

Solidarity in the City: Platforms for Refugee Self-Support in Thessaloniki¹

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Background on Thessaloniki

Following the arrival in Greece of approximately 124,000 refugees and migrants between January and July 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees declared a ‘humanitarian emergency’ in Europe, requiring ‘an urgent Greek and European response’.² With 50,000 arrivals in July alone (up 20,000 from the previous month) the UN stated there had been a ‘750% increase in the number of refugees and migrants from the same period in 2014’.³ Many of these arrivals saw Greece as a country of transit;⁴ predominantly, they aimed to reach countries in Northern Europe. However, following the closure of Greece’s Northern border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)⁵ – first to all those not of Syrian, Iraqi or Afghan nationality, in November 2015, and then to all refugees, in March 2016 – Northern Greece moved from a site of transit to one of containment. By May 2016, an estimated 28,726 refugees and migrants were stranded in formal and informal camps in Northern Greece.⁶ The initial humanitarian response, under the instruction of the Greek Government, and with the support of the Greek army, UNHCR, humanitarian NGOs and volunteers, was to house refugees in makeshift camps in disused, mostly ex-industrial, sites across Northern Greece – with Thessaloniki, which is an hour’s drive from the Greece-FYROM border at Idomeni, as an administrative centre.

While refugees were undoubtedly present in Thessaloniki during this time (and others have arrived since), no official data exists on the number of people or the support systems being used, with the focus of the humanitarian system on delivering programming in the predominantly rural and peri-urban⁷ campsites. Although there was already significant autonomous movement by refugees to Thessaloniki, it took the harsh winter weather of late 2016 to force a rapid change in strategy, with residents in uninhabitable camps (some referred to as ‘not fit for humans’ by one member of the international response) being moved into urban accommodation – hotels and apartments – of which a significant proportion was in the greater area of Thessaloniki.⁸ Various humanitarian agencies started to shift focus to responding in the city as camps emptied out. One interviewee asserted that, by March 2017, at times

there 'seemed to be more staff in some camp activities than beneficiaries'. International humanitarian organisations undertook rapid assessment of the situation in Thessaloniki in January and February 2017, seeking to define what their roles should be in an increasingly urban response. Thessaloniki went from being predominantly a site of administration for the international response (and thereby a base for a significant number of humanitarian workers⁹ and volunteers), with only local and national organisations predating the 'refugee crisis' supporting refugees in the city, to being itself a focus of programming by the international humanitarian response.

In March 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated 'The time has come to invest in the self-reliance of asylum-seekers and local integration of refugees in Greece, so that they can better contribute to their host society'.¹⁰ This statement drew on eight key recommendations published by UNHCR in February 2017, including to 'increase self-reliance opportunities for asylum-seekers'.¹¹ During the research period – March to April 2017 – international humanitarian actors were mainly in a planning phase, seeking to assess the best ways to engage in the urban context. This included members of the Urban Working Group, discussing how to increase the self-reliance of refugees in the city. At the same time, international NGOs¹² were providing various protection, health, education, and food and nutrition programmes in the city, almost exclusively for those in UNHCR coordinated hotel accommodation. A number of INGO staff members stated that they were struggling to 'find the beneficiaries' (since there was 'no tracking of Persons of Concern'), beyond those they were assisting through UNHCR's coordination.

Introduction: 'A City of Refugees'

Egnatia Street runs through the heart of Thessaloniki, from east to west. A busy commercial street lined with shops and offices, it takes its name from Via Egnatia, a road built by the Romans in the 2nd century BC that stretched from modern day Istanbul to the Adriatic. Via Egnatia passed through what is today Turkey, Greece, FYROM, and Albania on its route westward to Rome. Initially built by Rome to enable the suppression of the natives of the newly conquered region of Macedonia,¹³ over the centuries Via Egnatia facilitated the movement of goods, people and cultures between east and west, and Thessaloniki became an important trade hub on the route. Today, Egnatia Street bears many signs of Thessaloniki's diverse history, which, in part owing to its location in the Southern Balkans, has been shaped by a wide range of influences. Towards the western end of Egnatia Street, close to an 11th century Byzantine Church and just under the ruins of the city's Roman Forum, is Hamza Bey Mosque. Built by the Ottomans in the 15th century, it is one of three, non-functioning Ottoman era mosques in the city. To the east, the church of Acheiropoietos, built in the 5th century, sits just off Egnatia Street. A plaque outside informs passers-by of aspects of the city's complex history: 'When Thessaloniki fell [to] the Ottomans in 1430, Acheiropoietos was the first church to be converted into a mosque by Sultan Murad...During the years 1922-1923 [it] hosted refugees from Asia Minor, and no sooner than 1930 was restored to Christian worship'. As one local interviewee stated, 'the city reminds you of its past'. As the capital of Macedonia – a historically contested region, a section of which only became part of Greece following the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913¹⁴ – Thessaloniki has 'a long past of multicultural coexistence and trans-local importance in the Balkan region'.¹⁵ In the context of increasingly tightened borders within the European Union and in surrounding countries, Thessaloniki's location also means it is currently one of a handful of urban hubs for refugees and migrants on the periphery of Europe.

Thessaloniki has long been a convergence point for refugees and migrants, a place of permanent settlement and transit. Over the last century, the city has received groups fleeing the Balkan Wars (1912, 1913); from Armenia (following its incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1922); from Kosovo (1999); and those escaping conflict, poverty and repression in a number of African and Asian countries (perhaps most significantly Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, occupied Palestinian territories, Nigeria, Algeria, and Congo) as well as from other Balkan and Eastern European countries over recent decades. Resettled Greek populations have also shaped the city, following the voluntary population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria in 1919, the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations in 1922-23, the movement of Greek Cypriots from 1974 onwards, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990.¹⁶ Given such frequent and at times sizeable population flows over the

last century, the city has been significantly shaped by migration. Settlement following the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations, for example, led to a 40% rise in the city's population between 1920-1928 and the development of many of the modern city boroughs.¹⁷ At the city's Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki is named 'the "capital of refugees", having been a safe haven for the persecuted and the destitute'.¹⁸ The problems faced by new arrivals to the city are also outlined at the Museum, which states that 'employment, social and political integration tormented refugees for many years'.¹⁹ A number of local interviewees also referred to Thessaloniki as 'a city of refugees'²⁰ when discussing local reactions to recent refugee arrivals – with some referring to their family's direct experience as refugees (including grandparents and great grandparents).²¹

But if the city has a history of receiving refugees, humanitarian agencies responding to the 'refugee crisis' since 2015 have often exposed their unfamiliarity with operating in the city. Some local interviewees suggested that international humanitarian actors had yet to fully understand the urban context²² and the existing forms of refugee support the city was providing. An interviewee involved in the local government's refugee response cautioned: 'INGOs should be aware of the whole picture in the city – all of the civil society action, not just the formal projects and programmes. Understanding the context is not just about what other NGOs are doing'.

This paper seeks to contribute to building a 'whole picture' of the city, exploring refugee support mechanisms developed within Thessaloniki that have not been captured by humanitarian NGO and UNHCR assessments of Thessaloniki to date. Many refugees and migrants have been engaging in practices of 'self-support' – practices to meet every day 'basic' needs, which do not necessarily meet or conform to UNHCR's definition of 'self-reliance'. This paper examines these self-support practices, as well as alternative forms of refugee assistance, with a focus on the social and political use of spaces provided by local autonomous solidarity initiatives.

