solidarity that asserts the right to presence and belonging (hooks 1990) and proposes a space for the existence of new political subjectivities (Walters 2006).

No Border camps can be analysed within the tradition of camps as a political act: they are set up at particular geographical locations of symbolic relevance for the European border regime and emphasise the relationship between situational experiences and larger dynamics at work in Europe. They also aim to re-politicise the sanitised everydayness of repressive immigration and border controls by exposing their devastating consequences on people's lives.³⁸ No Border camps have taken place at physical borders, at immigration detention centres, near airports associated with forcible deportation and, as was the case with the Strasbourg and Brussels camps, at emblematic sites of EU power and decision-making. These camps can be looked at through Hakin Bey's notion of 'temporary autonomous zones' (Walters 2006) in the sense that they aim to create temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control. Typically, a No Border camp will be a horizontal space of experience-sharing and political debates, with various workshops and discussions, as well as a number of planned and spontaneous direct actions and protests aimed at the 'disruption of the running of the border regime'.³⁹ In addition to their protesting dimension, No Border camps are key moments in the consolidation of the network, with activists from the various groups operating under the label in different countries travelling to the camp. Whilst local and national groups have regular meetings, the camps are the most important occurrence of network-wide (European) meetings, bringing together people from different countries face to face to conjointly develop the analysis and tactics of the network as a whole. They are also moments when the network expands by engaging with the new activists, migrants and local communities and asserting a publicly visible presence through protests and actions in the cities and countries where they take place. The network has also adopted innovative tactics and technological tools to expand beyond the limitations imposed by geographical locations, as described by No Border activist Kuemmer:

[No Border] actions were expanded and the ideas spread. This resulted last summer in a border camp chain, which started in Tarifa in southern Spain (Spain-Africa) and

³⁵ Interview with No Borders UK's Sean (London, April 2012)

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See for example in France: <http://www.youphil.com/fr/article/04149-rencontre-avec-les-expulses-de-la-cite-des-4000?ypcli=ano>

³⁸ Interviews and personal conversations with No Borders UK's activist (London, April 2012 and on-going)

³⁹ Interview with No Borders UK's activist Alex (London, January 2013).

continued through Krykni (Poland-Ukraine), Lendava (Slovenia) and the internal border at the Frankfurt airport (Germany) ... Permanently crossing borders, the noborderTOUR connected border camps with other sites of resistance ... Connections were also made in virtual space: the "borderstream" visualized three border camps that took place simultaneously ... Strasbourg 2002 is now the first event organized by the entire noborder network as a joint action with anti-racist social movements, groups and individuals from 15 different countries.⁴⁰

Organising transnational events, campaigns and days of action is a crucial objective for all the participant networks and groups in a double sense: to stage various forms of public protest as well as to forge and consolidate transnational links and alliances. Eva Ottavy explains that inter-associative campaigns are an increasing focus for Migreurop, which used to primarily focus on internal networking work, but has now realised the 'complementarity between strengthening the network inside, and expanding it outside'.⁴¹ The case of B4P is illustrative in this respect: the campaign was largely supported by Migreurop and its member organisations, but a number of other associations, groups and individual activists also supported it in a variety of ways. According to a participant in B4P:

It was great to take part [in B4P] as it brought us closer to other activists and groups. We might have known them through emails but now we feel we have comrades. And new projects have come out of the campaign, like the Watch the Med idea. This campaign was just the start of something bigger!⁴²

An interesting effect of the transnationalisation of pro-migrant protests in Europe has been the sharing and mixing of tactics and strategies between and across groups and networks. For instance, B4P's idea of a flotilla stopping over at various symbolic points of the EU border regime around the Mediterranean Sea, and staging symbolic actions and protests to denounce the effect of EU policies on people's lives, strongly inspired another campaign: one year later, in the summer of 2013, a new flotilla project called 'Voices from the Border' took place with participants from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the UK. One of the 'Voices from the Borders' main members, a Dutch activist based in Amsterdam, was involved in B4P the previous summer and decided to initiate a similar campaign in his own context and with another set of partners. This is an interesting illustration of the ways in which tactics used by pro-migrant groups and campaigns travel beyond their original site and are re-appropriated and re-used in different spaces by other activists.

