

CROSSING BORDERS!

movements and struggles of migration

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Once more we use the reference to a World Social Forum (WSF), which will take place end of March in Tunis, to publish a new number of Crossing Borders. To be a „Harraga“ – a term used in North-Africa and translated as „burning the border“ – is a daily issue in Tunisia, and the fate of the boatpeople, their disappearance and death, affects an innumerable number of families. Last year, in summer 2012, Boats4People was launched as a transnational symbolic campaign with protests and memorials in Italian and Tunisian cities to denounce the left-to-die policy of the EU-borderregime with thousands of victims. Against this background migration will become a



main topic during the WSF in Tunis. Thus we start below - as a kind of introductory text - with excerpts of a „diary between migration and precarity“ - written after a tour through some tunesian cities in December 2012. It is dedicated to a bus-caravan for freedom of movement, which is projected for September 2013. Migration and precarity are also keywords for a multilingual website, which we present on page 2. „Precarious (di)connections“ - so the name - aims on a global exchange of struggles in and against the capitalist crisis, against exploitation, patriarchy and social exclusion. The migrationrelated networking process is developing: a „transborder map“ was published end of 2012 on www.noborder.org and on page 3 you find a text to explain more about the background and its potential follow up. Berlin, Vienna, Amsterdam, Budapest, Bologna, Choucha... - finally on page 4 - we document the series of manifold and partly simultaneous struggles of refugees and migrants all over Europe and beyond...

Between migration and precarization

Between December 25th 2012 and January 4th 2013 a small delegation of the Afrique-Europe-Interact and Welcome to Europe networks travelled through some Tunisian cities. The tour was part of a preparation process for a bus-caravan for freedom of movement in Tunisia, which is projected for autumn 2013. The following excerpts are from a longer „fragmentary diary“ that resulted from the trip. Even though it was written before the assassination of the left oppositional leader Chokri Belaïd on 6.2.2013 and the following general strike and mass protests, the authors from Europe experienced, „that the struggle for better wages, for freedom and dignity, are very much alive in Tunisia“. According to them "these social demands – and not the media polarization between Islamic governing party and secular opposition – must remain at the center of our considerations, of our solidarity and of our search for common grounds."

El Fahs - 27.12.2012

No work, no prospects. All 13 of the men who met with us in a café agree on the fact that as soon as they can they will leave the country: like Harragas towards (...) Europe. (...) During a boat-incident in September 2012 alone 10 families from El Fahs lost members. The news spread fast and seeing the inactivity and evident policy of misinformation of the governments, the 9th and 10th of September thousands of people in El Fahs erected barricades. A general strike completely blocked the small city, and the roads leading into and out of the city were blockaded. (...)

Siliana – 28.12.2012

(...)For an entire week a tenacious mass protest and general strike exploded "against poverty and unemployment". The thousands-strong protest in November 2012 succeeded in deposing the corrupt and hated governor.

And we got to know that the German industry Dräxlmaier in the industrial zone of Siliana produces cable harnesses for the most important automotive industries. 3000 workers, mainly young women, are exploited for a salary (125,- €) that doesn't guarantee survival, even in Tunisia. The plant is part of a chain of just-in-time suppliers with other branches in Tunisia, but also in Egypt and Eastern Europe. (...)

Regueb – 29.12.2012

"Why do you want to protest here with us, when the real problem is in Europe? The brutal immigration policy and racism come from Europe, why don't you do the caravan there? Isn't the capitalist system the real problem?" A lot of questions were exposed to us in an interesting assembly, which finally agreed that the high unemployment and mostly precarious forms of labor in Tunisia must also be considered through the lens of the unequal relationship between north and south ...

Full version in more languages at www.connessioniprecarie.org/category/world-connections/

Global di|connections

...crossing the borders of precarity

Precarity is global because it is built on the crossing of borders, but also because it is the condition of labor in every corner of the world. Precarity is the constitutive mark of the current international division of labor that ties up different kinds of workers, men and women, migrants and non, that everyday in the world challenge the domination of capitalism. Therefore, precarity is a matter of class, a transnational class whose potential force doesn't stem from its pretended homogeneity, but from the actual differences that makes it up. Following the global and complex threads of precarity is the aim of "global di|connections", the page of [conne]ssioni precarie website (www.conneccioniprecarie.org) website, devoted to shed light on the transnational dimension of class struggle.