Practices of Solidarity in the City

Although opinions on the arrival of refugees among the city's population are naturally diverse, and tensions have arisen,²³ there has been a tolerant, if not welcoming, response from a significant proportion of the city's population over recent years. One local interviewee working for a Greek NGO described her surprise at the strength of the response from locals to the 'refugee crisis' from 2015 onwards, with people finding the NGO's office to offer help and donations. Even though questions have since been raised by professional humanitarian organisations about how successfully these good intentions have translated into effective assistance and protection of refugees, it is indicative of local

sentiment at the time. Since 2015, a significant proportion of locals have undertaken a variety of voluntary actions, including accommodating people in their houses,²⁴ volunteering at refugee camps outside the city (including at Idomeni), and participating in the city's grassroots responses, activism and political organising, as well as organising around specific skills and expertise. For example, both prior to and since 2015, a group of lawyers has conducted pro-bono legal work in solidarity with refugees and migrants, and medical professionals have worked with solidarity clinics to provide primary healthcare for those unable to access state health services. Church networks were also reported to have been a source of support for refugees²⁵ – acting as hubs for information, including on jobs for those refugees with permission to work.²⁶ Many interviewees discussed these local actions explicitly under the term 'solidarity'.

The 'Greek crisis' – following the global financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing Greek (and European) debt crisis from 2010 – had a crucial impact on the development of solidarity practices and initiatives in Greece.²⁷ Sotiropoulos and Bourikos state that 'since 2010, the economic crisis has functioned as a catalyst which has revitalised Greek civil society, particularly with regard to social solidarity, and has allowed new informal types of civic-minded activity to emerge'.²⁸ This has included a variety of localised, popular responses, emerging across Greece, that question both the validity of post-crisis policies and the specific economic and political logic that underpins them. As in other places, one dominant aspect of the local responses in Thessaloniki has been a critical engagement with the idea of 'representative democracy',²⁹ and the use of direct democracy – the practice of making decisions 'horizontally'³⁰ in assembly format – as a central form of organising. Over recent years, a number of economic initiatives broadly referred to as part of the 'solidarity economy' have also emerged in the city, in part in response to the economic consequences of the crisis. Using the concepts of direct democracy, these initiatives have sought to operate under alternative social relations that challenge dominant capital-labour relations, neo-classical economic theory, and hierarchical relations of power,³¹ promoting principles of egalitarian participation and social solidarity.³²

As one interviewee engaged in solidarity initiatives in the city suggested, a connection between this critical engagement and the rejection of xenophobic narratives in the city over recent years merits further investigation. This connection was seen as especially significant given that xenophobic narratives have often focused on exploiting fears articulated in 'economic' terms – including reference to competition over jobs, suppression of wages, increased competition over resources and access to (and quality of) services. An article written in collaboration with members of central components of the local solidarity initiatives³³ asserted that responses to the recent increase in refugees in the city 'marked a moral victory for Greece's social movements,

which throughout the years of the crisis have not only been resisting the assault of the popular classes and creating grassroots alternatives, but have also been combating racism, xenophobia and fascism at all levels: in the neighbourhood, in the streets and in public discourse'.³⁴

Thessaloniki has a 'long history of political organising at the local level',³⁵ shaped by the urban context, including its industry and demography. Its industrial and trading history – as a commercial port with substantial industrial areas and links to nearby agricultural land – has given the city a significant working-class population and culture.³⁶ As a city with a number of large universities, Thessaloniki also has a significant proportion of young, well-educated residents. The two main universities – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (the single largest university campus in Greece by number of students) and the University of Macedonia – are located in the centre of the city. A local informant noted that the student culture of parts of the city fosters a spirit of resistance, solidarity and a questioning of the status quo.³⁷ For example, the area of Navarino (near Aristotle University) has long been fertile ground for political debate, musicians and collectives, and was the site of the first squat in Greece. A number of the local interviewees currently involved in solidarity initiatives in the city and their refugee responses had attended university in Thessaloniki.

Solidarity Initiatives and the Local Refugee Response

A significant aspect of the local response to 'the refugee crisis' has been through the city's 'autonomous' solidarity initiatives – autonomous on the grounds that they are 'self-organising' (run on the basis of direct democracy, through assemblies) and broadly seek to manage themselves 'without [a] relationship to the state or market'.³⁸ Although the reality is more nuanced (for example, initiatives pay rent on the buildings they occupy, and engage daily in local markets), it is indicative of an ideal that informs their approach. These initiatives are also premised on the concept of 'solidarity', which in each case appears to be based both on the rejection of the social relations promoted by both state and NGO approaches to support, and on the explicit premise that the initiatives – including solidarity kitchens, health clinics for the uninsured, non-food item (NFI) stores and activist groups – are open to anyone in need. They are founded in, and supported by, already existing structures that had developed over recent years and decades to support the city's population. They are also all developed within – and in response to – the city context; are aimed, primarily, at the city level; and are operated by people with a lived understanding of the local and national contexts. Notably, a number of these initiatives developed in response to the economic and social consequences of Greece's financial crisis from 2008 onwards, in response to the existing

presence of refugees and migrants in the city before 2015, as well as developing out of broader political and social movements in the city.

Referring to the increase in refugee arrivals to the city, one local NGO worker stated, 'In a way, we were much more prepared to respond because of the [Greek] crisis – we had solidarity kitchens, political movements, grassroots responses'. This 'preparedness' to respond among local groups existed not only in a material sense, of being able to organise and work through existing infrastructures to provide for basic needs and services, but also in political and social senses. This is demonstrated by a closer look at the aims and actions of these initiatives. The three largest are Steki Metanaston, Micropolis, and Oikopolis, although other smaller and more service-focused collectives are also very active, such as the Social Clinic of Solidarity.³⁹

Steki Metanaston, a 'Social Centre – Immigrants Place', developed from the Antiracist Initiative of Thessaloniki – an initiative established in 1998 as 'an open coordination space...for the social and political collectives of Thessaloniki fighting against racism'.⁴⁰ Opened in the centre of the city in 2004, The Social Centre ('Steki'⁴¹) was conceived as a site for hosting solidarity practices, with immigrants, as well as other political movements. It is managed on the basis of weekly open participative assemblies. In 2009, the centre opened a new 'Immigrant's Place', named Room 39, to provide greater space for 'a more participatory and open response'.⁴² This combined with Steki's response to homelessness in the city (a phenomenon that grew significantly during the Greek crisis⁴³), where actions involving refugees and migrants grew as the perceived need grew. These actions – labelled 'activities...of material solidarity'⁴⁴ by the Centre – currently include daily food distribution, the serving of hot food at the Centre on Saturdays and Sundays, a weekly clothing distribution session, legal support and referrals, a women's support group,⁴⁵ and classes such as Greek, Maths and Arabic. In addition to Room 39's activities, Steki also has a computer pool and exchange library; provides space for socialising, discussions, assemblies, concerts, parties, film screenings and arts activities (dance, music and theatre); and tutors Junior High School and High School students.

Micropolis, a 'social space for freedom...a miniature of the city that we want',⁴⁶ is another solidarity initiative in the middle of the city. It grew directly out of Greece's 'December 2008 uprisings', which started in reaction to the shooting of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police in Athens but developed into a wider response that expressed frustration with the economic and political context in Greece,⁴⁷ including rising unemployment, social inequality and proposed social and economic reforms aimed at ensuring Greece's competitiveness in international markets, including reforms to pensions. Over the following years, a movement with a strong anti-austerity message and horizontal approaches to organising developed, with the city's youth and student population playing a central role. Micropolis aims to create

a space ‘where people will not function by means of profit and competitiveness, but in terms of social solidarity’.⁴⁸ It includes a self-organised bar and concert space, a space for children (aimed to be co-managed by children, parents and teachers), a computer room with free internet access, an assembly room, a library, a film screening group, and a cooperative shop. In support of refugees and migrants, it also facilitates legal support, cultural exchange and solidarity events, provides hairdressing services, and holds assembly meetings with refugees and migrants – including to discuss more appropriate support for their needs and interests in the city.