Another example of this has to do with the forms of actions that pro-migrant groups and activists stage. Organising conventional symbolic actions and protests has been a common tactic. For instance, at the launch of the Frontexit campaign, in Brussels in March 2013, fake migrant raids were orchestrated with Migreurop activists staging street arrests in public spaces in order to make this practice visible to passers-by. However, some groups and networks, such as the No Border and Stop Deportation networks, have focused on more unconventional direct rather than symbolic actions with the aim of actually interrupting immigration control practices.⁴³ These include actions intended to disrupt, delay or stop immigration raids and forcible deportations,

⁴⁰ http://www.republicart.net/disc/hybridresistance/kuemmer01_en.htm

⁴¹ Interview with Eva Ottavy (Paris: September 2012).

⁴² Interview with a participant in B4P (Lampedusa: July 2012).

⁴³ Interview with No Border activist Sean (London: April 2012).

where activists attempt to physically block the arrests or deportation of migrants. An important aspect of direct action is that it does not try to pressure national and European authorities into stopping or changing their policies. Rather, it aims to disrupt the process through direct intervention, using various types of traditional and innovative protests, occupations and blockades. Such actions also often target other, non-state actors, such as the security companies, travel agents and airlines complicit in forcible deportations. Tactics include the occupation of the company's offices or calling for the boycotts of particular businesses.

This is perhaps the most visible illustration of the way in which migration struggles in Europe have been adopting some of the tactics from the global anti-capitalist or anti-globalisation movement, as well as of the new political and institutional terrain on which some pro-migrant groups are operating. This Europeanisation of immigration law has placed activists in the face of a new type of power and decision-making structure, characterised by its elusiveness and lack of transparency, as seen in the description of the EU as a political structure in earlier chapter. The issues of governance in the field of migration may not necessarily be the same as those in the areas of trade and finance, where anti-globalisation activists understood the unwillingness of individual states to apply pressure on corporate power and, thus, increasingly adopted direct actions tactics aimed both at disrupting international meetings (such as G8 and G20 summits) and at targeting and pressurising corporations. Yet, I would argue that the lack of representation mechanisms in the EU, as well as in national states applying European law, has led to the adoption of similar tactics. Indeed, the process of Europeanisation of migration law and of transnationalisation of migration struggles has led to the radicalisation of the 'repertoires of contention' used by pro-migrant activists and groups. For example, tactics originally used mostly by No Border-type groups, such as the denunciation of and 'reputational damage' to companies and businesses involved in the border regime and the 'deportation machine', are now commonly used by other more traditional pro-migrant groups and campaigns.

The history of this convergence of analytical, political and strategic frameworks and its relation to the Europeanisation of migration and asylum law on the hand and the development of other transnational social movements in Europe on the other hand was summed up by one of the participants as follows:

Our first attempts (...) to work with European partners were a lot more difficult (...) I really think there was a shift, in the years 2000s, in the relationships we were able to establish with our European partners. I think one aspect is that indeed migration policies have Europeanised and that similar issues started to emerge (...) And there also was, as I mentioned with the European Social Forum and the World Social Forums, the influence of the social movements, that started developing in all domains, not only migration but a lot of domains – housing, women struggles... (...) It started mixing people, mixing activists, making them meet, speak to each other... (...) And this created a sort of culture that enabled the emergence of a common openness, of common values and of common actions.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Interview with Claire Rodier (Paris: September 2012).

Conclusion

The process of harmonisation of migration and asylum laws in the EU has involved legal, discursive and practical developments, which have caused grievances and encouraged contentious reactions within the migrant solidarity activist scene in different European countries. The transnationalisation of resistance has been seen as essential in order to ‘match the level of the attack’, or has organically developed in response to some of the transnational practices of the EU. However, activists seem to require concrete examples of the consequences of the legal and discursive developments regarding migration and asylum in the EU for their awareness of the importance of activism at the European level to be raised. An important question that my research is also addressing is that of the emergence of collective, transnational European identities and alternative political subjectivities. Indeed, many of my participants only saw Europe as a negative reference point and not as a space where positive political interventions could take place. Instead, a series of regional, international or non-European cross-border identities were formulated and re-enacted. The question of whether migrant solidarity struggles in Europe can become a strong and robust social movement in the absence of a unified discourse and a shared identity thus remains to be explored.

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