"global di|connections" provides an insight into this dimension by looking at the concrete experiences of the workers of Foxconn in China and Romania, the strikes at the Maruti-Suzuki in India, the struggle of the Greek people against the crisis, the home based women workers in Pakistan, apparently located in marginal areas but actually involved in the international market, as well as the longshoremen workers of Oakland that fight against Wall Street by blocking the city port. Our purpose is to show that precarity is an institutional, social and global fact. Global is the dimension in which capitalism claims its domination. Global must be the arena in which precarious subjects hit the capitalistic command on work. "global di|connections" shows how men and women, migrants and non, "old" and "new" workers in different parts of the world fight against

the capitalistic exploitation, by assuming that their empowerment depends on their global connections.

From the struggle of longshoremen workers in Oakland, we learned that Wall Street can be "on the waterfront" as everywhere. Nevertheless, the blockade of the Oakland's port suggested us that we can locate some "hot points" where capitalism show its global connections and then hit them, uniting figures that the hierarchy of capitalism works for dividing. In the same vein, we looked at the home based women workers that in Pakistan showed the traits of a global insubordination, connecting themselves to other workers on a wider scale and beyond the specific kind of job they have, as well as pointing out the road to follow to their male counterparts. Telling the story of the "global di|connections" is for us a way to cross the borders of precarity.



Transborder Map

A map of resistance against the European border regime was published as a printed and online-poster end of last year. It presents initiatives which met at a conference in Istanbul in March 2012 and whose members are defying the migration regime on both sides of the EU's external borders and beyond.

The borderregime of externalisation

Whether at the Greek-Turkish Border and in the Aegean, in the straits of Sicily or Gibraltar, and around the island of Lampedusa or the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla: the pictures made at the so-called hotspots of the external borders, resemble each other. Monstrous fences and high-tech surveillance systems, detention camps and permanent deployment of the border control agency Frontex, all funded by the EU, characterize the situation along the major neighbouring states, which should – by means of economic pressure and financial incentives – be forced to integrate with migration control. This externalisation of the border regime towards the south and the east, has resulted in distress and thousands of deaths being calculated in, in the context of a EU deterrence strategy against „illegal migration“.

Transnational campaigns and structures

What has been developed over the last years as a transnational resistance is therefore all the more important. If the Noborder camps, caravans and solidarity boats in the contested border areas stand for public actions, yet rather symbolic interventions, the contacts and collaborations have nevertheless evolved into longer-term structures which increasingly turn into effective networks: for instance into the virtual flight-assistance-guide of Welcome to Europe (www.w2eu.info), which in real supports refugees and migrants on the move, offers useful addresses and practical information from all the important transit and target countries in four languages.

Tenacious movements of migration at all the external borders ...

Despite increased repressions towards transit migrants in Morocco and despite the armament of the fence systems in Ceuta and Melilla, this border remains a highly controversial centre of struggle. Again and again individuals succeed in scaling the fences or swimming around them, and in August 2012 there were again several hundred who collectively tried to defeat the obstructions.

In 2010 the Greek-Turkish land-frontier along the Evros river became the central place of transit and all repression could not stop the self-determined entries into the country. The crisis and the smaller chances of survival, the systematic raids of the police and the racist pogroms and the mobilisation of thousands of border policemen at the border, shifted the picture again in summer 2012. There are less people arriving but now again by sea and on to the islands, also on to Lesbos. There, solidarity groups succeeded by the end of November in forcing through an open welcome centre for the new arrivals. Considering that in general closed centres and prisons are the reality in Greece, prison riots of the detained refugees and migrants regularly occur.

With the fall of dictator Ben Ali, numerous new actors emerged in Tunisian civilian society. One example are relatives of the missing and drowned Harragas, who with their protests not only demand to be informed about the fate of their families and friends, but simultaneously demand the abolishment of the EU visa regime and criticize their own government for its collaboration with EU. When in September 2012 another boat capsized in close vicinity to Lampedusa and 79 Tunisian migrants died, this resulted shortly afterwards in a local uprising in El Fahs, one of the cities of origin of the victims. Strikes were taking place and several police stations as well as the office of the governing party were set on fire.

... Refugee strikes and protests inside the EU

The continuous and tenacious struggles for freedom of movement at the external borders, at this moment correspond with a wave of strikes, protest camps and demonstrations of self-organized refugees inside the EU (see page 4). The respective basic conditions are as diverse as the composition and the demands of the actors. Direct connections are so far limited, but the mutual inspiration is obvious. Refugees' experiences of struggle during transit are often made part of the actions.

Invitation to develop the map ...

The - until now - static version of the Transborder Map only shows a few key-symbols for migrant struggles inside the EU and does make no claim to be exhaustive. The map nevertheless offers a first survey of an increasing number of networking initiatives all over Europe and beyond. And this initial impetus goes with the proposal to construct an interactive platform. That is a map, which is to be completed and kept up to date, which at the pulse of the movements of migration visualizes the diversity of the resistance and thus strengthens the struggles for global freedom of movement as a transnational process.