Oikopolis, whose aim is to support ‘a parallel city for ecology and solidarity’,⁴⁹ developed out of a long-standing ecological movement in Thessaloniki. In 2012, Oikopolis started organising to support homeless people in the city. This included providing a nightly hot meal (which still happens, and which refugees now cook for everyone on Tuesdays) and a weekly clothing and food distribution. The organisation built on this experience and the infrastructure it had developed when it responded in the border camp at Idomeni from February 2015, providing clothes, water and food – eventually setting up a kitchen in collaboration with others that provided between 300 and 600 meals a day. Following the Idomeni response, the organisation continues to support a number of families in the city whom it had supported through the Idomeni kitchen, in finding housing, food, clothing and access to medical services. Predominantly, however, Oikopolis is a social space in the city for locals, refugees and migrants. It is a place for meeting and socialising, for events, for information and referrals, and for language classes.

It is within this context, and with the presence of these initiatives in the city, that various humanitarian organisations are planning to support refugee self-reliance.

Understandings of Self-Reliance and Practices of Self-Support

At the time of research, the question of how to increase the self-reliance of refugees in the city was increasingly being discussed by key actors in the humanitarian response, including UNHCR and the Urban Working Group. Cash programming had just been rolled out by UNHCR, while longer-term plans for livelihoods were in initial planning stages, led by the Municipality of Thessaloniki and UNHCR. For those registered for resettlement under the EU Relocation Programme or considered ‘vulnerable’,⁵⁰ UNHCR leads the provision of accommodation,⁵¹ cash for those eligible,⁵² and – to varying extents – supports access to other basic services for health, child education and protection. This is the group that the international humanitarian response and a significant proportion of the local NGO response are providing services for – and whose potential self-reliance they are considering. For those not

reached by UNHCR support, as discussed below, very little support is available from NGOs.

Both international organisations and local government appeared to have distinct understandings of self-reliance for those intending to leave the city and those likely to stay. For those under the EU Relocation Programme, self-reliance is broadly taken to be the ability of refugees to access services without support while in the city, in a form of temporary integration (in which, as one interviewee working for an international actor stated, there would be ‘no more babysitting’). According to local government, it is also dependent on collaboration with destination country authorities to begin certifying the qualifications of refugees, so as to minimise delays in them being able to re-join employment or study once they reach their destination.⁵³ ‘Cultural orientation’, in which refugees ‘learn to be self-reliant in the European context...learning European skills’ (for example, by focussing on ‘practical aspects of life in Europe’, such as how to navigate transportation systems and use ATMs, and by ‘learning about democracy’), was also mentioned as a way in which self-reliance processes could be initiated in a context of transit. One interviewee from an international organisation asserted that this was particularly important since he thought it likely that many refugees would be relocated to a small town or city, where there would not be the same number of actors to support assimilation as currently active in Thessaloniki.

For those receiving UNHCR support, understandings of self-reliance focused on transportation and mobility; access to information on, and whilst using, the city’s services – particularly health services;⁵⁴ aspects beyond ‘basic needs’, such as social needs and support for practicing a trade, developing skills, working towards aspirations, or otherwise being occupied in a way they considered valuable.⁵⁵

UNHCR defines self-reliance as ‘the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet basic needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity’.⁵⁶ Almost none of the refugee interviewees for this research were self-reliant by this definition, nor did many think there were significant possibilities to become so in the context. Those in the relocation programme were reliant on the support of UNHCR for accommodation and cash, along with other services provided by NGOs; and the majority of those not under the umbrella of UNHCR’s support were more focused on meeting immediate needs (often without – and at times at odds with – sustainability, dignity, personal safety, and access to education, for example). This paper distinguishes these processes of self-support, which are focused on more basic aspects of survival and protection, as well as other social and political activities, as fundamentally different from UNHCR’s definition of self-reliance.

According to interview data collected for this research, practices of self-support by refugees, and challenges for self-reliance, vary according to social

factors including age, gender, and nationality. The key factor for the provision of accommodation and other support by UNHCR is whether, based on their nationality, refugees fall under the EU Relocation Programme's criteria. Eligible nationalities are determined on the basis of EUROSTAT data for the previous quarter,⁵⁷ whereby a nationality must receive an average recognition rate in recipient countries of 75% or greater, which, in the context of Thessaloniki essentially applies only to Syrians.

For those nationalities thereby unsupported by the UNHCR-led response⁵⁸ and NGOs,⁵⁹ including Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Algerians, Egyptians and Nigerians, self-support practices, and understandings of self-reliance, focused much more on meeting 'basic needs' (most notably shelter, food and water, and access to informal employment opportunities), as well as on questions of how to spend their days in a valuable way. Since refugees⁶⁰ in the city do not have the right to work formally until they receive refugee status, and even then very few opportunities exist, both informal-market⁶¹ and non-monetary forms of self-support – like food recycling and squatting⁶² – can play a key role for a significant number of refugees and migrants supporting themselves in the city.

Shared nationality with refugees and migrants already living in the city was also a key factor of support for some new arrivals.⁶³ At times, this can be the most significant factor in helping arrivals to find accommodation (including squats), develop networks and informal livelihood opportunities (which can also be heavily based on nationality), and understand and navigate the city.

Gender was also found to be a significant factor in practices of self-support in the city. Refugees and migrants engaging with the city's solidarity initiatives, for example, tended to be mostly male – and where women engaged during the period of research, this tended to be limited to accessing material support, rather than fuller participation (for example in assemblies). Although this reflected the demographic of refugees in the city (arrivals to Greece were 52% men, 17.7% women and 30.3% children in 2016),⁶⁴ and, as mentioned by one interviewee, of cultural norms around appropriate behaviour for women (for example, women were much more likely to be travelling – and spending the majority of their time – with families), solidarity initiatives might do more to interrogate the gendered nature of their support (for example, identifying gendered barriers to participation in assemblies).

Social and Political Practices of Self-Support in the City's Solidarity Initiatives

Although autonomous solidarity initiatives provide material support, it is the social and political processes they facilitate that offer perhaps the most interesting and important contribution to refugee self-support. These processes take place both in the absence of, and in addition to, assistance

from UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs. Given the limited number of refugees engaging in the solidarity initiatives, the impact of these processes should not be overstated. Nevertheless, they can be considered emerging practices that suggest alternative ways of understanding and approaching refugee support and self-reliance in the city.

Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives support the political engagement of refugees in the city, both by facilitating refugee voice in the day-to-day running of the initiatives, and by providing a platform for organising to challenge broader political practice – including by encouraging democratic or civic participation of those engaged in the initiatives. One solidarity initiative states: 'Our target is not the creation of another political group but the creation of a social centre which will host different groups, actions and initiatives'.⁶⁵ Participation in a solidarity initiative is also inherently political in and of itself (whether participants make this choice explicitly or not), given the broadly stated aims of building alternative economic and social approaches.

To different extents, each of the solidarity initiatives supports refugee participation in decision-making through participative, horizontal assemblies. Steki, for example, holds weekly open assembly meetings to discuss the management of the centre, as well as assemblies for specific issues – including those experienced by refugees and migrants. At another of the city's collectives, participants (a mixture of refugees, migrants and solidarity actors) also discuss the management of the space in an open assembly format on a weekly basis. Discussion includes the week's rota, plans for developing the collective's income and how to spend it, updates on the context for refugees and migrants in the city, information on available services, and other aspects of community life.

