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Convivial Solidarity for refugees: a case study of Danish civil society

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2018

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Duru, D. (2018). *Convivial Solidarity for refugees: a case study of Danish civil society*. Abstract from Memories, normative ideals and empathic solidarities in Europe in the aftermath of refugee arrivals in 2015–16, Berlin, Germany. https://www.sowi.hu-berlin.de/de/lehrbereiche/migrationandtansnationalism/staff/1686896/kosmos/abs_duru.pdf

Total number of authors:

1

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Memories, normative ideals and empathic solidarities in Europe in the aftermath of refugee arrivals in 2015–16

Humboldt University of Berlin, 19–20 October 2018

Deniz Neriman Duru

Convivial Solidarity for refugees: a case study of Danish civil society

While the effects of the 2008 economic crisis are still ongoing, the fortress of Europe has been closing off its borders to the incoming refugees as well as closing off its eyes to the thousands of refugees sinking in the Mediterranean. European solidarity has been challenged by the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in the ways in which European countries share the responsibility in accommodating refugees and providing them the basic needs as well as providing humanitarian support outside of its borders. Even though Denmark has been relatively less effected by the crisis, the civil society sector experienced financial cuts and retrenchment.

This chapter investigates the scope of transnational solidarity action by Danish civil society organisations that support migrants and refugees. Our data comes from the Transsol (Horizon 2020 EU funded) project, on transnational solidarity towards vulnerable people. We first describe the types of solidarity actions towards refugees (e.g. offering basic/urgent needs, dissemination in public sphere, cultural activities), aims (e.g. combat discrimination, promote health, education and welfare, promote and achieve political change) and routes to achieve these aims (e.g. collective protest action, raising awareness, lobbying). Secondly, we document the types of beneficiaries, such as children, racial/ethnic minorities, general public. Thirdly, we explore the scope of action, which can be domestic/national (e.g. providing local support or fighting for the preservation of the Danish welfare state) or transnational (e.g. charity in Africa or mobilising for global justice). Finally, we investigate the impact of the crises (financial crisis and the increasing number of incoming refugees in 2015) in transnational solidarity action. It is argued that crises can be both an opportunity

and a threat for the mobilisation of transnational solidarity support action. Our findings suggest that even though these TSOs (Transnational Solidarity Organisations) provide more local/national solidarity actions due to financial limits, they aim for transnational convivial solidarity, supporting an agenda of global justice, trying to make the world a better place for everyone.

Building on mixed-methods, we first searched hubs/subhubs identified by keyword search (refugee, migrant, asylum combined with organization, association, network, initiative) where there are large number of links (total of 267) connecting to the websites of civil society organisations supporting migrants and refugees. These hubs/subhubs were retrieved by search engine experts. Then, selected (random sample) 100 organisations and social movements that has at least one transnational solidarity characteristic (e.g. support and beneficiaries beyond national borders, international partners). In order to understand how the crises affected the solidarity actions, the challenges faced, reasons and reflections on these solidarity actions, we conducted ten interviews between August and October, 2016 in Copenhagen with transnational solidarity organisations-TSOs, which are comprised of small NGOs, charity organisations, grassroots movements, and protest groups within the field of migration and refugee support. Our informants articulated that, they do not only focus on helping refugees or migrants, but perceive the society as a whole – Danes, migrants, refugees all together, on the same boat. Thus, they believe that helping someone else (migrants/refugees) is also helping yourself (ethnic Danes). For this reason, their solidarity actions are convivial; they build on living togetherness.

Deniz Neriman Duru is an assistant professor (tenure-track) at the Department of Communication and Media at Lund University. She holds a DPhil/PhD degree in Anthropology from the University of Sussex and worked in Sociology Department at the University of York and at the Media, Cognition and Communication Department at the University of Copenhagen. She has taken part in the collaborative Transsol Project (funded by Horizon 2020), which is on transnational solidarity towards refugees, unemployed and

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