Struggles of selforganised refugees and migrants

Last months saw a wave of simultaneous marches, manifestations and strikes, of protest camps and church occupations inside and beyond EU. The protesting groups seem to be very different in their specific conditions and demands and an unifying process concerning their aims will be hardly possible. But more exchange for mutual inspiration and transnational cooperation is important and the struggles are directed against the same system of so-called migration management, which combines exclusion and exploitation in a modern apartheid-regime.

March and Protest-Camp in Berlin

It started with first tent-protests in a few cities in March 2012, followed by a 30-days-march through Germany to Berlin in September and an ongoing protest-camp in the capital afterwards. Closure of all camps, abolition of the residence-law and stop of all deportations are the main demands and the various actions received a lot of public attention and support by many organisations. Selforganised activities just go on with a refugee-revolution-bus-tour and another demonstration in Berlin on 23rd of March. And for June 2013 a tribunal is under preparation.

<http://asylstrikeberlin.wordpress.com/>

<http://thecaravan.org/>



Protest-Camp and Church-Occupation in Vienna

On the 24th of November 2012 about 200 refugees marched from an displacement camp in a small village to set up a plainly visible protest camp in the heart of Vienna. The demands of the protesting refugees: a fair treatment in the asylum process, better conditions in the camps and access to the labour market. On the 18th of December, after weeks of being ignored by the government, the refugees decided to move into a church and started a hunger-strike to strain their demands. The hunger-strike in the occupied church got a huge public response. However, while the government has acknowledged the legitimacy of their demands, leaving the refugees with little more than vague promises. In the beginning of March 2013 the refugees started a new stage of the protests, moving from the church to a nearby monastery. The struggle goes on.

<http://refugeecampvienna.noblogs.org/>

Refugee Protests in Budapest

A group of recognized refugees who are facing homelessness protested two times in November 2012 in front of the Parliament against their miserable perspectives after they have to leave the temporary integration camp in Bicske. Their main demands were affordable and fairly accessible housing, fair job opportunities and adequate health care. (English interviews from the first protest day: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anZ27u_Mf5Y).

The government reacted cynically, therefore the refugees met with the UNHCR, held another protest at the EU-House in February, 2013 and filed a complaint at the EU Commission against Hungary. By 31st of March, 2013, many refugees including families have to move out from the camp into uncertainty, therefore there are more actions to come.

March 23: general demonstration of migrants in Bologna

On the 17th of February 300 migrants gathered in a huge assembly and expressed the will to bring the strength accumulated in the workplaces into the squares and the streets. After the strikes of the 1st of March, when migrants put the Bossi-Fini law in the middle of the struggles against the exploitation of labour, the struggles in the logistics sector once again say that until the costs of residency permit cut half of the salary, until the stay in Italy is tied to the contract of employment, there won't be any equality. On the 23rd of March the migrants will demonstrate against Bossi-Fini law, against exploitation, and against institutional racism. All infos: <http://coordinamentomigranti.org>

Self-organized migrant protests in the Netherlands

Last years about 5000 rejected asylum seekers are no longer entitled to basic rights as shelter and food in the Netherlands even when it is impossible to return to their countries of origin. But more and more refuse to hide and they fight for a decent life, for hope. In September 2012 two protest-camps were set up in Amsterdam and in The Hague. In Amsterdam it housed some 100 refugees from mainly Africa. With their slogan "WE ARE HERE" they show that WE are human beings, WE have nowhere to go, WE stay here until we have a solution - housing and a safe future - that respects our human rights. The migrants determined to stay faced the police at the eviction on November 30. Only days after the eviction a squatting group occupied an empty church in Amsterdam where 100 undocumented are still protesting today. In The Hague Iraqi (mostly Kurdish) refugees set up camp in open tents under the name RIGHT TO EXIST. End 2012 -after eviction- they squatted another empty church. More info on the dutch protests: "Refugeecamp in the Netherlands" on youtube, "Wij Zijn Hier" on facebook and www.devluichtkerk.nl

Protest of Choucha-Refugees

More than 200 refugees, who have been denied any status, are deprived of food and basic services in the Choucha camp in Tunisia near Libyan border. The UNHCR declared itself not to be responsible for these people and puts pressure on them to go back to their countries of origin or to Libya. Pushed to the limit, about 100 choose to go to Tunis at the end of January to carry their demands to the UNCHR, the European Union and the Tunisian authorities. After one week of protests and negotiations, their demands remain: to reopen the asylum cases of all rejected asylum seekers and to grant international protection to all those who have fled the war in Libya by resettlement in safe countries with effective systems of protection. <http://voiceofchoucha.wordpress.com/> <http://www.chouchaprotest.noblogs.org/>