The use of an assembly approach aims to give each person the opportunity to engage with and participate in planning,⁶⁶ with the possibility of influencing the approach and work of the collective. One interviewee from a local NGO stated: 'refugee participants react really well to the approach taken by the social spaces', noting that she often refers refugees and migrants to the initiatives. As one interviewee explained, participation in the assembly process feels particularly significant given a wider context that so often silences refugees and migrants, and in which humanitarian responses have offered little opportunity for input and influence. In such cases, assemblies appear to have the potential to facilitate a sense of agency solely through being recognised as an active subject, which research has shown has implications for what some participants then feel they are able to do.⁶⁷ Supporting meaningful elements of democratic or civic participation is also significant in a context of transit, in which conventional understandings of citizenship tied to nation states do not necessarily apply.⁶⁸

The assembly approach used by the city's solidarity initiatives also creates the conditions for shared problem solving and collaboration – at times supporting refugees to exchange experience and offer skills to support each other (although

this no doubt also happens outside of the assembly environment). For example, at one assembly meeting during the research period, one participant who had recently been granted refugee status in Greece coordinated with other participants in the social space to support them in their processes of applying for asylum.

Beyond participation in assemblies, a number of interviewees felt the personal significance of being a valued member of a social space – of contributing to a shared project, finding value through time spent there and, for some, through voluntary work. One participant, a Syrian student who had been in his final year at university, teaches Arabic in one of the social spaces while he is waiting for his relocation to be processed. In the absence of opportunities to continue or begin studying or training – or legally engage in work – a number of refugees and migrants interviewed were volunteering their time and skills, including in supporting others to develop skills (like learning languages), cooking for the spaces, or involving themselves in other ways in the day-to-day running of the initiative. Through such practices, solidarity initiatives (and the social networks they provide a platform for) support participants to use what agency they have in the context to shape their own time spent in the city.

The solidarity initiatives also provide a physical place for the development of networks of support. One interviewee described how those he met through a solidarity initiative had supported his application for asylum, and then once he had received asylum in Greece, in finding a job (as a translator for a Greek NGO) and an apartment. Some self-organising groups also cultivate networks of support. For example, when refugees were known in the solidarity initiatives to be providing for their shelter by squatting in abandoned buildings, self-organising groups have coordinated with pro-bono legal support groups to assist in cases of arrest, and found locals to assume legal responsibility for those arrested, in order to expedite their release from custody. Another solidarity initiative was in the process of organising the collection of data on the dysfunctional Skype asylum application process,⁶⁹ by encouraging as many participants as possible to apply using the space's internet facilities, so that the lack of response could then be recorded as evidence of the system's failings.

Beyond these types of participation, the solidarity initiatives provide space for leisure activities and semblances of normality. For example, a number of Syrians held birthday parties at the spaces during the period of research. They also address basic human needs for interaction for those experiencing the isolating effects of dispersed accommodation in an unfamiliar city. For example, at a number of the social spaces, locals, solidarity actors, refugees and migrants eat together, and hold cultural events that share aspects of refugees and migrants' cultures with locals and others. They also provide access to reading materials and spaces for study, and free access to the internet.

Although solidarity initiatives involve limited numbers of people, the significance of the social aspects of support that they contribute to the wider

civil society response, including the friendships that have developed in these spaces, should not be underestimated. A number of refugees have returned, or intend to return, to Thessaloniki, citing better possibilities for social aspects of support in the city. One participant expressed his intentions to return to Thessaloniki once he receives refugee status, citing the support of local groups and friends he had made in the city, and the comparison with news he had received from friends in Germany, who had reported feeling isolated from the local community, and where there were perceived to be limited social opportunities for self-support.

Another interviewee, a Syrian who had received refugee status in Germany after travelling there in 2015, when the borders were still open, had since returned to Thessaloniki (albeit not permanently as yet). Discussing how he felt arriving in Germany in 2015, he said ‘it felt like a victory at the time, but it was a fake victory. My life in Germany is not full. I want my days to feel full’. His return to Thessaloniki represents the opportunities he perceives in the city beyond basic survival, in spite of the fact that he was accumulating significant debt in order to be there. This interviewee spent his time engaging with refugees, locals and international volunteers – including through the city’s solidarity initiatives – doing what he could to support other refugees in the city, and acting as a ‘fixer’ for a variety of actors seeking access to refugee populations, such as a Syrian family living in an apartment in the city, or people in nearby camps (where he still has friends waiting for their resettlement applications to be processed).

The approaches taken by the city’s solidarity initiatives have resulted in qualitatively different forms and experiences of support and self-support to those resulting from the humanitarian response to date. For example, a number of interviewees reflected that the city’s local groups, especially its solidarity initiatives, are much more inclined to listen to refugees than humanitarian organisations, and to adapt their actions accordingly. For example, Alkyone,⁷⁰ a day centre in Thessaloniki that developed from Oikopolis’ refugee response, responded to participant’s requests for washing machines and dryers as something required to better support themselves; something that no other actors in the city had thought to provide, or responded to requests for. In contrast, interviewees expressed their frustration with humanitarian NGO responses. One interviewee who had recently received refugee status in Greece, reflecting on his experience in Thessaloniki, stated: ‘NGOs don’t know how to listen’. Another, an interviewee from a local NGO, stated ‘INGOs have been deciding what people need and how they need it’.

An interviewee working for an international agency stated: ‘Our communication with refugee communities is horrible’. During the research period, there was much talk of ‘assessment fatigue’ among the refugee population in the city, but, as pointed out by the interviewee, ‘there would not be fatigue if people felt this information was used to inform the approach

being taken, to improve their position – then they would likely be happy to keep providing information to humanitarian organisations’. The fatigue, it was suggested, came from the extractive nature of the information collection and use – the feeling among interviewees that their time was being wasted, since it would not change the approach taken by the response – and the lack of coordination between humanitarian actors often asking the same questions of the same people.

The abilities of humanitarian NGOs to work iteratively and to involve intended beneficiaries as meaningful participants, including to influence local programming and policy, have long been questioned.⁷¹ In the urban context, however, with such a variety of different actors present and responding in different ways, according to different logics, the problems actors from the humanitarian sector face in delivering appropriate programming – their difficulty in adapting plans based on feedback – is perhaps starker than in other contexts, where there might be less ‘competition’ or choice. This contrast in approaches to communication and planning is significant for the potential participation of refugees in the humanitarian response’s planning for self-reliance – with current approaches implying that refugee input into the development of plans for their self-reliance will be limited. Meanwhile, the city’s solidarity initiatives have been actively engaging on a day-to-day basis, facilitating opportunities for refugees to undertake processes of self-support.

Unlike humanitarian actors in Greece, the city’s solidarity initiatives do not generally distinguish between refugees (or, more specifically, those defined by humanitarian agencies as ‘persons of concern’) and migrants, or between these groups and locals in need of support.⁷² One informant explained that this was especially significant as ‘it responds to humanitarian principles, which the relocation scheme in particular doesn’t respect’ (since it offers assistance based predominantly on nationality⁷³ rather than needs).⁷⁴ The politicised nature of support, which leads to this segregation between those classified as ‘persons of concern’ and others, makes little sense to local solidarity initiatives. These groups generally plan their activities for all those requiring support – those affected by conflict, poverty, discrimination and repression, both locals and non-Greeks – as well as those who fit the definition of a ‘person of concern’, as used by humanitarian actors in the context. As one solidarity initiative states, the aim is ‘organisation of solidarity and material support towards all oppressed and excluded social groups’.⁷⁵ Under this approach, solidarity is understood not just as the practice of supporting people materially (‘assistance and protection’), but also as a challenge to the approaches and wider context that prevent people from supporting themselves. Instead of treating the situation of refugees in the city as a ‘crisis’ – language which might downplay many of the political and economic choices that have been made at a number of levels to create or sustain this situation – the solidarity approach focuses on identifying and denouncing the politics of these causes.

Where the state-led response (which set the parameters for the humanitarian response) has predominantly placed refugees outside of view and away from cities, the response by local solidarity initiatives has aimed to place and include refugees at ‘the centre of social life, where they can be accepted and included within society’.⁷⁶ In actively encouraging this integration, these spaces provide a platform for people to engage with others who may be, in different ways, economically, socially or politically marginalised⁷⁷ – other refugees and migrants, as well as locals. As such, their approach supports the potential for narratives and practices of ‘shared struggle’ to emerge, in which participants are more likely to see their interests as aligned rather than antithetical (as can often be the case between ‘host’ and refugee populations). In this regard, solidarity, understood as ‘a transformative process which works through the negotiation and re-negotiation of forms of political identification’,⁷⁸ provides a potentially effective approach for organisations in ‘recipient’ countries seeking to alter public opinion on refugee policy and presence.

UNHCR’s urban strategy – to house people in hotels and apartments – has resulted in dispersing refugees under its care, including removing people and families from the wider refugee community and existing networks.⁷⁹ Although this is to be expected in an urban area, the cutting of social ties and the isolation that can result from it can have implications for refugees’ mental health, as well as for their social capital. Isolation, boredom and sense of limbo – and its potential psychological and social impacts – have been highlighted in a number of urban assessments,⁸⁰ and humanitarian agencies are aware of the need for more social activities and spaces. A number of interviewees spoke of an increasing interest in social or community centres among INGOs in Thessaloniki. However, the majority of interviewees from international agencies either didn’t know about or didn’t appear to value the solidarity initiatives. For example, an interviewee from UNHCR stated that no informal spaces existed in the city for refugees to meet. Such plans therefore may reproduce what is already being supported by the city, and even divert people from the solidarity initiatives, potentially undermining what one local interviewee saw as the ‘big opportunity to bring refugees into semi-formal political groups’, drawing on the city’s ‘strong history of organising at the local level’.

At their best then, the city’s solidarity initiatives have the potential to support refugee voice, helping to challenge the stereotypical image of refugees as passive or dependent recipients;⁸¹ to provide opportunities for participation and input into planning; to help participants develop a sense of contribution and value to their time spent in the city; to support horizontal relationships and friendships, including between locals and refugees; and to help to strengthen a sense of social solidarity in the city.

Limitations of the City's Solidarity Initiatives

Humanitarian actors have played an enabling role in the environment in which the solidarity initiatives have been operating. The humanitarian apparatus has stimulated the local economy (directly and indirectly), housing and supporting many refugees, and providing jobs for both 'skilled' and 'unskilled' local workers (a factor likely to influence local responses to refugees) as well as for some refugees.⁸² Local responses would not have had the capacity to house the number of refugees in the city and in nearby camps, and would likely only have been able to offer material support to a small portion. Solidarity initiatives operate on a relatively small scale – many refugees don't use them at all or don't use them to their full extent; they are, as one participant suggested 'as helpful as people want them to be'.

Engagement from refugee and migrant participants can also often be limited and superficial, especially given the intention of many to leave the city in the short to medium term. However, many in the EU Relocation Programme have been in Northern Greece much longer than expected.⁸³ The closure and strict surveillance of the borders, and the detention and at times inhumane treatment of refugees and migrants on the route to Western Europe, have contributed to refugees and migrants staying longer in the city than they may initially have intended – or returning to it.

Analysis of the impact of Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives on the forms of political and economic organisation that they are set up to challenge goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, in response to arguments that have been made about horizontal movements more broadly – that they 'express an authentic rage that remains unable to transform itself into even a minimal positive programme for socio-political change'⁸⁴ – research for this study suggests that the approach taken by the city's solidarity initiatives can provide qualitatively different day-to-day experiences and opportunities for those engaged in them.

Self-Reliance and Local Markets

Markets form a key dimension of the urban context. As both physical spaces and sites of exchange, negotiation and power relations between different actors and social groups, they can determine the ability of refugees to meet needs and pursue aspirations.⁸⁵ As such, markets form key sites for practices of self-support or self-reliance in the city, as refugees negotiate access to resources, networks and livelihood opportunities, shaping markets both through their presence and through the presence of diverse responses to them.

Each of the city's solidarity initiatives engages in different ways, and to different extents, in local markets – but in every case with explicit social or political intent. One initiative runs a cooperative, selling food and other produce from local businesses and initiatives, including a self-organising business (Vio.me, a factory run by a group of its workers after owners attempted to close the factory during the financial crisis). Other initiatives receive donations from local businesses, for example food for distribution at Steki consists mostly of items that have not sold at a local chain. Solidarity initiatives also support practices of self-support through local markets, with one self-organising group retrieving still edible food thrown away every evening at the city's central food market to make up the majority of their nightly meal, which they cook and eat together.

One solidarity initiative makes iced tea out of 'recycled food' to sell in local markets, as well as selling food and drink at local events or 'bazaars' that solidarity groups organise both to generate income and to attempt to facilitate social and cultural exchange between refugees, migrants and locals. A number of the larger solidarity initiatives receive income from the bars they run in their social spaces, donations from locals and internationals who support their values and approaches, and from larger events they organise – such as the city's annual Antiracist Festival. As such, local markets are used as a vehicle not only to raise funds to support the approaches taken by the solidarity initiatives, but also explicitly to support the facilitation of social and cultural exchange between new arrivals and locals, as a step towards integration in the city.

These local market activities reflect the engagement with the local economy, and its specific social intent, that has taken place in the context of social movements in the city over recent years. Solidarity initiatives challenge the assumptions⁸⁶ of an economic approach that doesn't work for many in the city, especially not for those who already face political or social marginalisation. In contrast, current planning for self-reliance by humanitarian actors in the city does not appear to question – and continues to operate under – the assumption that supporting refugee self-reliance in Thessaloniki is a case of integrating refugees into the existing political economy.

Current plans for facilitating refugee access to the labour market in Thessaloniki – as a key part of plans for supporting the self-reliance of those who plan to remain in the city – are being led at the local level by the Municipality of Thessaloniki and UNHCR. These plans centre on the establishment of a hub for entrepreneurial initiatives and business ideas, where people can also register skills and identify areas for training. Planning was still underway at the time of research and the level of non-market intervention that would accompany the hub was unclear. Important questions therefore remain regarding the response to the economic environment in which the hub would be developed – crucial given that market-based approaches 'cannot alone remove the more extreme inequalities of asset ownership or political empowerment'.⁸⁷

Substantial evidence exists for the ways in which market-based approaches without sufficient non-market interventions and an adequate institutional environment can create or exacerbate inequalities,⁸⁸ including by fostering social exclusion and creating conditions for adverse incorporation⁸⁹ – not least because those with the existing capital to engage are the most likely to benefit.⁹⁰

Efforts to enable refugee self-reliance in Thessaloniki take place in a context in which practices of self-support have been increasingly employed by locals during the economic crisis, with its resultant cuts to state services and support (such as pensions), high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and evictions for those no longer able to pay mortgages or rent. As such, the Greek crisis produced an increased number of locals who were not self-reliant by UNHCR's definition. Given the economic consequences of the Greek crisis, including on livelihood opportunities, a focus on facilitating self-reliance through entrepreneurship appears to be a distraction from broader, structural changes that need to be made in the economy in order for refugees, as well as a significant number of locals, to become self-reliant.⁹¹

A focus on the entrepreneurial abilities of individuals as a key element of self-reliance programming is indicative of a broader trend towards the transferral of responsibility for the well-being of citizens from the state to the individual that has taken place over recent decades.⁹² This has been reflected in a number of refugee experiences in Thessaloniki, with one local NGO worker outlining how over the years she has seen refugees reduced to activities for survival in the absence of adequate state support. These practices of survival, she noted, 'usually cut their dreams', such as gaining a better education, leaving much of their productive and creative potential unrealised.

It is here that the contrast between the approach of humanitarian agencies and solidarity initiatives is most stark. While the humanitarian response has contributed to the individualisation of responsibility through its emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship, solidarity initiatives have promoted the 'active participation of citizens in political society'.⁹³

Humanitarianising Solidarity

The discrete, measurable interventions of humanitarian agencies aimed at promoting self-reliance reflect an increasingly technical approach to humanitarian action that has developed over the last 25 years, as humanitarian agencies and donors have placed growing emphasis on effectiveness and deliverable projects.⁹⁴ One interviewee working for an international humanitarian organisation criticised humanitarian NGOs for not being vocal enough about the situation of refugees and migrants in Northern Greece

– accusing them of being overly concerned with protecting their space for ‘small projects’. The interviewee claimed that this prioritisation of projects above all else meant there was no vision or strategy for challenging the ‘fundamentals of the situation’ from the international response. Beyond the ideological preference of humanitarian agencies, funding plays a part in this: A single donor – the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) – is providing the vast majority (over 85%⁹⁵) of funding for the response, with the EU also dictating policy (in a context in which Greece holds a weak negotiating position in Brussels following the economic crisis). This funding situation means that ‘NGOs have requested ECHO funding in order to conduct advocacy against EU policies’.⁹⁶ For local solidarity initiatives, meanwhile, voicing objections to the political causes of the plight of refugees in Thessaloniki, as well as the political motivations shaping the international response, has been a priority. In contrast, humanitarian actors have advocated safe and legal resettlement, but they have generally avoided thornier issues related to the politics and economics of resettlement. The solidarity initiatives have regularly challenged humanitarian actors to think structurally about refuge in Greece, and indeed across Europe.

Meanwhile, already in early 2017,⁹⁷ the presence of humanitarian organisations was having an impact on local responses and practices of self-support. A local interviewee stated that the increase in humanitarian organisations’ involvement in the city has led to a significant increase in employment opportunities for skilled professionals. These have included new opportunities for lawyers, many of whom had been doing a significant amount of pro-bono work in solidarity with refugees and migrants. The interviewee noted that much less pro-bono work and volunteering was being done at the time of research, in part because much of this was now being covered by NGOs. The interviewee also noted that social workers and educators who had been volunteering in the local response were drawn into the humanitarian response, in part by better wages.

The trend towards international humanitarian agencies working with (or through) implementing partners – local NGOs or local humanitarian workers – and, subsequently, the increased distance between donors, humanitarian strategies and programme implementation, have meant that those most aware of realities on the ground are less likely to be listened to or to have influence. One informant in Thessaloniki suggested that, as a result, local initiatives were either being turned into NGOs or ignored. This points towards the privatisation of solidarity and its gradual subsumption under the technocratic imperatives of the humanitarian system – ‘quantitative goals, laws of efficiency and cost effectiveness’.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Given its location, Thessaloniki will likely continue to receive significant numbers of refugees in the coming years, and therefore questions about how best to receive and accommodate these arrivals will remain relevant.⁹⁹ The approaches taken by Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives provide insight into structures that can facilitate types of support that have not been available from the various humanitarian interventions in the city to date. As humanitarian agencies scale up their support for refugees, they are compelled to reflect on how they might provide better opportunities for the meaningful participation of refugees in programme planning. The significance of inclusive and accessible social spaces and leisure activities, including those where refugees can develop and share skills (regardless of intention to leave or remain in the city), should also be kept in mind. And, given the emphasis placed on livelihoods in self-reliance programming, humanitarian agencies should give greater analytical focus to questions of political economy in their programme planning, seeking to engage with local markets, through their investments and their very presence, in ways that directly attend to the demands of refugees.¹⁰⁰

The case of Thessaloniki also brings to the fore questions regarding appropriate humanitarian response in a context with a very active civil society, and how best to engage with different local actors, guarding against undermining practices of solidarity. Greater investment by humanitarian agencies in understanding context, including through the adoption of qualitative approaches drawing on anthropological, sociological and urban-specific methods, could also support more appropriate policies of engagement and disengagement.

APPENDIX

A Note on Methodology

This study used semi-structured and unstructured interviews across a range of actors in the context: refugees and migrants – both those receiving support from humanitarian NGOs and UNHCR, and those without support; locals, including from a variety of civil society and solidarity actors; actors across a variety of functions at UNHCR, INGOs and Greek NGOs; as well as at the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Interviews were conducted in English, unless interviewees didn't speak English, in which case local translators – in many cases, connected to the solidarity initiatives – were used. Given the focus of the research on solidarity initiatives in the city, a site-based approach was employed to sample the majority of refugee and local interviewees. Although awareness of gender and age were key considerations in participant sampling, given the demographics of those engaging in the solidarity initiatives during the time of research, findings are more representative of male refugee experiences. It was not possible to verify interviewees' eligibility for refugee status beyond their stated nationality, and as such, the term 'refugee' is not used in a strict legal sense. It is also used to refer to those in the process of seeking asylum who had yet to receive refugee status. Participant observation was also carried out where appropriate.

ENDNOTES

77. This paper benefited greatly from review and comments by Jonathan Darling, Fotini Rantsiou and Evan Easton-Calabria.
78. United Nations News Centre. *UN Daily News*, 7th August, 2015. <http://www.un.org/News/dh/pdf/english/2015/07082015.pdf>
79. UNHCR press release, 7th August, 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2015/8/55c48ea69/unhcr-warns-deepening-refugee-crisis-greece-calls-urgent-bold-action.html>
80. Approximately 8% of new arrivals (4% of all Syrians) applied for asylum in Greece between January-June 2015, implying a highly transient refugee and migrant population. UNHCR. *Greece Operational Update 21 July-21 August 2015*. http://www.unhcr.gr/fileadmin/Greece/Extras/Operation/Greece_Operational_Update_1.pdf
81. As well as the construction of fences and the heightening of other border control measures along other countries' borders, including Hungary and Austria.
82. Save the Children Greece Refugee Crisis Situation Report #43 25th May 2016 – statistics taken from UNHCR operations portal in May 2016. <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>
83. Although most camps are significantly detached from the city, some staying in camps near Thessaloniki also come into the city and use its services.
84. This move was funded predominantly by the European Commission's Department of Migration and Home Affairs. An informant stated that delays it faced were in part due to poor coordination between actors, and to the difficulties INGOs faced in finding apartments in the city, 'usually because of lack of knowledge of the city'.
85. UNHCR's Thessaloniki office went from approximately 12 to 110 staff.
86. UNHCR. 'Stronger cooperation crucial to ensure sustainable refugee response in Greece'. 27th March, 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/3/58d8f15a4/stronger-cooperation-crucial-ensure-sustainable-refugee-response-greece.html>
87. UNHCR. 'UNHCR Recommendations for Greece in 2017'. 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/58d8e8e64>
88. The main international organisations programming in Thessaloniki at the time of research were Medecins du Monde, Save the Children, and Terre des Hommes, although a number of others were also considering how best to engage. The main national NGOs programming were ARSIS, PRAKSIS, and Solidarity Now. REACT – Refugee Assistance Collaboration in Thessaloniki – a coalition of actors led by the municipality and funded by UNHCR and the European Commission also includes The Hellenic League for Human Rights, The Greek Council for Refugees, the YMCA Thessaloniki, and other neighbouring municipalities.
89. Lolos, Yannis. 'Via Egnatia After Egnatius: Imperial Policy and Inter-Regional Contacts'. *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22(2), 2007: 273-293.
90. Rossos, Andrew. *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2013, 2.

THESSALONIKI

91. Hatziprokopiou, Panos Arion. *Globalisation, Migration and Socio-Economic Change in Contemporary Greece: Processes of Social Incorporation of Balkan Immigrants in Thessaloniki*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 6.
92. Pelagidis, Eustathios. 'Thessaloniki as a Crossroad and Shelter of Refugees (1912-2012)'. *Papyri Scientific Journal* 4, 2015.
93. Ibid, 299.
94. Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki. http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/Museums/History_And_War/Mma_Thessalonikhs.html (accessed 13th June, 2017).
95. Ibid
96. One interviewee involved in the local response asserted 'we are a city of refugees'.
97. It should be noted that refugees arriving in Greece following the forced population exchange with Turkey increased the ethnic and religious homogeneity of the city.
98. Save the Children Greece's rapid assessment for urban response in Thessaloniki and Athens, carried out in early 2017 (24th January to 14th February), defined 'urban' according to population density, total population, and the nature of livelihoods, with no attention to political and socio-economic characteristics.
99. For example, fears by concerned parents over the vaccination status of refugee children attending local schools.
100. This experience contrasts with statements from different actors in the humanitarian response regarding the difficulties faced in finding accommodation.
101. Different actors held contrasting opinions on the role of the church in support of refugees – especially around its role in the eviction of a squat housing refugees, migrants and solidarity actors in an abandoned orphanage (Oreokastro) owned by the church. Further research is required on the role of religious institutions (especially the church) in refugee support in the city.
102. Interviewees from a local NGO stated that although the tiered system for accessing the job market (in which recognised refugees were third tier and asylum seekers were fourth tier) had been abolished in April 2016, theoretically placing refugees and asylum seekers in an improved position for legally accessing employment, in practice there was 'no work for refugees and asylum seekers', who continued to engage in the same practices as they did before legal options for work were expanded.
103. Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. 'Civil Society in Greece in the Wake of the Economic Crisis'. *Report for Konrad Adenauer Stiftung und ELLAMEP*, 2014.
104. Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. and Dimitris Bourikos. 'Economic Crisis, Social Solidarity and the Voluntary Sector in Greece'. *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 2(2), 2014: 33-53.
105. Broadly, the representation of a group of people by elected officials.
106. Horizontalism as 'the negation of hierarchies, representation and closed ideologies'. Kiouпкиolis, Alexandros and Giorgos Katsambekis. *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude Versus the Hegemony of the People*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, 3.
107. Kokkinidis, George. 'Spaces of Possibilities: Workers' Self-Management in Greece'. *Organization* 22(6), 2015: 847-871.
108. Kiouпкиolis and Katsambekis. *Radical democracy*. 1.
109. Micropolis and the Social Solidarity Clinic.
110. Karyotis, Theodoros. 'Criminalizing Solidarity: Syriza's War on the Movements'. *Roar*, 31st July, 2016.
111. Interviewee working in the local government response. For example, student demonstrations and democratic demands started in Thessaloniki in the 1960s, before spreading to Athens.

112. For example, the tobacco workers' strike around May Day, 1936, which led to demonstrations of approximately 200,000 people.
113. The politicisation of Greek youth has varied over recent decades, but has increased since the 2010 economic crisis.
114. Sitrin, Marina, and Dario Azzellini, *They can't represent us! Reinventing democracy from Greece to Occupy*, Verso Books, 2014.
115. Social Clinic of Solidarity, accessed 10th June, 2017. <http://www.kiathess.gr/en/>
116. Social Centre/Immigrants Place, accessed 5th May, 2017. <http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/>
117. Which means 'hang out' in Greek.
118. Social Centre/Immigrants Place, accessed 5th May, 2017. <http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/english/>
119. 'The deep economic recession which Greece has experienced since 2009 has led to an increase in the levels of housing exclusion in the country. According to Klimaka's figures [a Greek NGO], the number of homeless amounts to around 17,000–20,000 people, a rise of 20–25% compared with two years ago [2009]'. Fondeville, Nicole and Terry Ward, European Commission Research Note 8/2011, 'Homelessness during the crisis', November 2011, 13.
120. Social Centre/Immigrants Place website, accessed 5th May, 2017. <http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/english/>
121. Inactive during the research period.
122. Micropolis Social Space for Freedom website, accessed 8th May, 2017. <http://micropolis-socialspace-en.blogspot.co.uk/>
123. Economides, Spyros and Vassilis Monastiriotis (ed.). *The Return of Street Politics? Essays on the December Riots in Greece*. London: The Hellenic Observatory, LSE, 2009.
124. Micropolis Social Space for Freedom website, accessed 8th May, 2017. <http://micropolis-socialspace-en.blogspot.co.uk/>
125. Oikopolis website, accessed 8th May, 2017. <http://oiko-polis.gr/>
126. 'Vulnerable persons include in particular: minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation'. European Asylum Support Office, accessed 1st July, 2017. <https://www.easo.europa.eu/questions-and-answers-relocation>
127. Details on accommodation provided by UNHCR can be found here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/56403>
128. Details on UNHCR managed cash programming can be found here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/53754>
129. This was only in the planning stage during the research period, however, and those involved in the implementation cited likely bureaucratic barriers to implementation: accreditation would be carried out by a separate government body, not the municipality.
130. For example, different hospitals in the city take turns throughout the week in functioning as the emergency hospital for that day.
131. Although interviewees from the various international humanitarian and local government responses were aware of a desire for continued training and vocational practices (and these were discussed in relation to self-reliance), little was being done or planned beyond child education in these areas during the research period. For example, no data had been collected on the existing skills and education profiles of the refugee population under UNHCR and NGO programming. An interviewee from a local NGO stated that in her experience plans for training and education are a central element of support. She suggested that future plans for self-reliance should focus on both typical and non-typical education – rather than being

THESSALONIKI

solely aimed at the labour market, such programmes could also be understood as a valuable tool in and of themselves, to get people 'out of the house and socialising'.

132. UNHCR, Promoting Livelihoods and Self-Reliance, Operational Guidance and Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, 2011, 15.
133. The European Asylum Support Office states that a person is eligible for relocation to a European state if they are 'in clear need of international protection and a national or a stateless resident of certain countries. The eligible countries as of 1st July 2017 are now Eritrea, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen or a stateless person previously residing in one of these countries'. Eligible countries are determined on the basis of an average recognition rate equal to or higher than 75% on the basis of EUROSTAT data for the previous quarter. For the first quarter of 2017, Iraqis received a 60% recognition rate and Afghans a 47% recognition rate on average: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report#Decisions_on_asylum_applications; http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_in_the_EU-28_by_outcome_selected_citizenships_1st_quarter_2017_V2.PNG. Other criteria includes having arrived in Greece after 24th March, 2015, and applying for international protection first in Greece. European Asylum Support Office, accessed 1st July, 2017. <https://www.easo.europa.eu/questions-and-answers-relocation>
134. This is limited to legal services and limited instances of funding some local organisations with wider focuses, such as indirect support from UNHCR through funding of projects e.g. ARSIS on street work.
135. Changes have also taken place in the funding environment for local NGOs based on the nationalities donors are willing to support. Interviewees working for a local NGO stated that there is now little donor interest in funding programming for non-Syrians, the majority of their work prior to 2015. Although this organisation still operates an 'open door policy' they are unable to meet required costs, for example to pay legal fees, for many nationalities.
136. Asylum seekers until they receive refugee status.
137. ARSIS is currently conducting UNHCR funded research on street work undertaken by refugees and migrants, looking at the activities and incentives of both those in official shelters who have their 'basic needs' met, and those outside of shelters.
138. Types of squats vary from activist-organised and run, to one or two people seeking shelter in an abandoned building.
139. Informants suggested this has been true, for example, of Afghans, Palestinians, Syrians and Nigerians towards their own nationalities. This was particularly clear in research conducted for the study in the groupings within solidarity initiatives, where groups of the same nationalities or region tended to spend time together – although certainly not exclusively. Given that the research discovered minimal mixing of nationalities outside of solidarity initiatives, it suggests that the initiatives provide an environment to facilitate this exchange.
140. UNHCR. *Operational Portal – Refugee Situations, Mediterranean Situation*. <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>
141. Social Centre/Immigrants Place website, accessed 5th May, 2017. <http://socialcenter.espvblogs.net/english/>
142. The extent to which 'participation' in assemblies led to equal opportunities and outcomes for participation was beyond the scope of this study, but further research in this area would be welcomed. Research has been undertaken on gender in horizontal decision-making in other contexts, which might provide useful references. See Sobering, Katherine. 'Producing and Reducing Gender Inequality in a Worker-Recovered Cooperative'. *The Sociological Quarterly* 57(1), 2016: 129-151.
143. Kabeer, Naila, Simeen Mahmud and Sakiba Tasneem. 'Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women's Empowerment? Empirical findings from Bangladesh'. *IDS Working Paper* 375, 2011.

144. Friese, Heidrun. 'The Limits of Hospitality: Political Philosophy, Undocumented Migration and the Local Arena', *European Journal of Social Theory* 13(3), 2010: 323-341.
145. Skype was the main channel through which people outside of 'formal sites', such as those in cities like Thessaloniki, were going through the initial stages of the asylum application process. <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/W001-8-Where-can-you-Pre-Register.pdf>
146. Funded internationally and run under a different structure to the solidarity initiatives.
147. See, for example, The Listening Project, *The Listening Project and Development Effectiveness*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2011; or Fiori, Juliano, Fernando Espada, Jessica Field and Sophie Dicker. *The Echo Chamber: Results, Management, and the Humanitarian Effectiveness Agenda*. London: Humanitarian Affairs Team & Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, 2016.
148. This view was also expressed by a Syrian interviewee (involved in the solidarity initiatives) who stated that refugees and migrants shouldn't be discriminated between.
149. And, to a lesser extent, a vulnerability criteria.
150. 'Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions'. OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles. https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf
151. Press release: The debt of the ex-refugee shelter in Thessaloniki, accessed 9th May 2017. <http://keepstekipluggedin.com/2017/02/10/hello-world/>
152. Karyotis. 'Criminalizing solidarity'.
153. A number of the spaces make clear the intersectional nature of their solidarity, acknowledging a variety of factors that may combine impede agency, including against racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.
154. Featherstone, David. *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*. London: Zed Books, 2012, 37.
155. An interviewee cited gendered impacts of this separation anecdotally: men were more likely to have mobiles and therefore able to stay in touch with others in the city.
156. Deprez, Simon and Eléonore Labattut. *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees. Thessaloniki, Greece*. Brussels: NRC, 2016. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/study-on-adequate-urban-housing-for-refugees-in-thessaloniki/>
Also UNHCR's Urban Assessment, carried out in early 2017. Unpublished.
157. On the subject of narratives of dependency of urban refugees within UNHCR, including in relation to cash programming, see Jeff Crisp and Mary Beth Morand on UNHCR urban refugee policy formation: Crisp, Jeff and Mary Beth Morand. *Better Late Than Never? The Evolution and Implementation of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy*. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. May, 2015.
<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/news/better-late-than-never-the-evolution-and-implementation-of-unhcrs-urban-refugee-policy-dr-jeff-crisp-and-marybeth-morand>
158. A number of refugees have been employed by local and international NGOs, predominantly as translators or cultural mediators.
159. As of 20 March 2017, 10,012 of the 66,400 original target had been relocated from Greece to other EU Member States. UNHCR website, last accessed 30th April 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/58d8e8e64>
160. Zizek, Slavoj. 'Occupy Wall Street: What is to be Done Next?' *The Guardian*, 24th April, 2012.

161. Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London and Humanitarian Affairs Team, Save the Children UK, 'A framework for the analysis of refugee self-reliance and humanitarian action in urban markets', 2; 2017.
162. Assumptions including 'that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximisation of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterised by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade'. Harvey, David. 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610(1), 2007: 21-44.
163. Department for International Development. *Making Markets Work Better for The Poor – A Framework Paper*. London: DfID, 2000, 5.
164. For example, see Hall, Jeremy, Stelvia Matos, Lorn Sheehan and Bruno Silvestre. 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Base of the Pyramid: A Recipe for Inclusive Growth or Social Exclusion?' *Journal of Management Studies* 49(4), 2012: 785-812; Kaplinsky, Raphael. 'Globalisation and Unequalisation: What Can Be Learned from Value Chain Analysis?' *Journal of Development Studies* 37(2), 2000: 117-146; Gereffi, Gary and Joonkoo Lee. 'Economic and Social Upgrading in Global Value Chains and Industrial Clusters: Why Governance Matters'. *Journal of Business Ethics* 133(1), 2016: 25-38.
165. Hickey, Sam and Andries Du Toit. 'Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion, and Chronic Poverty'. In *Chronic Poverty*, edited by Andrew Shepherd and Julia Brunt, 134-159. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
166. Hall et al. 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation'.
167. Livelihood opportunities are likely to be determined by 'the general productivity of the economy at large, which determines the going rate for employment of the skills utilised'. Kaplinsky, Raphael and Mike Morris. *A Handbook for Value Chain Research*. Ottawa: IDRC, 2001, 89.
168. See Reid, Julian. 'The Disastrous and Politically Debated Subject of Resilience'. *Development Dialogue* 58, 2012, 69.
169. Duffield, Mark. 'Global Civil War: The Non-Insured, International Containment and Post-Interventionary Society'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(2), 2008, 149.
170. Fiori et al. *The Echo Chamber*. 59
171. Of the total funding made available for Greece in 2017, of US \$306,370,438, ECHO contributes US \$262,555,642 (in addition, the European Commission contributes \$1,415,643). Financial tracking service, UN OCHA, last accessed 25th July, 2017. <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/86/donors/2017>
172. Rantsiou, Fotini. 'Humanitarian Response in Greece: A System Not Fit for Purpose', 23rd December, 2016. Accessed 13th June, 2017. <https://fotinirantsiou.com/2016/12/23/humanitarian-response-in-greece-a-system-not-fit-for-purpose-parts-of-this-piece-were-edited-and-published-in-irnews-org-and-ekathimerini-gr/>
173. Before many self-reliance programmes in the city had fully got underway.
174. Karyotis. 'Criminalizing solidarity'.
175. EU funding currently runs until 2020 for some aspects of response.
176. Deprez and Labattut outline areas such as investment in building regeneration, homelessness, and supporting resource-poor local authorities, but also point out that funding doesn't allow for that. Deprez and Labattut. 'Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees'.

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